

**Is there**  
FROM PAGE 3  
However, Alfai's family denied his involvement and dismissed the accusation, saying they are too poor to even afford a domestic worker in the first place.

In the case, the woman stated Alfai attempted to rape her on two separate occasions in August. She also accused Alfai's father Tajul Islam and mother Gulnaha Begum.

But Alfai's uncle Elias Hossain told this correspondent a different tale. "The family has never had a domestic help. Alfai's father has a small tea-stall in the village. I doubt he earns more than Tk 10,000 to 15,000 per month. They have a two-room house and an outdoor kitchen."

"It doesn't make sense why a woman from the city would come to a village some forty kilometres away to work as a domestic help. We do not even know her," he said.

Talking to this correspondent, Sitakunda Police Station Officer-in-Charge Abul Kalam Azad said they arrested Alfai and his parents after receiving an arrest warrant issued by the court.

Meanwhile, following two days in police custody, Alfai was granted bail by judicial magistrate Md Mainul Hasan of Chattogram's Women and Children Repression Prevention Tribunal-6 yesterday.

**Zero confidence**  
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country will lose interest in politics and voting, he added.

He alleged that dictatorship has been established in the country constitutionally.

GM Quader further alleged that according to the constitution, about 90 percent of the country's executive branch, legislature and judiciary are in the hands of one person through the president.

He said people of the country want to see Jatiya Party in power again.

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# 'A minimum wage that doesn't ensure minimum dignity'

Wage board recommendation for tea workers woefully inadequate, say speakers

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Sylhet

The minimum wage board for tea workers, a government-led tripartite body, have continued the 170-year-long "tradition" of depriving workers by recommending an unfair wage structure that conflict with existing laws, said speakers at a virtual dialogue yesterday.

The minimum wage recommended for tea workers is the lowest among the country's major sectors, and woefully insufficient for maintaining a basic standard of living, they highlighted.

Speakers expressed their concern over the recommendation at a dialogue titled "Tea Workers' Wage: Present structure and challenges".

The event was organised by Society for Environment and Human Development (SEHD)

**Bangladesh Tea Association** claims that they are paying daily wage of Tk 403 in cash and in kind. They included facilities cost like house rent, healthcare cost, pension, overtime and many other costs which cannot be considered as wage according to section 45 of the Labour Law. In our calculations, workers currently get no more than Tk 200 in cash and kind.

**PHILIP GAIN**  
DIRECTOR OF SHED

In Assam, a tea worker gets Tk 238 per day while Sri Lanka pays Tk 423. If they can pay higher wages and still be profitable, why can't our owners do the same?

**PROF MM AKASH**  
DHAKA UNIVERSITY



A worker collects tea leaves at a garden in Habiganj.

FILE PHOTO

in partnership with Power and Participation Research Centre (PPRC) and Bangladesh Cha Sramik Union.

In the keynote speech, Philip Gain, director of SEHD, said the tripartite body, formed after nearly five years' delay, recommended the same daily wage rates of Tk 117, Tk 118 and Tk 120 that have been provided for the past two-and-a-half years.

"Bangladesh Tea Association claims that they are paying daily wage of Tk 403 in cash and in kind. They included facilities cost like house rent, healthcare, pension, overtime and many other costs which cannot be considered as wage according to section 45 of the Labour Law," said Gain.

"In our calculations, workers currently get no more than Tk 200 including wages and allowances," he added.

He said the recommendation extended the wage negotiation period between Bangladesh Tea Association and Bangladesh Cha Sramik Union to three years from two years.

"We've graduated to low middle-income status and the government is working to graduate to a middle-income country soon. Does the wage board comply with the government's aspirations and agenda?" asked Dr Hossain Zillur Rahman, executive chairman of PPRC who chaired and facilitated the dialogue.

"Tea workers are living in a ghetto and are deprived of all facilities," said Dr Binayak Sen, director general of Bangladesh Institute of Development Studies (BIDS).

"The wage structure for tea workers is way too low considering the upper poverty line of 2016, minimum wage of other sectors like garment or leather and living wage in the country."

Professor Dr MM Akash of department of economics in Dhaka University, said, "The workers and the owners set Tk 120 daily wage for the year 2019-2020 while negotiating. Considering a 5 per cent inflation rate each year, the wage should have been increased by 15 per cent for 2022

and onwards. If this factor is taken into account, the recommended wage is lower than the previous wage."

"In India, a worker gets Tk 238 per day while Sri Lanka pays Tk 423. If they can pay higher wages and still be profitable, why can't our owners do the same?" he asked.

He further argued that the profit margins of the tea garden owners should be made public.

Uttam Kumar Das, a Supreme Court lawyer, said, "The labour law clearly stated that allowances do not constitute wages. There is no scope legally for the minimum wage board to contradict the existing labour laws of Bangladesh. There have also been multiple High Court orders which state that allowances and benefits cannot replace wages."

