

GCC for clear-cut laws to protect migrant workers

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The Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) has proposed bringing all recruitment agencies under a legal framework to root out fraudulent practices in the workers' recruitment process and protect the migrants' rights.

"Enforcing lawful, fair and transparent recruitment practices begins with the requirement by law that all actors in the recruitment chain, including subagents, be duly and verifiably licensed in their respective country of jurisdiction," says a paper presented by a delegate of the GCC in the ministerial meeting of Asian labour-sending countries.

This is aimed at holding the actors within a country and interna-

tional chain accountable for any violation of the law, notably in matters that pertain to human trafficking and collection of unlawful fees from the workers, it said.

The GCC made the recommendations as guiding principles for the drafting of a regional framework of collaboration among Asian countries of labour origin and destination.

Such proposals are important for Bangladesh, and other Asian labour-sending countries, as millions of migrants work in the Gulf countries -- the United Arab Emirates (UAE), Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Oman and Qatar. Around 5 million Bangladeshis work in these countries.

However, there are serious concerns that manpower brokers both in the labour-sending and destina-

tion countries are engaged in unethical practices that cause enormous woes for migrants.

The UAE undersecretary of labour led the GCC delegation to the meeting being held at the Pan Pacific Sonargaon Hotel from Tuesday. The meeting concludes today.

Eleven Asian labour-sending countries and eight labour-receiving countries from the Middle East, Southeast Asia and Europe are attending.

The GCC also proposed that the legal fees for recruitment of migrant workers in the GCC nations will be borne by the employers, but that should be clearly defined by the labour-sending and receiving countries, says the paper.

"The GCC delegate also sug-

gested a technology to check changes of job contracts," said William Gois of Migrants Forum Asia, who attended the meeting. Changing job contracts of migrants by the employers in the destination countries has been a common phenomenon, which cuts wages and benefits of the workers.

"At all stages of migration, we want to protect the migrants," said Khandker Mosharraf Hossain, expatriates' welfare minister of Bangladesh.

An official of International Organization for Migration (IOM), which is providing secretarial support to the meeting, said the ministers at the meeting also agreed that these Asian countries will work together to address the problems of migrants induced by climate change.

Kaler Kantho resorted to yellow journalism

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lawyers on both sides, the council said daily Kaler Kantho resorted to "yellow journalism by deliberate lying, fabrication and vilification".

The council said it is of the opinion that Motiur Rahman has been falsely linked to the grenade attack to malign him publicly.

The council after in-depth review of the appeal of the daily Prothom Alo, reply of the daily Kaler Kantho and reply of the daily Prothom Alo found no evidence that

support the information daily Kaler Kantho dished out about Matiur Rahman, the verdict delivered on April 12 said.

The council thinks that the information provided by daily Kaler Kantho about Matiur Rahman does not have any basis," it read.

Kaler Kantho published a report on May 10 last year stating that "the editor of Prothom Alo and journalist Tipu Sultan of the same daily had warned militant leader Maolana Tajuddin, the main architect of the brutal

August 21 grenade attack, that Rab was looking for him. It also alleged that Matiur Rahman had discussed with Tajuddin the forming of a new political party by the latter to help BNP.

The reports also claimed that Tajuddin had met Matiur Rahman several times at the Prothom Alo office which journalist Tipu Sultan had arranged.

The reports were claimed to have been based on statements of jailed former BNP deputy minister Abdus

Salam Pintu given to intelligence agencies.

"The council considers this attitude of daily Kaler Kantho to be against the principles of newspapers and the debatable was news not at all based on information but falsehood, imagination and was humiliating," the council verdict said.

"The daily Kaler Kantho has created an instance of bad journalism centring the Prothom Alo Editor Matiur Rahman," the verdict said. "The council is hereby issuing a warning against daily

Kaler Kantho to refrain from publishing any subject under prosecution or publish any material not supported by proper evidence."

Matiur Rahman had complained to the press council on October 24 last year that the Kaler Kantho reports were totally false and they had denigrated his status and family reputation.

In defence, Kaler Kantho on December 28 last year said the investigation officer or intelligence agencies had not disputed the reports and so it can be assumed that the statement of Pintu or the related report was correct.

It said, "As former state minister Pintu, who was arrested in the August 21 grenade attack case, is a conscious person and so are his family members, they would have protested if the reports were false."

But the council was not convinced with the reply. As the plaintiff insisted on submission of case-related documents, the council gave seven more days to Kaler Kantho. Kaler Kantho submitted a printed document of the so-called statement of Abdus Salam Pintu. But since the document did not bear the seal of any court, the council did not take it into cognisance and said anyone can use this kind of computer-generated statement to mislead the council.

"The owners/publishers of newspapers and other mass media sometimes publish/broadcast news to serve their own interest which goes against the ethics of journalism and they resort to negative competition against rivals. This practice should be considered as yellow journalism and responsible individuals should be brought to book and declared guilty," the council observed.

In the wake of political violence on the streets in 2006 and 2007, AL in its last electoral manifesto pledged to bring changes to the culture of confrontation in politics which hampers

Politics denied

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ruling and opposition camps -- demonstrate intensification of the culture of confrontation.

