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Manpower agents must clean up their act



PHOTO: ZAHEDUL I KHAN

I am shocked to read that Bangladesh Association of International Recruiting Agencies (BAIRA) is threatening to stop manpower export because the government has decided to arrange manpower export to Malaysia. Ali Haider Chowdhury, general secretary of the Association, has claimed that government officers are too inexperienced to pick workers or arrange proper training for them. Is he suggesting that officials who have passed stringent civil service examinations and qualified to hold jobs in the government do not compare with some of the so-called recruiting agents that treat people seeking job abroad as migrant workers heartlessly? They even lure them into selling what little property they own to pay hefty fees to obtain poor-paying jobs under disgraceful conditions. I have personal experience about these agencies. I had to travel to Dubai and to Kuala Lumpur to rescue people I knew who were in the clutches of these agencies. In Kuala Lumpur, one person,

who had been sequestered in the airport for a week and was later given an inferior job and wanted to return home, was unable to do anything because these agencies kept those workers' passports in their control. I travelled to Malaysia and it was only with the intervention of the Bangladesh High Commission that I was able to get the man out of what amounted to indentured labour. Even then the broker did not permit me to see him and put him on another flight home purely out of spite. Two lakh taka was wasted on this misadventure. It is these vile practices that our government is trying to put an end to, and the Association should put more effort in cleaning up its own act than to protest the wise decision of the governments of Malaysia and Bangladesh.
Syed Hamde Ali
The Nawab Palace
Bogra

Are we advancing or regressing?

We are advancing fast on the crime curve! There are many new criminal activities that we come across, as we scan the dailies. This is a profession that is getting more expertise and specialisation! Today criminal activities have a large number of fields, and more are being added. Decades back, we started with thieves and pickpockets. Later came robbers and murderers. Now we have musclemen, child lifters, child molesters, rapists, wife beaters, hijackers, food polluters, traffickers, scalpers and the latest are computer hackers! There are more, which is beyond my recall, and I am sure readers can add on to the list. It all only deflects society's decadence and degeneration, day by day. The more we go forward into the modern age, the more criminalisation is being introduced! It seems that we are taking two steps back, for every step forward! One wonders what it will be like a decade hence. Only time will tell what lies ahead, but the signs are very depressing indeed!
S.A. Mansoor
Dhaka

India's dealings with Bangladesh

Interactions over time in myriad sectors show clearly how a mighty neighbour like India treats a smaller country like Bangladesh. Whatever little we export to India is always impeded by visible or hidden tariffs. On the other hand, India's huge export to Bangladesh ranging from pin to piano, so to speak, gobbles up our hard earned foreign exchange. As a lower riparian country Bangladesh has the right under international law to have a fair share of water downstream -- with 54 rivers originating from India crisscross Bangladesh before they pour into the Bay of Bengal. India perennially flouts such obligation and has a field day diverting waters building dam after dam without caring a fig. Examples are galore -- from Farakka to Tipaimukh to Teesta. What a horrific future lies in wait for an agrarian country like Bangladesh whose lifeline is water, one shudders to think. Bangladesh merrily ceded sovereignty over enclaves of Berubari and Angorpota in the early seventies pinning on India's commitment to cede Tin Bigha Corridor to marooned Bangladeshis of Dahagram. About wanton killing of innocent Bangladeshis along the common border by Indian border security forces -- the least said the better. India is a vast country and an emerging world power, economically and militarily. But it should not make a mistake about our independent spirit. Let nobody bully us indefinitely lest the sacrifices made by her in our War of Liberation might be misconstrued by our posterity.
Raihan Syed
Tennessee, USA



PHOTO: BANGLAWIRE.COM

Quader the right man for railway

I feel sad that Mr Obaidul Quader is no more the railways minister. I think Mr Quader is the fittest person to modernise Bangladesh Railway. There are many obstacles to modernising the railway. Inter-district bus owners often create pressure on the railway authorities not to add new trains in order to get enough passengers for their buses. Sometimes they offer bribes to the BR high officials for this purpose. To take hard decisions against these bus owners, Mr Quader was the right person. I request our Prime Minister to rethink this decision and reappoint Obaidul Quader as the railways minister again.
Sayeduddin
Shyamoli, Dhaka

Unfortunate!

