

Brokers fleece

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lished a circular in a local newspaper asking the Bangladeshi migrants not to pay any money to the brokers. He said some companies would be commissioned to do the registration work but the Malaysian government has yet to announce their names.

There are an estimated 5 lakh Bangladeshis in Malaysia and over 3 lakh are believed to be irregular who have been facing threats of arrest and deportation. They have long been waiting for the chance of amnesty or regularisation, said the councillor.

Malaysia on June 22 officially announced that the government will do registration of the irregular foreign workers in two weeks' time from July 11. The migrants, who get registered in the period, will be regularised or repatriated as per their wish within next six months.

For not getting registered within the deadline, workers will face punishment, said Mahmood Adam, secretary general of Malaysia's home ministry, on June 23 as reported online newspaper malaysiakini.com.

He said the registration will be free and it would be unlawful for any agents or employers to charge the immigrants.

He, however, said employers have to pay for work permits of their workers. To ensure that the immigrants are not made to pay the money the government would pursue various engagement processes with employers.

Robbers loot

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gunpoint, the gang looted the ornaments after breaking showcases within a few minutes.

The miscreants left the scene in a CNG-run auto-rickshaw kept in front of the market, locals said.

Nusrat Sultana, daughter of shop owner Ali Akbar Khan, told The Daily Star, around 1,000 tolas of gold might have been looted from the shop.

She suspects involvement of the staff in the robbery.

"Only the heavy ornaments were picked up. It was not possible for someone unfamiliar with the shop to select the best in such a short time," said Sultana, who runs the shop.

Sultana said the shop was opened in the morning as usual, but was closed for Jumm'aprayers.

It was again opened at 1:56pm, she quoted a staff named Shamim as saying. Only after 15 minutes, Shamim informed her over the phone about the robbery.

An employee of a nearby shop said around 2:00pm he heard something broke. He came to know of the robbery a few minutes later when the salesmen of the jewellery shop cried for help.

Shopkeepers of Iqbal Centre said a security guard is posted at the market entrance, but he was absent during the robbery.

This correspondent during a visit to the ornament shop, found blood stains on floor, showcases and the ornaments.

Police said they could not immediately ascertain the loss.

Khondoker Lutful Kabir, deputy commissioner for Gulshan Division of Dhaka Metropolitan Police, said there was no security guard at the main gate while three close circuit cameras of the shop were dysfunctional.

Police picked up seven persons, including the four employees of the shop and three security guards of the market, for interrogation, he said.

Limon

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performers. They also snatched microphones and broke instruments, said Rahnuma.

The crowd could catch one of the attackers and handed him over to police, she said.

"We don't know why they made the attack, and we couldn't recognise them."

Officer-in-Charge of Shahbagh Police Station Rezaul Karim said the detainee is an employee of a tailoring shop. He said the audiences mistook him for one of the attackers.

Meanwhile, participants of the drama organised by Songkhubdho Nagorik Samaj demanded withdrawal of the cases against Limon and the government's compensation to him.

Rapid Action Battalion shot 16-year-old Limon, a college student, in his left leg at Chhaturia of Rajapur, Jhalakathi on March 23. Later, his leg had to be amputated.

Hope for talks

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avert a possible political turmoil in the coming days but they cannot raise their voices within their parties fearing they might be misunderstood by others as paranoia has grown in the parties during the last emergency period.

The leaders strongly believe that the chiefs of Awami League and BNP are not well advised by leaders they rely on.

"Negotiations should immediately start between the two camps behind the scenes, if it is not possible to hold formal talks right now. The nation will be gripped by another political turmoil if things go unbridled like this," a senior Awami League leader told The Daily Star last week.

Echoing the same, a BNP policy maker said the door for talks should never be closed. If the door is closed, politics will be on the streets hampering people's lives, he said.

Amid such a situation, Law Minister Shafique Ahmed is scheduled to place in parliament today the much-talked-about constitutional amendment bill proposing changes in the country's charter including scrapping of the provisions for the caretaker government system, sources in the Parliament Secretariat said.

After the bill is placed, it will be sent to the parliamentary standing committee on the law ministry for scrutiny, opening a window for holding talks between treasury and opposition bench lawmakers at the committee level.

