

ABUSE OF BANGLADESHI WORKERS Malaysian rights bodies for probe

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Malaysian Labour rights organisations called for an urgent investigation into allegations of abusing workers from Bangladesh, Nepal and Myanmar against Top Glove.

"The abuses within Top Glove are just a sad part of a much wider story," said the Right to Redress Coalition, an alliance of 11 Malaysian migrant rights and anti-trafficking groups, in a statement on Friday.

On Thursday, Reuters revealed allegations of horrific labour practices, including excessive and in some cases illegal overtime work, and crippling recruitment debts to secure a job.

Workers do not exercise real control over their passports, thereby affecting their freedom of movement while working for Top Glove, which employs some 11,000 foreign workers, it reports.

There are some one million Bangladeshi workers in Malaysia, according to officials of Bangladesh High Commission in the country. But it is not known how many workers are in Top Glove.

The Right to Redress Coalition said allegations of exploitation against Top Glove were not new. In 2014, complaints were made to the Labour Department that workers were detained in a 'lock-up' in factory for five days.

"Conditions like this are in fact widespread, not just within the rubber glove industry, but in many migrant-dominated industries, including domestic work, security, hospitality, construction, wood and furniture and others," the statement said.

It said labour rights bodies in Malaysia often encountered migrant workers who were compelled to work excessive overtime hours for their basic wage, which is rarely above the minimum wage of RM 1,000 (Tk 20,000).

"Most have recruitment debt to service, as well as families in their country of destination who rely on remittances," said Right to Redress Coalition Spokesperson Adrian Pereira.

Even Bank Negara, central bank of Malaysia, in a 2016 research said a single worker living in Kuala Lumpur

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'Drug trader' killed in 'gunfight'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

An alleged drug trader was killed in a "gunfight" between two groups of drug traders at Dhalaghat village in Chattogram's Patiya upazila early yesterday.

The victim, Kamal Hasan, 36, was a resident of the upazila's Moddham Hunain village.

Niamat Ullah, officer-in-charge of Patiya Police Station, said they had raided Dhalaghat Chandra Kalar Bridge on information that two groups of drug traders were engaged in a gunfight around 2:00am.

However, the other criminals escaped the scene sensing presence of the law enforcers, he added.

Police recovered the bullet-hit body of Kamal and rushed him to Patiya Upazila Health Complex where doctors declared him dead, said the OC.

A firearm, two rounds of bullet and 800 pieces of yaba pills were recovered from the spot, he said.

According to police, Kamal was accused in 17 cases filed over various charges.

President for skilled, smart naval force

UNB, Chattogram

President Abdul Hamid yesterday said there is no alternative to a skilled and smart naval force that will protect maritime sovereignty as well as marine resources to ensure the full trade and investment potential of the country.

The president said this while addressing the "President Winter Parade of Bangladesh Navy" during the passing out of midshipman naval cadets at parade ground of Bangladesh Naval Academy in Patenga of the port city.

"The Navy has been fully built as a three-dimensional force. I believe Bangladesh Navy will continue its efforts in upholding the country's image in international arena alongside protecting maritime sovereignty," he said.

President Hamid also urged Bangladesh Navy to work hand in hand with the army and the air force to protect the country's sovereignty, and whenever necessary, stand by the people during any disaster.

"The 'Bangabandhu Complex' has been built with modern facilities to materialize the dream of the Father of the Nation... It will enable [the navy] to provide training [maintaining]



international standard to a larger number of local and foreign nationals. This will also create opportunities to tap the full potential of Blue Economy," he added.

Chief of Naval Staff Admiral Nizamuddin Ahmed received the president at the parade ground amid a ceremonial motorcade.

The president reviewed parade and took salute from 2016 batch Midshipmen and 2018/B batch Direct Entry Officers (DEO).

Out of a total 59 Midshipmen, who were commissioned in the rank of Sub-Lieutenant following the completion

of a 3-year training, two were from Sri Lanka and the Maldives while 4 were female.

A total of seven DEOs were also adorned with the recognition of Officer Epaulette on their successful completion of 6 months' basic training.

Midshipman 2016 batch joined Bangladesh Naval Academy on 27 December, 2015 and were promoted to the rank of Midshipmen on 25 December 2017.

The Best all Round Midshipman of the course, Midshipman Ahmed Ridwan Khan, was awarded the "Sword of Honour" while Midshipman Ijaz Mahmud Shuvo was awarded "CNS Gold Medal".

Acting Sub Lieutenant Saif Hossain Sudhi, the best DEO, was awarded "Bir Shreshtho Shaheed Ruhul Amin Gold Medal".

Parliament members, ministers of the government, chiefs and high officials of armed forces, dignitaries, Liberation War-time naval commandos, diplomats, and parents and guardians of the newly commissioned naval officers were also present at the programme.