Once I got a chance to visit a hydro-electricity project. There were two turbines to generate electricity. However, only one was functioning. I asked the engineer, "Why is it not working? Is the water insufficient or is it a technical problem?" He replied, "It is an order from the higher authorities not to run the turbine." I was utterly shocked to learn this when people are forced to live in the dark due to load shedding.
Miton Kumar Gupto
Phulbari Technical & BM Institute
Phulbari, Dinajpur

Theft inside govt. hospital

About a month ago, I was staying at a male ward in Mymensingh Medical College Hospital to look after my sick father. It was nearly 4 in the morning and almost all patients and their relatives were sleeping. Suddenly, I woke up hearing the scream of a woman. We thought she probably found her son dead. Her son was suffering from serious lung cancer. But to my utter surprise, I came to know that all her money went missing, which was her last savings for her son's treatment. I learned that this happens quite often here. Majority of the people who come to public hospitals for treatment are poor people. But the thieves do not spare them. Some hospital staff are allegedly involved in this. The hospital authorities should identify those people and punish them. They should take proper steps so that this type of theft never occurs in the hospital.
Mohammad Anisuzzaman
Bangabandhu Hall
Bangladesh Agricultural University

Show Meena on every TV channel



Meena Day has been observed on last Monday of September with the slogan that autism is not a problem in education if classmates are good friends. All the children in the class should extend a helping hand to the autistic child so that the child finds the environment congenial. Children can learn this good quality of cooperation from Meena. Meena is a cartoon where Meena herself is the central character who has a lot of good qualities such as: Meena goes to school regularly, helps her parents in doing household chores, brushes her teeth every day, washes her hand before and after meal, etc. She also knows about the bad consequences of early marriage and dowry. Children can be inspired from this cartoon and can do good work for their family and for society, which Meena does in this cartoon. But this cartoon is only shown on BTv. I request all concerned to air this cartoon on all the private channels on a regular basis with a view to instil the good qualities of Meena into the minds of children for a better society.
Md. Musfikur Rahman Jony
Baneswar
Rajshahi

The real fighters

There are people around us who struggle through all difficulties in their life. We hardly know about them. They are the real fighters. Their limitations can not stop them from going ahead. They do not give in. Seeing the way they struggle, one finds the strength and motivation not to give in. They are very ordinary people, yet they rise above all! The old man who sells hair combs and cotton buds on Farmgate over bridge is one of them. When you buy something from him and pay him the money, he will take the note and ask you which note this is to know if he has to give you any changes. Only then you will discover that he is visually challenged.
Cantara Wali

READERS respond

Here are some comments that came in response to Sunday's *The Daily Star* news report headlined "Rafique ready to head CG"

Translucent

Rafique-ul Huq acted for both parties during the past caretaker government. He also has very good links with both parties. Therefore, he would be a good choice for a transitional period.

Md Musa

But Huq is more pro-BNP than pro-AL and that is a big problem. However, he is anything but neutral.

Reaz Hassan

Since Barrister Rafique-ul Huq knows both the party leaders, there is no harm talking to them. But I pin no hope at all on such talks.

Islam

Barrister Rafique is undoubtedly, in my opinion, is impartial and a patriot and so far not a political trader. We want an enlightened and democratic Bangladesh.

Khondkar Abdus Saleque

Barrister Rafique is a courageous and well respected personality. Caretaker government is a dead concept after the constitutional amendment. Now if any interim government is formed, it has to be constituted of elected representatives. There can be discussions in parliament or elsewhere about the composition of it or who should be its chief.

Abu S Azad

With due respect I would request him not to spoil himself by getting involved in our confrontational politics. He should rather form a small group of respectable senior citizens and mediate between the two political parties to solve the present political crisis.

Elihan, UK

At this age, he has come forward to resolve the crisis, so created by the government. A set up was wilfully destroyed only to remain in power. PM's recent statement in New York brings no hope for the nation. Senior citizens should chalk out a respectable formula in our national interest.

Neutral

A difficult choice for him because one doubts whether he would stand the test of scrutiny by the non-partisan media. The most important thing is to propose a complete legal framework and the names and number of people who would join the government and run the election. This will be a permanent system to follow as a constitutional mandate.

Mehedi

A pleasant reminder

The power supply situation is said to have greatly improved over the year in Dhaka but at a great cost, making the lives of consumers more miserable. The prime minister has publicly mentioned that there would still be two hours of mandatory load shedding as a pleasant reminder of the suffering that people had go through during the time of the past regime. The announcement of the prime minister is no doubt a noble gesture. It is believed that the majority of the population i.e. 70% people were born after the independence of Bangladesh. This 70% of the population is not aware of how life used to be prior to 1971. I remember buying four eggs for 25 paisas, a maund of rice for 25 rupees, a gallon of gasoline for 6 rupees, a bottle of soda for 25 paisas and so on. These have now become the stories of the past. The late founding father of the nation Bangabandhu sacrificed his life for the cause of the common people so that they could live in peace. At present, perhaps four eggs cost 40 taka or more; one kg of coarse rice 25 taka or more; a litre of gasoline 90 taka or more; a bottle of soda 10 taka or more and so on. As a pleasant reminder, can the prime minister make yet another announcement to take us to a period, say, three to four decades back, twice a year, during the Eid festivals to remember the past!
Saleh Mohammad Ayub