

# Reinstate 1,447 Ansar members

HC asks govt to consider those physically fit and have service age; the Ansars were dismissed following 1994 mutiny

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The High Court yesterday directed the government to reinstate to service some of the 1,447 Ansar members who were dismissed following the Ansar mutiny in 1994.

The Ansars, who can demonstrate physical fitness and are of service age, will be reinstated within four months following the HC order.

Additionally, the government will provide pension and other relevant facilities to those Ansars whose retirement ages have already expired, the court said.

The HC bench of Justice Sheikh Hassan Arif and Justice Md Badruzzaman came up with the verdict after hearing two separate writ petitions filed by the 1,447 dismissed Ansars.

The Ansars, in the petition, said they gained acquittal from the com-

petent court at different times in the case filed following the Ansar mutiny.

The petitioners said that they applied to the authorities concerned of the government in 2000 for reinstating their services but the authorities did not do so.

According to private news agency UNB, hundreds of Ansar members stood in rebellion against the authorities in 1994 raising different demands.

The mutiny was controlled with the help of army interference.

Following the incident, a case was filed against 2,696 Ansar members leading to their termination.

Later in the trial proceedings, a large number of Ansar men were acquitted of the mutiny charges, and 1,447 of them filed petitions with the High Court seeking their jobs back.

Advocate Syed Jahangir Hossain appeared for the petitioners.



United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees Filippo Grandi during his visit to a registered refugee camp at Kutupalong in Cox's Bazar yesterday. Filippo arrived in Dhaka on Saturday on a three-day trip to discuss the refugee situation.

PHOTO: STAR

# Big opportunity

FROM PAGE 1

Some of the East and South-East Asian countries have invested heavily in human resource development, in particular education and health, to achieve a higher economic growth rate during their time of demographic dividend when most citizens work, they said.

According to the experts, the size of working-age population of Bangladesh would start to decline and the country may not get this dividend again in future.

China, Japan and many other countries have reaped the demographic dividend to develop their economies but in Bangladesh, things are not on right track.

Bangladesh's economy has been doing well for the last several years but currently its job growth is the slowest in two decades.

With about 7 million people underutilised, Bangladesh observes the World Population Day 2017 today with the theme "Family Planning: Empowering People, Developing Nations".

The country could add only 1.4

million jobs between 2013 and 2015-16 fiscal year, down from 4 million jobs it had added between 2010 and 2013, according to the latest data of Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics' Labour Force Survey.

The sluggish job creation has raised questions about the high economic growth figures being recorded, with some economists terming the phenomenon "jobless growth".

Economist Hossain Zillur Rahman referring to data of the labour force survey said, "We did not capitalise on the demographic dividend ... Youth frustration has been increasing as they are either not getting any job or expected jobs. Job opportunities have decreased."

He identified the reasons for not taking advantage of the demographic dividend, including a faulty education system, increasing unemployment, and a huge underemployment rate.

Zillur, executive chairman of the Power and Participation Research Centre, said the mid-level job market was gradually being occupied by foreign manpower in some sectors, which is a reason for worry.

"We have become complacent with the demographic dividend and are failing to cash in."

He said there was a misconception regarding demographic dividend; people think Bangladesh has got the dividend and it would have it forever.

"A few people know that transforming the demographic dividend into economic dividend comes with a time frame ... sense of urgency is needed. But unfortunately we do not have that urgency," he added.

Echoing Zillur, population scientist AKM Nurun Nabi said the demographic dividend usually continues for 30 to 35 years. The dividend usually comes once for a country.

"Now, we have more producers than consumers ... We got the window of demographic dividend but we have to transform it into economic dividend," he told The Daily Star.

He said the government has set a target to become a higher income country by 2041. "It will be possible only if we properly utilise the manpower."

Nabi said if the birth rate continued to drop as it has been, then the divi-

dend might expire sooner due to decreasing labour supply.

"We are already late for formulating a proper plan to utilise the manpower even though the government has taken some initiatives."

He said the government should have multi-sectoral focus, with special attention to education and health. Education should be skill and market oriented, not certificate oriented.

The government policymakers often speak of implementing various initiatives to transform the population into human resource but the situation has not improved much.

The latest progress report on UN Sustainable Development Goals or SDGs shows poor state of human development.

Out of 157 countries, Bangladesh ranked 120 in the SDG Index & Dashboards Report 2017 of the UN Sustainable Development Solutions Network.

The report marked 10 of 17 development goals of Bangladesh in red, indicating that the country needs to overcome major challenges to meet the goals, according to the report.

The red marked goals are: zero hunger; good health and well-being; quality education; affordable and clean energy; decent work and economic growth; industry, innovation and infrastructure; sustainable cities and communities; life below water; peace, justice and strong institutions; and partnership for the goals.

Bangladesh country has emerged as a major exporter of skilled, semi-skilled and unskilled labour but most of the export to more than 22 countries is unskilled labour.