It is discriminatory that while all workers are granted service benefits as per section-28 of the Labour Law of 2006, tea workers were stripped of the benefit in the 2018 amendment of the law, he said.

"Besides, there is no casual leave for tea workers, which is discriminatory. Every worker is exempted by law from working eight weeks prior to childbirth, except the women tea workers."

"The wage structure declared by the wage board is an injustice to the workers and clearly benefits the owners by not considering workers' rightful demand," said Tapan Datta, a labour leader.

Among others, Rambhajan Kairi, executive advisor of BCSU, and Nripen Paul, acting general secretary of BCSU, spoke in the dialogue.

## Amend existing anti-trafficking

FROM PAGE 3  
Addressing the human chain, M Tipu Sultan, president of Recruiting Agency Oikya Parishad, said, "We want those involved in human trafficking be punished as per existing law."

"Recruiting agencies send workers abroad with BMET clearance, attestation from Bangladesh missions abroad, and approval of the expatriates' welfare ministry. Our activities cannot be considered as "human trafficking," he added.

Lima Begum, proprietor of the Jannat Overseas, said that since recruiting agencies send workers abroad with due immigration clearance, they should not be held accountable under the anti-trafficking act.

She demanded that the government bring required amendment to the existing anti-trafficking act.

Mostafizur Rahman, managing director of Al-Nahin Manpower Services Ltd, alleged that he has been a "victim" of the anti-human trafficking act.

He also urged that the law enforcement agencies verify trafficking allegation raised against the recruiting agency owners and their employees properly before nabbing them.

The protesters are also planning on submitting a memorandum to the home ministry on that day to press home their demand, said Tipu.

## Offenders identified

FROM PAGE 3  
if someone died after sustaining injuries in stone throwing.

The above information was revealed at a press conference that the railways ministry convened yesterday at Rail Bhaban in its bid to prevent stone throwing on running trains.

Minister Nurul Islam Sujon talked about different aspects of the issue and sought media cooperation to create awareness in this regard.

The minister said throwing stone on running trains by children or miscreants is nothing new from the beginning of the rail operation in the sub-continent in 1853.

He said such incident takes place even in the US and New Zealand.

But recently, the number of stone throwing on running trains has increased here and guard, staffers, passengers of railway are getting injured, losing eye sight and even getting killed, he said.

"This has become a severe problem in Bangladesh now," he said.

He said they have identified five areas in BR's East Zone and 15 areas in West Zone as stone throwing-prone areas.

He said they are taking two-way action -- firstly prevention of such attacks by raising awareness and secondly executing relevant laws to punish perpetrators.

"However, we are giving importance on prevention," he added.

Asked how many people were brought to justice for the offence, the minister said, "We have taken legal steps for each and every incident but could not ensure punishment to anyone so far." He said they have been able to identify some attackers and detain those but later found that they were either minors or vagabonds or mentally unstable.

"So we cannot ensure punishment. In many cases, final reports have been submitted after investigation," he said. "It is fact that we were unable to catch the original attackers in all cases," he added.

Replying to another question, Sujon, also a senior lawyer of the Supreme Court, he said, "Only handing down punishment will not solve the problem..."

Talking about corruption in railway sector, the minister said he would not deny that there was no corruption in the past and they were fully corruption-free, but they are working to make the sector corruption free.

Among others, ministry secretary Salim Reza and BR Director General Dharendra Nath Mazumder were present at the briefing.

## No more

FROM PAGE 3  
Jatiyatbadi Ulema Dal arranged the programme at Jatiya Press Club, marking its 42nd founding anniversary.

Fakhrul said Bangladesh was liberated with a dream of establishing democracy and a free society, but Awami League has established a "one-party rule". "Now there's no democracy, election, accountability and law and order in the country. We didn't want such a country."

He said 11-12 companies, including Evaly, took away hundreds of crores of taka from people in the name of e-commerce, but the government could not take any step in advance to check such fraudulence.

The BNP leader said the incidents of killing, rape, repression of women and children have marked an unusual rise in the country due to a slide in the law and order situation.

He said AL has become the "biggest enemy" of people by resorting to repressive acts, enforced disappearance and extrajudicial killings.

"The entire nation is now looking at BNP and its associate bodies to lead a movement for establishing a pro-people government. We must be ready... It's now our responsibility to strengthen the organisation."

He alleged that AL wants to hang onto power unlawfully by suppressing the opposition leaders and activists with repressive acts and false cases.

## Protect ancestral land of Khasi people

Urge 13 eminent citizens in letter to Sylhet divisional commissioner

STAFF CORRESPONDENTS

Thirteen environmentalists, rights activists and prominent citizens have issued a letter to Sylhet divisional commissioner, demanding the protection of the ancestral and customary land of the Khasi people living in Daluchhara and Belkuma Khasiapunji, located in the Kulaura upazila of Moulvibazar.

