



MIGRANTS IN MALAYSIA Employers start paying foreign workers' tax

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Around six lakh Bangladeshi migrants in Malaysia would be benefited as the Southeast Asian country's government has asked employers to pay the levy of foreign workers.

Malaysian Deputy Prime Minister Ahmad Zahid Hamidi on Friday said the employers would no longer be able to deduct the wages of their foreign workers for the levy or tax on their monthly income.

"Malaysian employers will be responsible for paying the levy of foreign workers beginning Sunday [yesterday]," reported The Star of Malaysia, quoting the minister.

The foreign workers employed in construction, manufacturing and service sectors were paying levy of Malaysian Ringgit 1,850 or equivalent to Tk 32,713, while workers in plantation and other sectors were paying MR 600 or equivalent Tk 10,610 annually since 2013.

"Foreign workers used to pay the levy since 2013. But employers in some companies paid the levy on behalf of the workers," Sayedul Islam, labour counsellor at the Bangladesh High Commission in Kuala Lumpur, told The Daily Star over phone.

About the Malaysian government's decision, he, however, said they had heard about it but had not received any official letter yet.

Ahmad Zahid, who is also the home minister, said the decision would be in effect from the application stage to the worker going back home.

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PHOTO: REUTERS
An injured woman is carried to an ambulance from a nightclub where a gun attack was carried out during a New Year party in Istanbul, Turkey, yesterday. Inset, flowers are placed next to Turkish police officers as they stand guard near the Reina nightclub. Story on page 1.

Children get their new books

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

As the day began yesterday children dressed up and rushed to their schools braving the morning chill to receive New Year gifts.

With a new set of textbooks in hand, they cheered at primary and secondary schools across the country after the education ministry distributed them for free marking the start of a new academic year.

Elated, some held those up in the air, some began flipping through the pages. The refreshing smell of new books hung in the air of the premises.

Like the last seven years, the government observed "Textbook Festival Day" at the start of 2017.

There was, however, a unique move this time to distribute more than 77,000 copies of pre-primary textbooks, written in five ethnic languages, to children from the ethnic minorities.

Besides, around 9,000 braille books were distributed to visually impaired

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'Govt making shady arms deals to stay in power'

Says Khaleda

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia yesterday accused the government of making "shady arms deal" with different countries in its own interest.

"Hasina's government is purchasing arms from different countries including India without floating any tender. Those arms are purchased in exchange for commission," she said while addressing a programme to mark the 38th anniversary of Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal at the Institute of Engineers' Bangladesh in the capital.

The government purchases arms from the countries that give an assurance of helping it to stay in power, the former premier said, citing particularly the name of India.

Greeting the country's people in the New Year, Khaleda asked her party leaders and activists to bring the BNP to power once again through movements and reorganisation of the party.



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RECRUITMENT OF JUDGES Delays result in cases piling up

ASHUTOSH SARKAR

Shortage of judges at the Supreme Court and other courts across the country is getting worse and creating a huge backlog of cases due to recruitment delays.

More than four lakh cases have been pending with the High Court, which currently has only 89 judges. Of them, three are currently serving as the judges of the International Crimes Tribunal to deal with war crimes cases.

Nine judges of the Appellate Division have been dealing with around 13,119 cases. Two of them are scheduled to go on retirement this year.

The lower courts have only 1,268 judges to deal with more than 27 lakh pending cases. At least 387 of 1,655 approved posts of such judges are vacant.

Considering the situation, Chief Justice Surendra Kumar Sinha has advised the government to appoint eight additional judges to the HC. He also stressed the need for doubling the number of lower court judges through fresh appointments.

On December 24, the chief justice told the National Judicial Conference, 2016 held at Bangabandhu International Conference Centre in Dhaka that he had to face difficulties in constituting HC benches as four of its judges were ill.

Justice SK Sinha added seven of the HC judges would go on retirement in 2017 and then he would have to face more difficulties while forming the benches.

"I advised the government to appoint eight additional judges to the High Court in August 2016 after a long discussion with the law minister. On mutual consent, a recommendation was sent to the government for appointing the judges, but the process was yet to see the light of day in four months," he said.

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Govt to revive Grameen Bank activities

Says finance minister

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Finance Minister AMA Muhith has said the government plans to strengthen Grameen Bank further so that the Nobel Prize winning microcredit lender becomes more relevant in changing times.

"I think we should revive it in a new style," he told reporters at his secretariat office yesterday.

