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MIGRANT WORKERS STUCK HOME

Drowning in debt

JAMIL MAHMUD

Migrant worker Nazim Uddin returned home from Saudi Arabia in May last year amid the Covid-19 pandemic. His residence permit expired after a few months, meaning he could not return to the Gulf country.

His monthly income in Saudi Arabia had been around Tk 50,000, but he had to send home the lion's share of his earnings as his seven-member family depended on his remittance.

With his meagre savings already exhausted on family expenses, the 42-year-old from Noakhali took a bank loan of Tk 1 lakh and invested the money to set up a small shoe factory in his area. The factory, however, did not do well, forcing him to shut it down.

Nazim also had to borrow around Tk 3 lakh, in phases, from relatives as he hasn't been able to find a job yet. Now, he is worried sick about how to come out of the debt trap.

"I don't know what I should do now," he said.

Like Nazim, many returnees are facing a debt cycle after they borrowed money in the face of economic hardship created by the pandemic. With little or no income, these returnees are in despair, struggling to repay their debts and manage household expenses.

Around 3.76 lakh migrant workers returned home between April 1 and December 17 last year amid the pandemic, according to government data.

International Organisation for Migration (IOM), in its recent survey report, showed the debt burden on the migrant workers and the challenges of reintegration.

The report, titled "Rapid Assessment Round 2: Needs and Vulnerabilities of Internal and International Return Migrants in Bangladesh", found that around 69 percent of 875 returnee migrants from abroad and their households are in debt.

Some 28 percent returnees from abroad have debt higher than Tk 2 lakh and over 50 percent have debt higher than Tk 1 lakh, it said.

The survey on returnees was conducted in 12 high return-migration districts in August and September last year.

The report found 64 percent of the returnees from abroad unemployed.

'OVERWHELMED WITH DEBT' Since the Covid-19 pandemic hit the world early last year, many Bangladeshi workers returned home in large numbers, either after job losses or seeing no job opportunities in the host countries.

But after coming back to Bangladesh,

RELATED STORY ON PAGE 2 SEE PAGE 10 COL 2



Relatives and bystanders help Liakat Ali, 55, after he collapsed at the capital's Mugda General Hospital yesterday. He went there for a Covid test as he has been suffering from fever and cold for several days. When Liakat regained consciousness, he was sent to Dhaka Medical College Hospital.

PHOTO: AMRAN HOSSAIN



Renowned actor Wasim laid to rest

SHAH ALAM SHAZI

Renowned actor Wasim passed away in a city hospital early yesterday.

He was 71. His actual name was Mesbahuddin Ahmed, but he was known by his stage name Wasim.

The actor, who had been suffering from brain, nerve, and heart complications, died in the capital's Shahabuddin Medical College Hospital around 12:30am.

Zayed Khan, general secretary of Bangladesh Cholochitro Shilpi Samiti, confirmed the news of his demise.

Wasim is survived by his son Dewan Fardun. His wife passed away in 2000, and he lost his only daughter Bushra Ahmed in an accident in 2006.

Born on March 23, 1950, in Sutrapur, Dhaka, Wasim spent his childhood in Mymensingh, as his father, a government officer, was posted there.

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PRAYER TIMING APRIL 19

Fazr Zohr Asr Maghrib Esha
AZAN 4-10 12-45 4-45 6-25 7-45
JAMAAT 4-20 1-15 5-00 6-35 8-15

SOURCE: ISLAMIC FOUNDATION



SEHRI, IFTAR TIMING

RAMADAN APRIL SEHRI IFTAR

6	19	6:25
7	20	4:09 6:26
8	21	4:08 6:26

Scientists create 'whitest paint ever' to keep homes cool



INDEPENDENT.CO.UK

Scientists have developed what they claim is the whitest ever paint as a way to tackle global warming by reducing the need for air conditioning.

Engineers at Purdue University say it reflects up to 98.1 percent of sunlight – up from 95.5 percent on their last attempt from six months ago – and can cool surfaces by as much as 19F or 10.5C.

Ordinary white paints that are designed to reject heat reflect only 80-90 per cent of sunlight and cannot make surfaces cooler than their surroundings, according to researchers.

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Ex-Ducusu VP Nur sued under DSA

He 'hurt religious sentiment' of AL men, supporters

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Former Ducusu VP Nurul Haque Nur has been accused in a case of hurting religious sentiments of Awami League activists and supporters and defaming the party with his derogatory comments in a Facebook live session on April 14.