However, BNP's representative to the committee Salauddin Quader Chowdhury is behind bars on charge of war crimes and the party has not named a substitute.

"If they write to the leader of the House proposing the name of a party MP to be included in the committee in place of Salauddin, it is possible to reconstitute the committee without any difficulty since the House is now in session," committee chief Suranjit Sengupta said.

On proposing an MP for the standing committee on the law ministry, BNP policy maker Moudud Ahmed, however, said they will not choose another MP. "Who will listen to the opposition's voice? They will not pay any heed to our proposals. So we are not considering it," Moudud said.

Parliamentary affairs experts said it is possible to forge a consensus on a new model of the caretaker government system, if they want it, and changes could be brought to the bill. The experts said the ruling and the opposition MPs often reach a consensus on various issues at committee level discussions.

But for this both sides should reach a political understanding outside of the committee, they observed.

BNP lawmakers regularly join different committee meetings even though they remain absent from House proceedings. But if the ongoing political situation remains unchanged, possibility of the opposition's return to the House is very slim.

"Yes, the committee can work as a platform to reach a consensus between the ruling and opposition parties. In that case, the opposition should come to the House or the committee with an open mind to discuss the bill," Suranjit Sengupta told The Daily Star Wednesday.

Suranjit said political consensus is necessary to reintroduce the caretaker government system after its nullification by the Supreme Court.

Asked whether the committee will invite BNP for its opinion on the proposed changes to the constitution, Suranjit said the committee may discuss it at the meeting. If its members want, they may invite the BNP to send a delegation to the committee to express their opinion on the bill, he said.

Talking to The Daily Star over the telephone Thursday, Moudud Ahmed brushed aside any possibility of joining the committee meeting during scrutiny of the bill or the House during passage of the proposed legislation.

"We don't want to be part of the process of legalising the amendment to the constitution. Is there any instance of changing a bill which was approved by the cabinet at the committee?" asked Moudud, also former law minister.

"We see the demise of democracy in the country," he said.

Talking to The Daily Star on condition of anonymity, a senior BNP leader said the BNP chief may take a more tough stance against the government after her son's conviction in a money laundering case.

The Supreme Court on May 10 prospectively declared the caretaker government system unconstitutional and void, but observed that the system might be used for holding two more general elections for the sake of "safety of the state and its people"--provided parliament approved it.

Despite the court's ruling, the parliamentary special committee on constitutional amendment was actually in favour of keeping the caretaker government system by bringing some changes to the provision. But the prime minister did not agree with the special committee's proposals.

In defiance of the proposal for scrapping the provision, the government is depending on the Supreme Court verdict. The government seems to have started using the caretaker government issue to keep the opposition under pressure.

The BNP seems to have opted for waging street agitation against the government instead of trying to find a solution through talks.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina in June urged BNP to return to parliament to discuss any new formula for the caretaker government.

In response, Opposition Leader and BNP chief Khaleda Zia a few days later in a press conference said her party will sit with the government to discuss who will lead the next caretaker government announces that the system will continue and the provision will be kept in the constitution as it is.

5 killed

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"It was drizzling when the Dhaka-bound pick-up hit the truck from behind at about 12:30am. The labourers were loading vegetables in the truck at that time," said Sakhawat Hossain, sub-inspector of Shibpur Police Station.

Sources said, the pick-up hit the truck after its driver lost control over the steering, leaving five people dead on the spot.

Of the injured, Idris Mia, 34, Shahadat, 35, Tara Mia, 22, Pagle, 30, Momtaj, 40, had been admitted to Narsingdi Sadar Hospital in critical condition, while the others received primary treatment.

Police seized both the vehicles, but their drivers and helpers managed to escape.

The bodies were sent to the hospital morgue for autopsies.

30,000 trees

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were in Patuakhali and the rest in Bhola section, said Devdas, range officer of Char Montaz.

A three-member police team from Rangabali Police Station in Galachipa upazila reached the spot around 5:00pm on Thursday. Seeing the law enforcers the locals stopped felling the trees and left the scene, he added.

The police force was not strong enough to arrest any of the offenders, Mizanur Rahman, sub-inspector of Rangabali Police Station told The Daily Star.

Patuakhali forest department filed a case with Rangabali Police Station on Friday naming nine people and another 400 unnamed people for their alleged involvement in the incident.