Aminul Haque, chairman of Department of Population Sciences, University of Dhaka, said, "We still have time to capitalise on the demographic dividend."

He said private sector and personal initiatives were expanding and that it could be done "if we can plan well in the next few years".

Aminul said a coordinated and well thought-out plan was required in four sectors -- quality manpower export, expansion of private sector, and expansion of government sector and opportunity creation for the self entrepreneurship -- to get maximum dividends.

BANGLADESH POPULATION	
1950	3,78,95,000
2017	16,46,70,000
2030	18,55,85,000
2050	20,19,27,000
2100	17,35,49,000
GLOBAL RANK	
1950	12
2017	8
2050	8
2100	14
LIFE EXPECTANCY AT BIRTH	
1990-95	60
2005-10	69
2010-15	71.2
2015-20	72.9
2025-30	75.7
2045-50	79.9
2095-2100	87.5
SOURCE: "WORLD POPULATION PROSPECTS: THE 2017 REVISION", UN DEPARTMENT OF ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL AFFAIRS	



Rajshahi University teachers visit injured Arafat Rahman, Rajshahi University correspondent of The Daily Star, at Rajshahi Medical College Hospital hours after the journalist was beaten up by some Chhatra League men near the campus yesterday.

PHOTO: STAR

# BCL activists assault Star's RU reporter

FROM PAGE 1

As he started taking photographs with his mobile phone, Mahamudur Rahman Kanon, information and research secretary of RU BCL, flew into a rage and asked him why he was taking snaps.

Arafat, who was wearing his press card round his neck, replied he was discharging his professional duties.

All of a sudden, around 10 Chhatra League men led by RU unit Vice President Ahmed Sajib, Organising Secretary Abid Ahsan Labon and Law Affairs Secretary Saiful Islam Bijoy swooped on the journalist.

The attackers beat Arafat to the ground, leaving him badly injured. They also tried to snatch the reporter's phone, but he managed to hold on to it.

The journalist said he cried for help, but the policemen didn't come to his rescue.

Some cops on duty there sent him to RU medical centre after the BCL men had left the area. He was later shifted to the RMCH.

Registrar Rashik Alvi at the RMCH neurosurgery ward said the patient had injuries to his right eye, head and palm of his left hand. He was also suffering abdominal and chest pain.

"We gave treatment for injuries and advised a CT scan of his head be conducted," he added.

Masud Rana, sales in-charge of Desh Travels in Rajshahi, said BCL leader Saiful Islam Bijoy was travelling to Rajshahi from Chittagong on the bus.

Saiful had an altercation with bus supervisor Manik after the latter asked him to stop smoking.

Passengers repeatedly complained about smoking on the bus, but Saiful didn't pay heed. Pressed by the passengers, Manik at one stage asked Bijoy to get down.

As the bus reached Chaudhagram of Comilla, Saiful revealed his identity to the supervisor. Being afraid of consequences, he offered apology to the BCL leader, Masud told The Daily Star.

The BCL men beat up Manik and bus driver Khokon after the vehicle had reached near the main entrance to the university. They also damaged the windshield of the bus, he added.

Manik received primary treatment at the RMCH.

Witnesses said movement of traffic on this part of the Dhaka-Rajshahi highway almost came to a halt for around an hour because of the vandalism.

Contacted, BCL leader Ahmed Sajib said he went to the area on hearing that some students had an altercation with a bus supervisor. He claimed that he was not aware of the assault on the journalist.

Despite repeated attempts, this

newspaper couldn't reach BCL leaders Abid and Saiful over the phone for comment.

Arafat last night filed a case with Motihar Police Station accusing BCL leaders Kanon, Sajib, Abid, Saiful and 8/10 unnamed others of attacking and injuring him, said Humayun Kabir, officer-in-charge of the police station.

Bus supervisor Manik lodged a written complaint with the police station saying that BCL men beat him and the driver and vandalised the vehicle, causing a damage worth about Tk 1 lakh.

Meanwhile, Chhatra League central unit on its Facebook page last night posted a circular saying that the organisation suspended Mahamudur Rahman Kanon and Saiful Islam Bijoy for violating organisational discipline.

RU Proctor Shamsul Haq Azad, Prof Moshir Rahman of Journalism department and Student Affairs Advisor Mizanur Rahman visited Arafat at the hospital yesterday.

Rajshahi Union of Journalists, Rajshahi University Reporters Unity, RU Sangbadik Samity, Rajshahi University Press Club, Rajshahi University Sangskritik Jote, Chhatra Union, Chhatra Federation and Shahjalal University of Science and Technology Press Club condemned the attack on the journalist and demanded punishment of the attackers.

# Marooned with scanty relief

FROM PAGE 1

need dry food immediately. But we cannot afford it."

