

New KSA

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ate with the Saudi government so that its workers are not made scapegoats of the system.

"The government should study the Saudi programme to act promptly."

However, this is not the first spark of "Saudization".

The Saudi government had already been restricting job transfers of Bangladeshis for the last three years, said officials and expatriates in the oil-rich country.

Foreigners also bear the brunt of employers' failure in paying premiums for social insurance of workers.

"Saudi authorities are not renewing our work permits as our employer has not paid premium for our social insurance," said Fazlur Rahman, a Bangladeshi working at a telecom company in Riyadh.

The company never bothered to pay the premium, he said. As the outstanding amount grew high, the Saudi government blacklisted the firm and stopped renewing their permits.

"I live here with my family. My daughter is scheduled to go to the US for studies, but cannot leave only because my work permit is not being renewed," said Fazlur Rahman.

Fakhrul Basher Masum, who has been working there for many years, estimated around 10,000 Bangladeshis are stranded there because of the rule. Around a thousand companies were blacklisted for defaulting on paying premiums.

The foreigners cannot go back home even if they want to return forever. Even if an expatriate dies, the rule prohibits sending the body home. "Why should the foreigners suffer for employers' fault?" he said.

Haroon Or Rashid, first secretary (labour) at Bangladesh embassy in Riyadh, said the rule is in place for long, but not been enforced. Now that Saudi government is strictly enforcing it, the defaulter companies and their foreign workers could be in trouble.

Indian HC

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hotel suit on Wednesday.

In the meeting, Khaleda hoped that people of the both countries will be mutually benefited following the Indian premier's visit.

"Indian high commissioner met the BNP chairperson to invite her for a formal meeting. This is the first time the Indian government has invited the Bangladesh opposition leader to meet their premier," Shamser Mobin Chowdhury, vice chairman of BNP, told reporters after the meeting.

"...the high commissioner hoped that the visit will make a positive contribution to enhance bilateral relations," he added.

Party's acting Secretary General Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir and chairperson's advisers Reaz Rahman and Sabihuddin Ahmed were present in the meeting.

Meanwhile, Foreign Minister Dipu Moni yesterday at a briefing said the opposition leader and leaders of Awami League and grand alliance will meet Manmohan on Wednesday.

Protocol

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Therefore, tomorrow's summit meeting will instead set the deadline for its signing, the sources add.

A joint working committee will be formed for identifying routes, fixing fees and setting rules for transit.

The issues were discussed at a meeting among the ministries concerned at the Prime Minister's Office yesterday.

Also yesterday, Foreign Minister Dipu Moni told a press briefing that the two countries will sign a letter of exchange on different protocols on transit during the Indian prime minister's visit.

Once the framework

Mamata's no

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have conveyed her decision to the Indian prime minister's office through the chief secretary of Paschimbanga.

Her decision followed Dhaka's formal announcement of finalising a 15-year interim agreement on Teesta water-sharing to be signed by the water resources ministers of the two countries in Dhaka tomorrow.

It is understood that Mamata has voiced strong reservations about the interim Teesta water-sharing treaty worked out by Dhaka and Delhi.

Indian TV channel Star Ananda said the chief minister objected to reported difference between the draft treaty and the final document which is to be signed during Mammotha's visit.

According to the channel, she felt the treaty would be "detrimental" to the interests of Paschimbanga.

The Teesta is a key river for at least six districts of the northern part of Paschimbanga in matters of irrigation and drinking water.

Contacted, a top official of Bangladesh water resources ministry said Dhaka already got written commitment from Delhi about a fair deal on the Teesta water.

"Her (Mamata's) change of decision about Dhaka visit won't hamper the signing of the treaty," said the official on condition of anonymity.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's international affairs adviser Gowher Rizvi also said Mamata's decision not to visit Dhaka with Prime Minister Manmohan Singh would not affect the outcome of the premier's visit, UNB adds. "Her [Mamata's] concern is not directed at Bangladesh. It is something between West Bengal and New Delhi," he said.

In Delhi, an official of Indian external affairs ministry said the Paschimbanga chief minister was well informed about the content of the pact as she was consulted three times before finalising it.

Indian National Security Adviser Shiv Shankar Menon and Water Resources Secretary Dhrub Vijay Singh met her in Kolkata last week

3 held after

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Friday evening with head injuries. He was injured earlier on the day after a vehicle hit him from behind in Faridpur town. He died on Saturday afternoon at the hospital.

Family members and friends of Sumon made the complaint when Health Minister AFM Ruhal Haque was paying a surprise visit to the hospital on Saturday. The minister assured them of taking action against the doctors if the allegation was proved true.

Minutes after the minister's departure, some friends and relatives of Sumon staged a demonstration inside the hospital in protest against the death. They were also locked into a scuffle with policemen of DMCH police camp.

The police picked up Sumon's friends Ratan and Hanif from the spot and sent them to Shahbagh Police Station.

The police also conducted a raid at the city's

No new deal

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legal instrument for such transit protocols.

The foreign minister further said Dhaka and New Delhi will sign an interim agreement on sharing the water of Teesta river on the basis of "equity". However, she would not provide details about the rate of sharing before the deal is signed.

She said Singh's talks with Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina are expected to take the relations between the two countries to a new height.

"This is going to be a historic visit, important not only for Bangladesh and India but for the region," she said.

The two leaders will sign a framework agreement spelling out a comprehensive long-term cooperation between their nations, Dipu Moni said without providing further details.

Once the framework

Ajit Roy

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of the Opposition in Parliament Khaleda Zia in separate messages expressed their condolence at his death.