Samutang

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following installation of gas processor lines and transmission line.

The gas field will add 18 to 20 million cubic feet gas to the national grid daily through the Karnaphuli transmission line, said Petrobangla General Manager and Project Director Shahiduzzaman Khan.

Samutang field spreading over 21 acres of land was discovered in 1963 by a British company.

Several attempts were taken earlier to extract gas from it but due to the incidents of abduction and extortion in the area the process was delayed.

Karnaphuli Gas Distribution Company has already started laying 65-kilometre gas pipeline from Samutang field to Chittagong main line.

Jamiul Ahsan, drilling-in-charge of the gas field, said the drilling of well No 5 has been completed successfully. It has been observed that the pressure of gas is huge in that well.

The volume of gas reserve in the field could be estimated after drilling of one more well, he added.

As per a decision of Ecneec in 2009, Bangladesh Petroleum Exploration and Production Company Ltd (Bapex) started work with a target of lifting gas from the Samutang field first by 2011 and then by 2013.

8 held

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drive at a programme and seized 49 bottles of liquor and 270 cans of beer at about 12:10am.

A case was filed in this connection, said Sirajul Islam, officer-in-charge of Ashulia Police Station.

BNP

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between the ruling party men and BNP activists over dropping tender documents of a construction work of Sirajganj municipality on June 15.

Mostafa Harun, officer-in-charge of Sirajganj Sadar Police Station, said Mokaddes was arrested in a case filed for attacking law enforcers.

BNP staged demonstrations in Sirajganj yesterday and will hold rallies protesting the arrest today.

Efforts

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Manzur Hossain said a plastic surgery will be needed to bring her nose back to shape.

Meanwhile, Stephen Toope, president of the University of British Columbia (UBC), said a number of fundraising efforts for Rumana are underway.

"UBC is also working to prepare options for Ms Manzur to complete her master's degree in political science," Toope said in a letter. "While this cannot, of course, be Rumana's immediate priority, we want her to know that everyone at UBC is thinking of her and of her future," reports CBC news in Canada.

Dhaka University authorities have agreed to provide legal assistance for Rumana. She will also continue to hold her post at the university.

DU Vice-chancellor Prof AAMS Arefin Siddique gave the assurance following a request from her family, said Prof Delwar Hossain, chairman of the International Relations Department.

SUMON REMANDED AGAIN

Hasan Sayeed Sumon was yesterday remanded for another day in a case filed for torturing his wife.

Grabbers defy all

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Authority (BIWTA) and the district administration have filed around a dozen cases against the illegal sand traders and river grabbers.

"Police have not yet taken action against the offenders," he said, "I talked to the police superintendent several times but to no avail."

Also, BIWTA wrote to Narayananj sadar, Siddhirganj, Rupganj, Sonargaon, Demra and port police stations at least twelve times since January 2009 to lodge cases against the unauthorised traders and stop further encroachment.

Kanchpur is under Siddhirganj Police Station. Its OC Qamrul Alam Mollah, however, said, "I have neither received a complaint nor am I aware of such encroachment into the river."

Port authorities on May 16 wrote to the Siddhirganj OC for filing case specifically against seven encroachers identified as Shajahan Prodan, Nuruzzaman, Shahidullah, Jahangir Hossain, MH Monir, Khokon Devnath and Based Mian.

Despite repeated attempts over the phone, none of the traders was available for their versions.

Narayananj SP Shaikh Nazmul Alam said he was unaware of the issue as he took over just a month back. "I will look into why police have not taken action."

In June 2009, the HC ordered eviction of all illegal structures and stop to the earth-filling along the Buriganga, Shitalakkhya, Turag and Balu rivers, with the police as respondents.

It also directed the officers-in-charge concerned to be vigilant against river encroachment.

Meanwhile, authorities have identified around 60 unauthorised traders destroying the river at Shimrail, Anti and other moujas.

They unload bulkhead vessels carrying sand, earth, boulders and other materials filling up river foreshores and bed. A number of politically-blessed local thugs control

the whole affair, said sources.

During a recent visit to the site, the river's navigable channel was found choked with earth-filling.

Narayananj river port officials of BIWTA requested the deputy commissioner four times for mobile court operation against the encroachers.