Finding pure drinking water has also become a concern as, villagers said, most of the tube-wells went under water.

Mofazzal Hossain, chairman of Rajpur union parishad in Lalmonirhat Sadar upazila, said the authority could not distribute relief materials to all the flood-affected people as "we didn't get any allocation."

AFM Alauddin Khan, deputy commissioner of Lalmonirhat, said a total of 400 packets of dry food, 100 tonnes of rice and Tk 1 lakh cash had been allocated, which would be distributed today.

Meanwhile, the flood situation in Jamalpur worsened since the Jamuna was following 37 centimetres above the danger level at the Bahadurabad Ghat point yesterday.

A vast low-lying area in seven unions in Islampur upazila, four in Dewanganj, three in Sarishabari, two in Melandah and two in Madarganj upazila has been inundated, leaving as many as 50,000 people marooned, said officials of the district administration.

Some upazila chairmen claimed that the relief materials were scanty.

"In the last three days, only 250 packets of dry food were distributed among the flood-hit families though nearly 2,500 families are affected in my union," said Abdul Malek, chair-

man of Belgachha UP.

Ninety primary schools, nine high schools, six madrasas and one college had to be shut down.

In Gaibandha, around 30,000 people were stranded in chars of Jamuna basin as the river was flowing 17 centimetres above the danger level at the Balashi point in Fulchhari upazila, the worst hit in the district, reports our correspondent.

River erosion took a serious turn at Erendabari union in Fulchhari, pushing 130 families to move to safety after their homesteads were eroded within the course of the last three days.

WDB engineers of Gaibandha identified several vulnerable points along 70 kilometres of the flood control embankment from Shaghata to Sundarganj upazila.

Precautionary measures were being taken to repair the dyke on emergency basis, said Mahbubur Rahman, executive engineer of the WDB, Gaibandha.

Gautam Chandra Pal, deputy commissioner of the district, said the government allocated 125 tonnes of rice and Tk 10 lakh in cash.

The flood situation in three upazilas of Bogra didn't improve as the water level was still flowing 25 cm above the danger level yesterday, reports our Bogra correspondent.

Local upazila and WDB sources said the low areas of the Jamuna basin at 35 villages in Shariakandi upazila, five villages in Sonatola upazila and four

villages in Dhunat upazila were hit by flood. Nearly 20,000 people were affected.

Pratul Chandra Sarkar, deputy director of the Department of Agriculture Extension, said about 4,065 hectares of cropland were inundated, affecting 17,350 farmers in the three upazilas.

In Sirajganj, the Jamuna river was flowing 30cm above the danger level yesterday.

The increasing water level raised the risk of erosion of the flood protection embankment, according to the Sirajganj district administration.

The district's flood protection embankment is 16 meter high from the river while the water was flowing 13.65 meter above the usual water level yesterday.

"The water level is still increasing, which may put the embankment at risk," said Hasan Imam, executive engineer of the WDB, Sirajganj.

Several hundred villages of five upazilas in the district are affected by flood, said Abdur Rahim, district relief and rehabilitation officer.

In Kurigram, academic activities of 67 government primary schools were suspended due to floods, reports our correspondent.

The Brahmaputra river was flowing eight cm above the danger level at Chilmari Ghat point in Chilmari upazila yesterday noon, WDB officials said.

# Men-only island gets Unesco nod

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manned by a Shinto priest who prays to the island's goddess, in a tradition that has been kept up for centuries.

Limited numbers are permitted to land on the island in the Sea of Japan (East Sea) -- this year it was 200 -- for a yearly festival that lasts just two hours, but they must adhere to strict rules.

Most importantly, they must be men, but they must also strip off and take a purifying dip in the ocean before they are allowed to set foot on the sacred ground of the shrine.

Despite its inscription on Unesco's World Heritage list -- often the prelude to a leap in tourist numbers -- shrine officials say they are now considering banning future travel for

anyone apart from priests, partly out of fears the island could be "destroyed" by too many visitors.

"The island has sometimes been said to ban women, but in principle anyone but the priests who pray there for 365 days a year is barred from entering," said a spokesman.

The ban on female visitors specifically "has nothing to do with discrimination against women," the official told AFP by phone.

It is considered dangerous for women to travel by sea to get to the island and the shrine will not change the centuries-old rule, he said.

"It is meant to protect women, the birth-giving gender," he added.

The island, which sits off the

northwest coast of Kyushu, the southernmost of Japan's four main islands, was an important window for foreign trade in Japan since ancient times, forming part of a trade route that linked the archipelago to the Korean peninsula and China.

Thousands of gold rings and other valuable items have been found there.

"These treasures are believed to have been offered to the gods in order to pray for national prosperity and the safety of marine traffic," says the website of Munakata Taisha, the shrine which owns Okinoshima.

Unesco's heritage committee considered 33 sites for the prestigious status at its annual gathering in Poland.