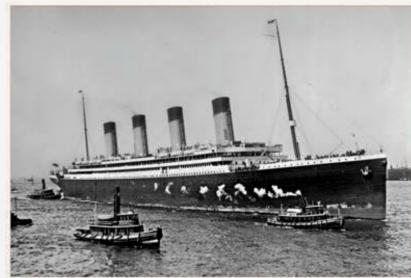
Muhith said when Grameen Bank was founded in 1983, it had two aims: to provide loans to the poorest and to make the habit of regular repayments.

"Both aims have already been achieved. There are many microcredit institutions like Grameen Bank in the country now."

"Grameen Bank is the pioneer. It should be relevant. We want to make it relevant."

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Fire, not Iceberg sank the Titanic!



INDEPENDENT.CO.UK

The sinking of the RMS Titanic may have been caused by an enormous fire on board, not by hitting an iceberg in the North Atlantic, experts have claimed, as new evidence has been published to support the theory.

More than 1,500 passengers lost their lives when the Titanic sank on route to New York from Southampton in April 1912.

While the cause of the disaster has long been attributed to the iceberg, fresh evidence has surfaced of a fire in the ship's hull, which researchers say burned unnoticed for almost three weeks leading up to the collision.

While experts have previously acknowledged the theory of a fire on board, new analysis of rarely seen photographs has prompted researchers to blame the

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Some TV talk show panelists misinterpret court decisions

Says Chief Justice SK Sinha

UNB, Moulvibazar

Mentioning that some "intellectuals" in TV talk shows misinterpret court decisions, Chief Justice SK Sinha yesterday urged them to refrain from this.

He made the call while addressing a rally after inaugurating the Chief Judicial Magistrate Bhaban in

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PRAYER TIMING JANUARY 2
Fazr Zohr Asr Maghrib Esha
AZAN 5:30 12:45 4:00 5:30 7:00
JAMAAT 6:05 1:15 4:15 5:35 7:30
SOURCE: ISLAMIC FOUNDATION

ATTACK ON HINDUS Nasirnagar AL leader placed on remand

A CORRESPONDENT, Brahmanbaria

A Brahmanbaria court yesterday placed Awami League leader Sheikh Abdul Ahad, who was arrested in connection with the October 30 attack on the Hindus in Nasirnagar, on a one-day police remand.

Senior Chief Judicial Magistrate Sharaf Uddin Ahmed granted the remand for Ahad, former joint secretary of Nasirnagar upazila unit AL and also former chairman of Sadar union of the upazila.

Mahabubur Rahman, court inspector, said investigation officer of the case Shawkat Hossain, sub-inspector (investigation) of Nasirnagar Police Station, prayed to the court for a five-day remand. The court granted a one-day remand.

Police arrested Ahad at his Ghoshpara house in the upazila town Tuesday afternoon. The following day, police sought a seven-day remand for Ahad. The

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A waterbus in the Buriganga. Irregular and poor service have led to people avoiding the much-hyped transport. A handful of passengers sitting inside a vessel, inset. The photos were taken recently.

PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

WATERBUS SERVICE IN DHAKA Getting worse every day

PANKAG KARMAKAR

With luggage in hand, Mehedi Hasan walked towards the city's Gabtoli landing station to catch a waterbus to Sadarghat.

The clock said noon and he looked worried as there was no vessel around. He was looking for someone to inform him about the waterbus service schedule.

Unfortunately, there was no one nearby. "A waterbus might be here later, but I don't know when," a street vendor told the passenger.

It was a huge frustration for Mehedi, an employee at a private hospital in Gazipur. He stood alone, looking at the river whether any waterbus came.

"I prefer travelling on waterways to roads. But I am in a dilemma over whether I should wait further," he told this correspondent on November 15.

Around 2:30pm, a waterbus with six passengers reached the landing station.

But his two-and-a-half-hour wait was far from over. The vessel would not start for Sadarghat for lack of passengers.

By around 4:00pm, some 40 passengers boarded the vessel and the journey had finally begun.

He reached Badamtoli terminal near Sadarghat around 5:15pm.

The trip is reflective of the overall standards of the waterbus service which is now on the verge of collapse.

The state-run Bangladesh Inland Water Transport Corporation (BIWTC) had introduced the service in August 2010 with two locally-made waterbuses to ease city traffic. Each of the 35-capacity vessels had cost the government around Tk 1.10 crore.

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