But the DC said there was no "strong" law to effectively use mobile courts against river grabbers.

However, Syeda Rizwana Hasan, chief executive of Bangladesh Environmental Lawyers Association, said the mobile court could be conducted even under Penal Code and Criminal Procedure Code to check encroachment.

The port officials a year back requested higher authorities of BIWTA for dredging of the river and construction of retaining walls at Kanchpur site. But nothing has been done yet.

BIWTA Director (port) Mahbul Alam said, "I made a verbal proposal in this regard."

BIWTA and district administration jointly conducted eviction drives at the site at least ten times since 2006 till last October and excavated some of the filled-up places.

They removed 525 illegal structures during March 2010 and January this year.

But the encroachers soon came back and filled up the river at Kanchpur, Shimrail, Anti, Joka, Siddhirganj and Ruposhi moujas.

And the river lost navigability. Records show there are at least 138 earth-filled areas along the Shitalakkhya.

Some 65 traders were permitted by BIWTA to do business on the Shitalakkhya foreshores at Kanchpur. But their licences have not been renewed, said Mahbul Alam of BIWTA.

Though the Shitalakkhya along with Buriganga, Balu and Turag were declared ecologically critical, environment department has yet to take action against the encroachers.

BNP questions

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According to the rules, he observed, only Bangladesh Bank, not the Anti-Corruption Commission, can file such cases.

Briefing journalists at the BNP headquarters in the capital's Nayapalton, he also said, "The verdict in Koko's case came very quickly...within 17 days and totally unfairly. He has been denied justice."

The same day, Law Minister Shafique Ahmed said Koko has to return from abroad to seek bail or appeal against the verdict. "The court has delivered the judgment after hearing the witnesses and assessing the evidence. Those who are commenting on the verdict should have respect for the court."

He also said the ACC filed and moved the case independently; there was no pressure from the government.

The minister was speaking at a programme of the Inner Wheel District 328, a voluntary service organisation of female Rotarians.

On Thursday, Koko and Ismail Hossain Simon, son of former shipping minister and BNP leader Col (ret) Akbar Hossain, were sentenced to six years' rigorous imprisonment and fined Tk 38.83 crore each for laundering around Tk 20 crore bribe money to Singapore.

Koko's lawyer Sanaulah Mia yesterday said his client will lodge an appeal with the High Court against the verdict once he has fully recovered from illness.

According to laws, Koko will have to surrender before the trial court within 30 days of the verdict's delivery to appeal against the conviction. Sanaulah said, "There's also a provision for the High Court to grant a delay [in filing an appeal] for up to 6,000 days on proper grounds. Koko is now under treatment in Bangkok and his health condition is not good."

Earlier, at the press conference, Fakhrul alleged that the government is trying to smear the Zia family as part of its policy to repress the opposition.

Citing recent statements of the prime minister and the ruling party leaders about cases against BNP's Senior

Munir Chowdhury, director (enforcement) of Department of Environment, said he would soon conduct eviction drive at the site.

Star-DHL

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members, and academics. Commerce Minister Faruk Khan is scheduled to attend the ceremony, Bangladesh Business Awards 2010, as the chief guest.

The award aims to publicly acknowledge the precious contributions of the companies and individuals in Bangladesh business, to create an environment for entrepreneurship and to improve the standards of corporate management.

The Daily Star, the country's most-read English newspaper, and DHL Express, an international express mail service provider, introduced the award also to illustrate the depth of talent in the country, making it one of the most prestigious accolades that crown private sector luminaries and start-ups.

In just a decade after its inception in 2000, the award has become Bangladesh's premier recognition platform for businesses.

At its eleventh edition, the awards are given in five categories: Best Financial Institute, Best Enterprise, Best Business Person of the Year, Outstanding Woman in Business and Lifetime Achievement.

Its former winners include Mirza Ali Behrouze Ispahani, chairman of MM Ispahani Ltd; Mohammed Mizanur Rahman, chairman of PHP Group; Md Saiful Islam, chairman of Western Marine Shipyards; Geeteara Safiya Choudhury, chairman of Adcomm Ltd; KM Rezaul Hasanat, managing director of Viyellatex Group, and also companies like Pubali Bank Ltd, Brac Bank and BRB Cables Industries.

Explosions

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the number of casualties would have been higher.