Barrister Md Ashrafur Islam Shojib, member of Jubo League Central Committee, filed the case under the Digital Security Act against Nur with Shahbag Police Station yesterday, said Officer-in-charge Mamun ur Rashid.

According to the complaint, Nur spoke on Facebook live around 4:37pm on April 14 and hurt religious sentiments of Awami League activists and supporters.

Nur called supporters SEE PAGE 10 COL 1

ROAD TO FREEDOM THIS DAY IN BANGLADESH LIBERATION WAR HISTORY

Bangladesh Cabinet discusses war strategy

APRIL 19, 1971

SHAMSUDDOZA SAJEN

WAR STRATEGY DISCUSSED

The Bangladesh cabinet met today and issued instructions to Col MAG Osmani for preparing a strategy to oust the occupation army from certain important strongholds.

The cabinet reviewed the overall war situation in the country and took note of the sagging morale of the Pakistani forces. Chief of Mukti Fauz Col Osmani was learnt to have expressed confidence in the liberation force and told the cabinet that the occupation army would be wiped out from vital strongholds sooner rather than later.

The cabinet also discussed how to gear up the relief machinery and coordination committee for getting food and other essential commodities to the people of Bangladesh in different districts that remained



largely isolated. **BANGLADESH MISSION GETS ITS OFFICIAL SEAL** The diplomatic coup in the Pakistan Deputy High Commission in Calcutta was given a positive shape today when official appointment letters were sent to Hossain Ali, the head of the mission and all the Bangalee staff of the mission for serving as foreign representatives of the sovereign People's Republic of Bangladesh.

The Bangladesh Mission started functioning at 9:30am. It had its new letterhead and new seal. The first letter it issued was to the chief secretary,

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'Media distorted my statement on Ilias Ali'

Mirza Abbas claims

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

BNP Standing Committee Member Mirza Abbas yesterday said that the media distorted his statement regarding the disappearance of former BNP lawmaker M Ilias Ali.

Mentioning that a newspaper quoted him saying the BNP leaders were involved in the disappearance of Ilias Ali, he said, "Can someone prove that I had said it? Absurd, impossible!"

He then said, "I want to say clearly, my statement was distorted."

Mirza Abbas, while attending a virtual programme on Saturday, had said that someone from BNP was involved in the disappearance of Ilias Ali.

He also urged the party's Secretary General Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir to find those involved in the incident.

After the statement was published in several media outlets, the BNP leader yesterday held a press conference at his residence in the capital's Shahjahanpur area and claimed that the media only presented a partial statement.

The BNP leader also said, "In the media report, it was also reported that the government or the Awami League did not

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This photo shows social distancing, one of the main guidelines to contain the spread of coronavirus, not being maintained when health minister inaugurated the country's largest Covid-19 hospital at Dhaka North City Corporation's Mohakhali market yesterday. The ceremony was organised despite strict Covid restrictions enforced by the government.

PHOTO: STAR

MOVEMENT IN LOCKDOWN Six lakh passes issued in 5 days

Most applicants aged 21-40 yrs, police website gets 18.04 crore hits

MOHAMMAD JAMIL KHAN

In the five days after the movement pass was introduced by police to ensure a "strict lockdown", going to workplaces has been the most common reason for people availing the passes.

Till 6:00pm yesterday from 11:00am on April 13, around 6.01 lakh people have taken the movement passes to travel for emergency reason during the lockdown that started on April 14.

During the time, around 18.04 crore visited movementpass.police.gov.bd.

Of the passes, the highest 2.07 lakh has been issued for job purposes, according to the analysis of the Police Headquarters' Information and Communications Technology Division.

Around 70,000 passes have been issued for other purposes, including taking parents to hospitals and travelling from Chattogram to Dhaka to catch emergency flights.

The analysis report reads 49,000 movement passes were issued for treatment purpose, 15,000 for receiving Covid-19 vaccine, 14,000 for purchasing medicine and 4,000 for Covid test.

Around 49,000 people have taken passes for business purposes, it added.

In addition, 16,000 movement passes have been issued for going to kitchen market, 4,000 for agricultural work and 3,000 for wholesale and retail business, the PHQ data shows.

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