

Baira blames govt for shrinking overseas job market

STAR BUSINESS REPORT
Recruiting agents have blasted the government for what they said the shrinking overseas job market and remittance-drop. They said such decline is a consequence of flawed government policy. According to the data placed by Bangladesh Association of International Recruiting Agencies (Baira) at a press conference in Dhaka yesterday, the number of migrants from Bangladesh declined to 3.9 lakh in 2010 from 4.75 lakh in 2009. The figure was 8.75 lakh in 2008.

The wage earners' remittance in 2010 reached \$10.99 billion, while it was \$10.71 billion in 2009, but the growth is low compared to the cumulative figures of the last 30 years. Baira was critical of the government's priority in sending workers through two state-run organs -- Bureau of Manpower Employment and Training and Bangladesh Overseas Employment Services Limited. It said this will ultimately result in loss of Bangladesh's labour markets. The government made such a decision considering that private recruiting agencies charge the

jobseekers too high. "The government must not involve itself in business, rather it should frame policy and monitor the sector," said Baira President Abul Basher, fearing a rise in corruption in bureaucracy. He said now 1100 recruiting agencies are on the verge of losing their capital. "If these problems are not solved, we will demand resignation of the minister concerned," said Basher. Some of the Baira members from the audience said they want resignation of the minister, but Basher tried to pacify them in a

heated press conference. In a written speech, Basher said it is the recruiting agencies that made major contribution to the recruitment of over 75 lakh Bangladeshis abroad, but the agencies are the victims to negative propaganda and suffer from an image crisis. Smelling a conspiracy against the rising sector, he lamented that Bangladesh's Riyadh mission did nothing to revive the country's workers' image, although the Saudi media in a propaganda tarnished the image. Baira Vice President Reazul Islam criticised the recruitment

of labour councilors from the defence forces. Baira leaders said they have made proposals to the government on curbing middlemen system to cut migration cost. However, at a stage, they said middlemen are the integral part of any business. They did not make any comment when a reporter asked what failures by the recruiting agencies have led to the decline in overseas jobs. "The government is there to punish us, if we do any wrong," said Baira Secretary General Ali Haider Chowdhury.



BRAC
Tahnayat Ahmed Karim, head of human resources of BRAC Bank, delivers presentation for the students of Shahjalal University of Science and Technology at a roadshow organised by the bank in Sylhet recently.

Mercantile Bank gets new MD

STAR BUSINESS DESK
AKM Shahidul Haque assumed the office as managing director and chief executive officer of Mercantile Bank Ltd recently. Prior to the assignment, he was the additional managing director of the bank, said a statement.



AKM Shahidul Haque

Haque is associated with Mercantile Bank since its inception. He also served at Rupali Bank, National Bank and Prime Bank Ltd, throughout his

Technical glitches suspend Akhaura port trade

UNB, Brahmanbaria
Export and import activities through Akhaura land port have remained suspended since Saturday morning due to a technical faults in weighing machines on the Indian side.

The machine glitches in Agartala, India, left scores of goods-trucks stranded at the land port in Bangladesh. Several hundred workers were also sitting idle for the last three days as loading and unloading of goods came to a halt on Jan 1. Monir Hossain, general secretary of Importers and Exporters Association of Akhaura Land Port, said trade except fish trading remained suspended since Saturday morning as the Indian traders of Agartala claimed the weight machine in their side was out of order. Besides, Brahmanbaria District Truck Owners Association held a meeting with Agartala Exporters-Importers Association at the office of Medda Truck Owners Association on Monday morning to discuss

Online travel firm Expedia drops American Airlines

AFP, New York
Internet-based travel company Expedia said Sunday it has suspended the sale of American Airlines tickets from its website, calling American's new direct marketing strategy "anti-consumer and anti-choice."

"As a result, the sale of American Airlines flights on our website has been suspended," Expedia said in a statement, adding however that it remained "open to doing business with American Airlines on terms that are satisfactory to Expedia." "American Airlines is attempting to introduce a new direct connect model that will result in higher costs and reduced transparency for consumers, making it difficult to compare American Airlines ticket prices and options with offerings by other airlines," it added. The airlines' AA Direct Connect model "would compromise travel agents' ability to provide travelers with the best selection," said Expedia adding the new commercial strategy "we believe is anti-consumer and anti-choice." Expedia's announcement followed AA's move on Wednesday severing its decade-long ties to online travel giant Orbitz in a dispute over the same policy.

SKorea manufacturing soars in Dec: HSBC

AFP, Seoul
South Korea's manufacturing activity accelerated in December to its fastest rate in seven months, propelled by an increase in new orders, according to data released by HSBC Monday. HSBC said that South Korea's Purchasing Managers' Index in December rose to a seasonally adjusted 53.9 from 50.2 in November. A reading above 50 indicates expansion while a reading below signals contraction. "The Korean economy is ending 2010 on a strong note. With the global trade cycle firing up again, Korea especially stands to benefit," HSBC economist Kim Song-Yi said in a report. While exports are accelerating again after a recent lull, the labour market is strengthening as well, which should help underpin consumption spending in the coming quarters, she said. Input prices, however, increased at the fastest pace in December since February 2009 due mainly to rising raw materials prices, pushing up output prices, the HSBC report said.