Mamata was due to come to Dhaka to join the chief ministers of four other Indian states -- Manik Sarkar of Tripura, Tarun Gogoi of Assam, Mukul Sangma of Meghalaya and Lal Thanhawla of Mizoram.

Presence of the five chief ministers would demonstrate that the five states are on board with the pacts on exchange of adversely-held enclaves, border demarcation and water-sharing that Bangladesh and India are going to sign during Singh's visit.

Mamata's Trinamool Congress party with 19 Lok Sabha members is the second largest component of the Congress-led ruling UPA.

We won't give up UN bid'

Say Palestinians

AFP, Ramallah

The Palestinians will not be deterred from seeking United Nations membership, a senior official said here yesterday, after reports Washington was trying to head off their bid.

The Palestinians are going to the UN Security Council to ask for recognition for the state of Palestine on the 1967 borders... and there is no turning back or other choice than that this one," said leading Palestinian official Nabil Shaath.

"There is no alternative to this decision and no going back on it and if the United States vetoes it, we will continue to knock on the door of the UN Security Council seeking full Palestinian UN membership," he told AFP.

The comments from Shaath, a member of the Fatah party led by Palestinian president Mahmud Abbas, came after The New York Times reported that Washington was trying to put together a new peace talks proposal that would convince the Palestinians to hold off seeking membership at the United Nations.

Abul refutes

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"work," he said at a press conference at his secretariat office yesterday.

The US cable published by the whistle-blowing website WikiLeaks on August 30 quoted Moriarty labelling Abul Hossain "less than honest" a man in business dealings. Citing the cable, the Bangladeshi media yesterday ran reports on this.

Giving his reaction, Abul Hossain questioned, "What is the barometer of honesty?"

He said he does not understand what "less than honest" means although the media explained it in various ways.

"I strongly suspect whether Moriarty made such a remark about me at all."

Defending himself, the minister said, "I'm an honest and a dedicated man. I'm a proven honest man."

He added that the BNP-led four-party alliance government and the caretaker government did not find any evidence of corruption against him despite repeated investigations.

About the media reports quoting the cable, he said, "The media should have verified with the US embassy in Dhaka as to whether the report was sent by Moriarty."

"Moriarty is still alive. You can ask him if he has said anything like that."

He alleged that the media did not act suitably in this regard. "I'm trying to deliver with efficiency, sincerity and honesty. But reporting without verification of the truthfulness of the US cable was embarrassing for me as well as for the government."

He claimed he communicates all the development-related decisions to the Transparency International to avoid confusion.

She said deals will be signed also on sharing the water of Feni river, demarcation of 6.5-kilometre stretch of un-demarcated common border, and transfer of enclaves and adversely possessed lands.

The two sides will sign MoUs and protocols on extension of railway route from Rohanpur to Singabag, cooperation in the fields of renewable energy and fisheries, cooperation between Dhaka University and Jawaharlal Nehru University, telecast of BTV and Durdarshan programmes in both countries, conservation of the mangrove forest Sundarbans, and conservation of Royal Bengal Tigers.

Once the framework

City

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of the Opposition in Parliament Khaleda Zia in separate messages expressed their condolence at his death.

Zillur in his message said the renowned singer as an artist of Swadhin Bangla Betar Kendra had played a remarkable role during the 1971 Liberation War.

Ajit Roy's contribution to the national arts and culture would remain ever memorable in the minds of people, Hasina said.

Khaleda in her message said Roy was not only a singer but also a freedom fighter and teacher.

Roy was a veteran singer and composer of many timeless and patriotic songs including 'Ekti Bangladesh tumi jagroto janotar', 'Apomaney tumi shedin'.

The prominent Tagore singer received several awards including Swadhinata Padak (2000), Guniyan Padak, Sradhanjalipatro, Shabdoshainik Padak, Sequence Award (1988) and Begum Rokeya Padak.

He has also rendered playbacks in films including Reporter, Jibon thekey neya, Jeganey puri, Jamabhumi, Kothay jano dekhechi and Kashi.

Born in 1938, Ajit Roy was inspired by the spirit of the language movement and began singing in 1952.

Information Minister Abul Kalam Azad, Industries Minister Dilip Barua, among others, expressed their deep condolence at the death of Roy.

Several organisations including Bangladesh Sangat Parishad, Bangladesh Uddihi Shilpigosthi, Bangla Academy, Bangladesh Muktijoddha Sangsad, Aino Salish Kendra, Bangladesh Mahila Parishad in separate messages expressed their condolences at his death.

Highway turns

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vehicles plying 16 routes in the northern region and five routes in the south-western part, said Sanwar Hossain, officer-in-charge of Gorai Highway Police.

Direct road communication between the capital and northern districts was established through the inauguration of Bangabandhu Multipurpose Bridge and the two-lane highway in 1998.

Further extension of road links between the south-western region and Dhaka via the bridge led to a heavy traffic on the two-lane highway.

A steep rise in traffic on the motorway over the years resulted in higher number of accidents, said observers.

Moreover, violation of traffic rules, reckless driving, exceeding speed limits, overloaded vehicles, carrying passengers on bus roofs and pressing into service unfit vehicles contribute to

the increasing number of accidents on the highway, said officials at the road transport authority office.

Many drivers often flout traffic rules on the highway as the patrol police do not perform their duty properly, alleged a number of locals.

They demanded that the authorities ensure road safety and take stern action against reckless drivers.

Sergeant Mohammad Salahuddin of Elenga Highway Police said most drivers do not know the traffic rules on overtaking other vehicles. Besides, reckless drivers do not lower speed while crossing dangerous curves and battered bridges on the highway.

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