Thanks to the ruling party's indifference to its own promises to bring changes to the political culture, and the opposition parties' latest strategy to launch street agitation against the government on different issues -- the situation might deteriorate ahead of the next parliamentary election, observed political analysts.

Observing the current state of political culture, the Election Commission (EC), a constitutional body, on Monday expressed anxiety about the possible political atmosphere ahead of the next parliamentary election.

It said the country might face another political turmoil before the next parliamentary election if the culture of confrontation in politics does not change, and that will have a negative impact on the possibility of holding a free and fair election.

The EC also cited the debate over formation and the role of the caretaker government that will assist the next EC in holding the next parliamentary poll in early 2014.

Political analysts said the situation might worsen if there is no consensus on the appointment of the chief adviser to the next caretaker government, and formation of the new EC in early next year, after the retirement of the incumbent chief election commissioner and the other two election commissioners.

Since restoration of democracy, through a mass upsurge against autocratic ruler HM Ershad in 1990, the country witnessed waves of general strikes as part of anti-government agitation, and political unrest ahead of parliamentary polls.

Quader hoped that the government will take an initiative within its current tenure to establish a positive political culture in the country.

When his attention was drawn to the EC's observation, Quader said the EC's remark was too early. "It should not have made such a remark hurriedly," Quader, chief of the parliamentary standing committee on information ministry, told The Daily Star on Tuesday.

A member of the AL advisory council, Suranjit Sengupta, however echoed the EC. "The culture of confrontation in politics must be transformed into a culture of consensus," he told The Daily Star.

Suranjit, also the co-chair of the parliamentary special committee on constitutional amendment, cited the committee's move to hold talks with top political leaders and constitutional experts, and said the practice of forming

political consensus will gain ground one day through such moves.

Main opposition BNP's national standing committee member, MK Anwar, however thinks the possibil-

ity of bringing change to the political culture is very slim, as the premier herself has been hurting people's sentiment through her use of aggressive language.

"Tolerance and decency will be developed in the political culture and efforts will be taken to formulate a code of conduct acceptable to all," reads the AL electoral manifesto that contributed to the party's overwhelming victory in the December 29, 2008 parliamentary poll.

It also pledged reforms for ensuring democratic practices within political parties, and promised to take all measures necessary to make the parliament more effective.

Later, in July 2009, ruling AL amended its party manifesto declaring it would make it mandatory to hold discussions in the parliament on various important national issues, and would build a consensus against the culture of House boycott.

Oaidul Quader, an AL presidium member, said, "It is true that the government has more responsibilities, because there is a matter of taking the initiative. But we couldn't do so since we had to deal with some other crucial issues."

He said there must be a joint effort from both the ruling and opposition parties to bring a positive change to the political culture through compromise, accommodation, and adjustment.

AL General Secretary and LGRD Minister Syed Ashraful Islam however recently said without holding trials of war criminals and the perpetrators of the August 21, 2004 grenade attack on an AL rally, and curbing of militancy -- it is not possible to bring a positive change to the political culture.

Since 1991 to March 24 this year, successive parliaments including the current one had 1,362 sittings, 677 of which were boycotted by opposition lawmakers.

The ninth parliament, constituted through the last general election, was expected to bring change, as it was termed "a parliament for change".

But the current parliament so far failed to deliver on the promises. Instead of encouraging tolerance, politics seems to have deteriorated to quite an extent.

Going with the culture of House boycott, BNP-led opposition lawmakers boycotted most of the sittings of the current parliament, as they joined only 51 out of a total 207 sittings till March this year.

BNP is now planning to wage anti-government street agitation which might strengthen gradually ahead of the next parliamentary election.

Just like in the past, ruling AL activists and supporters might also come out on the streets to foil the opposition's agitation, which in turn might trigger clashes between the two arch rivals.

The Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh
Disaster and Climate Risk Management in Agriculture Project
(CDMP Phase-II/DAE Part)
Department of Agricultural Extension (DAE)
Khamarbari, Dhaka-1215.

Memo No.: dcrma/dae/recruitment/2011-02

Recruitment

Date: 20/04/2011

Department of Agricultural Extension (DAE) announces vacancy for the following positions for Disaster and Climate Risk Management in Agriculture Project under the Comprehensive Disaster Management Programme (CDMP Phase-II). The duration of the contract for all positions is one year initially and subject to renewal on an annual basis upon satisfactory performance up to the completion of the project.

1. Agricultural Risk Management Analyst- 01 Position
2. Programme Assistant- 12 Positions
3. Finance and Admin Assistant- 01 Position
4. Project Assistant (HQ)- 01 Position

For details of the Terms of Reference (ToR) and instructions to apply, please visit the following websites: <http://www.dae.gov.bd> and www.cdmp.org.bd. Applications should be submitted to the following address no later than 10 May, 5:00 PM local time.

"Only short listed candidates will be contacted, submitted documents will not be returned to the applicants".

Dr. Abu Wali Rahib Hassan

Project Director

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Interested candidates are requested to send their applications along with CV, a recent passport size photograph and attested photocopies of academic certificates before/by May 2, 2011 to:

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