Samsung launches brand shop

STAR BUSINESS REPORT
Samsung Electronics yesterday opened its first brand shop in Dhaka to display its products under one roof. Kanghyun Lee, managing director of Samsung Electronics for Dhaka, and Taiyoung Cho, South Korean ambassador, inaugurated the shop at Gulshan. "The main objective of the shop is to showcase Samsung's complete portfolio of products that include consumer electronics, IT products and mobile phones," said Lee. Samsung has launched the shop to maintain a one-to-one relationship with consumers, record feedback and find valuable consumer insights to deliver better products and services, said Samsung's local chief. "We also have plans to open more such shops in the major cities of Bangladesh." Consumers will get all necessary information of the products and latest innovations of Samsung of all categories. Representatives from Samsung's local distribution partners, including Transcom Electronics, Electra International, Singer Plus, Smart Technologies (BD) Ltd, Computer Source and Index IT Ltd, were also present.



SAMSUNG
Kanghyun Lee, extreme left, managing director of Samsung Electronics, Dhaka, takes a look at a Samsung mobile phone at the launch of the company's Brand Shop at Gulshan in Dhaka yesterday. Taiyoung Cho, second from left, South Korean ambassador, is also seen.

Azim Group suspends RMG units in Chittagong

STAR BUSINESS REPORT
The Azim Group management yesterday announced closure of its four sweater units in Chittagong for an indefinite period, fearing a massive labour unrest. The workers of the units have been staging demonstrations for the last few days in a demand to raise the piece rate of making sweaters. "Such unrest has been a regular feature in the last few months," Rezaul Masud, senior assistant director of Industrial Police, Chittagong, told The Daily Star yesterday. He pointed to the fact that the piece rates fixable by factory owners vary on receipt of new export orders from buyers. To press home their demand, at least 3,500 workers of two units of Global Specialised Garments Limited and two other units of Savar Sweater Limited -- all owned by Azim Group -- located on four different floors of the four-storied GKL Sweater Complex at Kalurghat industrial area took to streets yesterday. Our Chittagong correspondent adds: A senior official of the group said the workers demonstrated inside the factories from 10am to 12pm. To find out a solution, the management sat with law enforcers and BGMEA officials at around 3.00pm. "But, it is not possible to increase the rate further as we have already negotiated with the buyers," said Uttam Kumar Nath, a deputy general manager of Azim Group. "At last we have announced closure of the units for an indefinite period. But we continue parleys with the agitating workers to find how we can reopen those factories as soon as possible," he said, regretting the workers' rigid attitude. "We will disburse salaries and other benefits as per rules very soon," Nath said. Some workers of one of the factories housed in the same building started demonstration at around 10.00am. Soon their colleagues in other units joined them and vandalised lights and furniture on the ground floor, witnesses said. When they took to the streets, Chandgaon police intercepted. At one stage, the protesters fled the scene.

Seminar points to social workers' role

STAR BUSINESS REPORT
Social workers should maintain socio-economic justice at the heart of their value-driven profession and expand vision of the social work's role in stages of development, said a US-based Bangladeshi expert yesterday. "They should also promote gender equality, continue to advocate for the vulnerable populations and participate in democratising democracy," said Golam M Mathbor, professor of Social Work at Monmouth University, New Jersey, USA, at an international symposium in the city. "We believe that social development is a key to ensuring good governance, while good governance sets the parameters and conditions for social development." Mathbor also said: "Ignorance, prejudice, bigotry and other stereotypes are socially-constructed problems that continuously threaten our human rights and social and economic justice." He was speaking at the opening of the 17th biennial international symposium on 'Good Governance: Building Knowledge for Social Development Worldwide' at Dhaka Sonargaon Hotel. Independent University, Bangladesh (IUB), Monmouth University of USA and International Consortium for Social Development organised the five-day event, where experts from about 40 countries are taking part. Prof Thomas Pearson, vice president of Academic Affairs of Monmouth University, Prof Barbara Shank, dean of the College of Social Work at the University of St. Thomas and St. Catherine University, Minnesota, Towhid Samad, chairman, governing council of IUB, and Nazrul Islam, director of the School of Liberal Arts and Social Sciences at IUB, were also present on the occasion. Scholars, professionals, development partners and government officials attended the ceremony. The symposium will cover global challenges including effectiveness of millennium development goals; policy limits; institutional autonomy; poverty and hunger; global climate change; continuous marginalisation and social exclusion; social justice and human rights issues; mobilisation of government, non-governmental and civil society institutions; and the roles of global governance agencies.



IDLC
Md Saifuddin, managing director of IDLC Securities, and Khwaja Shahriar, head of cash management and Probashi banking of BRAC Bank, shake hands over a deal to provide services to non-resident Bangladeshis, at a programme in Dhaka recently.



SOUTHEAST BANK
AHM Moazzem Hossain, a director of Southeast Bank, inaugurates the bank's 75th branch at Rokeya Sarani in Dhaka recently.