A bomb was also blamed for an explosion in an unoccupied house opposite a market in Naypyitaw, the new capital about 205 miles north of Yangon, at about 12:20pm (0550 GMT).

"It was very powerful. We all heard a very loud explosion," said a government official who had been in a bookshop near the market at the time.

"So far as I heard, there were no casualties. Security officials are now combing the area," said the official, who asked not to be named.

The third explosion hit Pyin Oo Lwin, a town about 45 miles north of Mandalay, at about 12:30pm (0600 GMT), the Mandalay shopkeeper told Reuters after speaking with relatives living there.

Also known as May Myo, Pyin Oo Lwin is a garrison town as well as a hill resort, home to four military institutes including the elite Defence Services Academy.

The fourth explosion went off at about 3:00pm (0830 GMT) in the same part of Mandalay as the earlier blast, near a rubbish dump. No casualties were reported, the shopkeeper said.

There have been about half a dozen bomb blasts in Myanmar cities, including Naypyitaw and the Kachin State capital, Myitkyina, in the past few weeks.

3 suspected

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presence of the law enforcers, most of them fled.

The police could arrest Mahi Chowdhury, 20, of Takerbazar in Sylhet sadar, Imran Hossain, 21, of Kakordi in Beanibazar upazila, and Zuman Chowdhury, 20, of the city's Kuarpar area. They all are students of class eleven of Madan Mohan College.

Some leaflets with anti-government slogans were also recovered during the raid.

A case was filed with Kotwali Police Station. The arrestees will be produced before the Judicial Magistrate's Court today, said police sources.

It's a warning

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"There is nothing to get excited about the verdict. I am personally unhappy," he said. "The judgment proves we have to suffer dire consequences if we fail to make our children good human beings."

On Wednesday, Koko, younger son of Opposition Leader Khaleda Zia, and Ismail Hossain Saimon, son of former shipping minister late Akbar Hossain, were sentenced to six years' rigorous imprisonment for laundering more than Tk 20 crore to Singapore.

This is the first ever verdict in any case against a member of the Zia family.

BNP Chairperson Khaleda and her two sons -- Tarique Rahman and Koko -- stand accused in 22 cases, nineteen of which were filed during the rule of last caretaker regime and three during the present government's tenure.

Immediately after the verdict, BNP termed the judgment "politically motivated".

However, Ashraf, also LGRD and cooperatives minister, said the government did not have a hand in the judgment and the main opposition's allegation is false and baseless.

The Anti-Corruption Commission filed the case against Koko during the immediate past interim government's rule, he said adding, the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), an agency of the US, had sent the commission all the information about the money laundering.

"As the case has not been filed by the present government, there is no scope of political mudslinging."

It is, however, sad that the son of freedom-fighter and late president Ziaur Rahman and two-time prime minister Khaleda Zia had been found corrupt, the minister said.

Had Ziaur Rahman and Khaleda Zia been careful about their sons, this unexpected situation could have been averted, said Ashraf, who is also the spokesperson of the AL-led grand alliance government.

He said there is still scope for going to High Court over the matter and he would be happy if Koko comes out clean.

AL leaders Mahbul Alam Hanif, Dipu Moni, Khalid Mahmud Chowdhury, Nuh-ul-Alam Lenin, Afzal Hossain and Mrinal Kanti Das, among others, were present at the briefing.

Triple blasts

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One bomb went off near Husseiniya, a place of worship for Shia Muslims, reports said.

"I was on my way to the market when the first bomb blew up. People ran to see what's going on and the second one blew up," Sijad, a teenager who lives in the area, told Reuters news agency.

"Suddenly there were bodies everywhere around me, most of them women and children, and their things were scattered everywhere."

Ali al-Haidari, who suffered a shrapnel wound to the back, said he had tried to rescue two children from the scene.

Niko admits

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The company agreed to a statement of facts read in court.

The bribes were made after explosions at one of Niko's natural gas fields -- Tengratila in Bangladesh -- resulted in protests in a nearby village and elevated concerns about the environment surrounding the property, reports AP.

AKM Mosharrar resigned on June 18, 2005 after the then prime minister Khaleda Zia asked him to stand down.

He had received a luxury car from Niko Resources which was blamed for the Tengratila gas field explosion early January 2005.