7 detained over death of N'ganj factory worker

He died after 'compressed air pumped into his rectum'

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Narayanganj

A factory worker was killed allegedly after compressed air was pumped into his rectum by co-workers in Araihaaz upazila of Narayanganj yesterday.

The victim -- Azharul Islam Sumon, 35 -- was a worker of Aziz Packaging Factory.

Police have detained seven people in connection with the incident.

Akter Hossain, officer-in-charge (OC) of Araihaaz Police Station, said when family members informed them about Sumon's death, a police team was sent to his home at noon to recover the body.

Four workers were then detained from the factory for interrogation. After primary interrogation, police detained three others alleged to be involved in the incident.

Quoting the detainees, the OC said that the workers used to "clean themselves" using the air compressor every night after work. On Saturday

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In violation of the electoral code of conduct, supporters of the Awami League set up an election campaign camp at Babaniganj Mor in Natore. According to the code, all sorts of electoral campaigns are prohibited before three weeks of the voting day.

PHOTO: STAR

BNP keeps 238

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Khaleda yesterday moved the High Court against the EC's decision.

Fakhru and Standing Committee Member Khandakar Mosharraf Hossain are the only BNP candidates who are contesting the election from two seats each.

In case the HC rejects Khaleda's petition, it will be the first time that the BNP would contest the polls without Khaleda, now in jail, since she took the helm of the party in 1984.

WHO'S GETTING WHAT?

In all, 13 political parties are taking part in the polls with BNP symbol.

Of the 60 seats it left for its allies, Oikyafront got 21 and the 20-party allies got 39.

Bangladesh Jamaat-e-Islami, a key component in the BNP-led 20-party, has been given 22 seats.

Jamaat leaders had sought nomination in 61 constituencies -- 25 with BNP ticket and the rest as independent candidates.

Of the other partners in the 20-party alliance, LDP got five seats, Jamiat-e-Ulama-e-Islam four, Khelafat Majlish and Bangladesh Jatiya Party (Zafar) two each and Bangladesh Kalyan Party, Bangladesh Jatiya Party (Partha), National Peoples Party and Labour Party one each.

Among the Oikyafront partners, Gonoforum got seven seats, Nagorik Oikya five, Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal (Rob) five and Krishak Sramik Janata League (KSJL) four seats.

Two seats -- Pabna-1 and Chapainawabganj-3 -- have been kept open for both Oikyafront and Jamaat candidates.

The BNP, which boycotted the 2014 election, had nominated 696 aspirants in 295 constituencies. It had single candidates in only 36 seats, while more than one in the rest.

4 technocrat

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submitted their resignation letters to the Cabinet Division on November 6 after Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina asked them to step down.

However, they continued to participate in subsequent cabinet meetings.

After a cabinet meeting on November 12, Cabinet Secretary Shafiul Alam told reporters that they attended the meetings as no gazette was issued about their resignation yet.

China

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solemn and just position," it said.

China also urged the United States to "take immediate measures to correct wrong practices, and to revoke the arrest warrant against the Chinese citizen."

The statement warned that Beijing would make an unspecified "further response" in light of the US actions.

The US embassy spokesman could not immediately be reached for comment.

Meng was arrested in Vancouver while changing planes on December 1, the same day that US President Donald Trump and Chinese leader Xi Jinping agreed to a truce in their trade battle and gave negotiators three months to find a compromise.

The world's top two economies have exchanged steep tariffs on more than \$300 billion in total two-way trade, locking them in a conflict that has begun to eat into profits.

Analysts say Meng could become a bargaining chip in the negotiations.

In a bail hearing that was adjourned on Friday, Canadian government lawyer John Gibb-Carsley asked for bail to be denied, saying Meng has been accused of "conspiracy to defraud multiple financial institutions."

He said if convicted, she faces more than 30 years in prison.

Meng is specifically accused of lying to a US bank, identified by her lawyer as "Hong Kong Bank", about the use of a covert subsidiary to sell to Iran in breach of sanctions.

The extradition process could take months, even years, if appeals are made in the case.

Canada has a long-standing extradition treaty with the United States, requiring it to cooperate with US Department of Justice requests to hand over suspects.

The offence for which extradition is being sought must also be a crime in Canada, and a Canadian court must decide if there is sufficient evidence to support the extradition.

Khaleda files 3 writ petitions

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with a malafide intention.

On Saturday, the EC rejected her all three appeals against cancellation of her nomination papers by returning officers (ROs).

Khaleda landed in jail on February 8 after a special court in Dhaka sentenced her to five years' imprisonment in the Zia Orphanage Trust corruption case. The HC later extended her jail term to 10 years.

On October 29, Khaleda was convicted and sentenced to seven years' rigorous imprisonment by the same court in the Zia Charitable Trust graft case.

HC DIRECTIVE

The HC yesterday directed the EC to accept the nomination papers of 11 candidates and allow them to contest the upcoming election.

The EC recently upheld the ROs' cancellation of their nomination papers on different grounds.

Of the 11, eight are from the BNP, two are independent candidates and

one is from the Jatiya Party.

The BNP contenders are Amjad Hossain Sarker in Nilphamari-4, Syed Jahangir Alam in Dinajpur-3, Fahmid Faisal Chowdhury in Nilphamari-3, Nazmul Haque in Naogaon-5, Towhidul Islam in Panchagarh-1, Badal Sarker in Bogura-7, Abdul Muhit Talukder in Bogura-3, and AKM Mahbubur Rahman in Bogura-6.

The two independent candidates are Imran H Sarker in Kurigram-4 and Afzal Hossain in Naogaon-4.

The JP candidate is Kazi Ashraf Siddiqui in Tangail-8.

Two HC benches passed the orders in response to writ petitions filed by the candidates challenging the EC's rejection of their appeals against cancellation of their nomination papers by ROs.

The HC bench of Justice Sheikh Hassan Arif and Justice Razik-Al-Jalil delivered orders on the petitions of nine of the candidates, while the bench led by Justice Tariq ul Hakim

gave orders on the petitions of the two other contenders.

Besides, the HC benches upheld the EC's scrapping of four aspirants' appeals against cancellation of their nomination papers.

The four include Mushfiqur Rahman of the BNP in Brahmanbaria-4.

The court rejected their writ petitions on the grounds that those were not placed before it properly.

HAWLADER'S WRIT PETITION
JP chairman's Special Assistant Ruhul Amin Hawlader filed a writ petition with the HC yesterday, challenging the EC's rejection of the appeal against cancellation of his nomination papers for Patuakhali-1.

Hawlader, a presidium member of the JP and also a lawmaker, submitted the petition seeking HC directive on the EC to accept his nomination papers.

Talking to this newspaper, his lawyer Ashik-Al Jalil said the EC

JP refuses to quit in 145 seats

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According to the lists submitted to the Election Commission, the AL is contesting in 258 seats, Workers Party in five, Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal (Inu) and Bikalpadhara Bangladesh in three each, Tarikat Federation and Jatiya Party (Manju) in two each, and Bangladesh Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal (Ambia) in one.

The JP will contest the 174 seats with its own symbol "plough".

Apart from contesting from the grand alliance, JSD (Inu) will have its four candidates running with its own symbol "torch", sources said.

Several candidates of Workers Party will also contest the election with the party symbol "hammer", party president Rashed Khan Menon told The Daily Star.

The two parties will use AL's sym-

bol "boat" in the seats where their leaders will contest as grand alliance candidates.

Candidates will formally begin electioneering across the country today after the election offices allocate them poll symbols.

SEAT-SHARING NEGOTIATION

The JP high-ups had initially pressed for around 100 seats to contest the polls under the banner of grand alliance. Later, the party demanded 45 to 50 seats but the AL turned it down, insiders said.

At one stage of the talks over seat-sharing, JP Chairman HM Ershad removed Ruhul Amin Hawlader as the party's secretary general on December 3 and replaced him with State Minister for LGRD Moshir Rahman Ranga, who is considered close to AL.

After a weeklong negotiation, Ranga failed to ensure more than 29 seats, making the JP chief highly disappointed, several party leaders told this correspondent yesterday.

Ershad, who has been staying at the Dhaka Combined Military Hospital since December 1, asked Ranga and his close aides to make sure that JP aspirants do not pull out from the race.

Yesterday was the last day for withdrawing nomination. Many JP leaders gathered at the party chief's Banani office since morning.

Around 12:30pm, Ershad made it clear that his party will contest in 145 constituencies besides the 29 offered by the AL, insiders said.

Earlier on several occasions, AL General Secretary Obaidul Quader said his party would leave 65 to 70

seats for its partners in the 14-party combine and grand alliance.

On December 1, Quader at a press conference formally said the JP would be given 40 to 42 seats to contest the polls under the banner of the grand alliance.

Later, the AL high-ups backedtracked on the decision considering the "current reality" and sensing tough battle with the BNP camp, party insiders said.

Currently, the JP has 36 MPs in parliament.

In the 2008 national election, the AL gave 29 seats to the JP, four to the Workers Party and three to the Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal.

In the 2014 election, which was boycotted by the BNP-led opposition, the AL left 60 seats to its alliance partners.

Soviet dissident Lyudmila Alexeyeva dies aged 91

AFP, Moscow

Lyudmila Alexeyeva, a Soviet-era dissident who became a symbol of resistance in modern-day Russia as a leading rights activist, died after a long illness at the age of 91 in Moscow on Saturday.

In an extraordinary career emblematic of the country's turbulent history, she tirelessly defended human rights in the USSR from the 1950s, and continued to do so in strongman leader Vladimir Putin's Russia.

"This is a huge loss for the entire human rights movement in Russia," Mikhail Fedotov, head of the Kremlin Human Rights Council, said in a statement.