They issued the letter on Saturday upon receiving news that the so-called beneficiaries of Kulaura Upazila administration, police, forest department and social forestry of Moulvibazar will forcibly implement the plantation of trees on the land of Daluchhara Khasia Punji today.

The signatories said the forest department implementing a flawed project such as this one in the name of social forestry raises serious questions, and requested the administration not to undertake any such project that destroys natural forests.

The Khasis have been living in their ancestral lands for ages. Various international charters, including the United Nations, have recognised the indigenous culture of preserving ancestral lands, and the Bangabandhu regime also ratified the ILO Convention 107 in 1972, recognising the ancestral land rights of the indigenous people, the letter stated.

The letter also highlighted that the forest department unilaterally listed the beneficiaries without any discussion with the Khasis and ignored the social forestry policy as well, creating several issues and complications between the beneficiaries and the Khasis.

Some miscreants have already destroyed the betel nut jum/garden owned by the Khasis and attacked them, claimed the signatories in the letter. The media has shed light on this issue very recently, prompting a meeting between the Khasi leadership and the forest and environment minister to solve the issues.

Besides, the Moulvibazar court has imposed a ban on this land too, according to the issued letter.

The letter was signed by Sultana Kamal, president, Bapa; Khushi Kabir, coordinator, Nijera Kori; Prof Dr Mizanur Rahman, former chairman, National Human Rights Commission; Advocate Rana Dash Gupta, general secretary, Bangladesh Hindu Buddhist Christian Unity Council; Prof Dr Mesbah Kamal, vice chancellor, Prime Asia University; Syeda Rizwana Hasan, executive director, Bela; Shamsul Huda, executive director ALRD; Sharmin Murshid, former member, National River Conservation Commission; Sharif Jamil, general secretary, Bapa; Nirmal Rozario, president, Bangladesh Christian Association; Sanjeeb Drong, general secretary, Bangladesh Adivasi Forum; Father Joseph Gomes, regional coordinator, Adivasi Poribesh Rokkha Andolon; Abdul Karim, general secretary, Bapa Sylhet.

**টিএমএসএস মেডিকেল কলেজ ডেন্টাল ইউনিট**  
ঠেঙ্গামারা, রংপুর রোড, বগুড়া  
ওয়েবসাইট: www.tmsmedicalcollege.com, www.tmshealth.com

**১ম বর্ষ বিডিএস কোর্সে (৯ম ব্যাচ) ভর্তি বিজ্ঞপ্তি**

গণপ্রজাতন্ত্রী বাংলাদেশ সরকার অনুমোদিত, রাজশাহী মেডিকেল বিশ্ববিদ্যালয় অধিভুক্ত এবং বিএমডিএস কর্তৃক স্বীকৃত, ভারত মেডিকেল কাউন্সিল, নেপাল মেডিকেল কাউন্সিল, ভূটান মেডিকেল এ্যান্ড হেলথ কাউন্সিল ও মালদ্বীপ মেডিকেল এ্যান্ড ডেন্টাল কাউন্সিল কর্তৃক অধিভুক্ত এবং (World Directory of Medical Schools এর আওতাধীন)

২০২০-২০২১ শিক্ষাবর্ষে সরকার কর্তৃক গৃহীত বিডিএস ভর্তি পরীক্ষায় জাতীয় মেধা তালিকায় উত্তীর্ণ (লিখিত পরীক্ষায় ন্যূনতম ৪০ বা তদুর্ধ্ব নম্বর প্রাপ্ত) ছাত্র-ছাত্রীদের নিকট হতে অত্র কলেজের নির্ধারিত ফরমে দরখাস্ত আহ্বান করা যাচ্ছে।

- ১,০০০/- টাকা (অক্ষেরযোগ্য) জমাদান সাপেক্ষে আগামী ০৫/১০/২০২১ ইং হতে ১৪/১০/২০২১ ইং তারিখ (ছুটির দিন সহ) সকাল ৮:০০ টা হতে বিকাল ৪:০০ টা পর্যন্ত আবেদন ফরম ও প্রসপেক্টাস সংগ্রহ ও জমা প্রদান করা যাবে।
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**নিম্নলিখিত ঠিকানায় যোগাযোগসহ ভর্তি ফরম সংগ্রহ ও জমা দেয়া যাবে**

টিএমএসএস মেডিকেল কলেজ রংপুর রোড, ঠেঙ্গামারা, বগুড়া মোবা: ০১৭৩০-০৪১৬৫১, ০১৭২২-১৫৮৬৬৫ ০১৭১৪-২১৪৪৯৯, ০১৭৪৮-৬৪৪৪১৪	টিএমএসএস ভবন, ঢাকা ৩৩১/৫, পশ্চিম কাজিপাড়া, মিরপুর-১০ মোবাঃ ০১৭৭৭-৭৯৮০৯৮	রংপুর কমিউনিটি প্যারামেডিক ইন্সটিটিউট হাছনা বাজার, হাজীরা হাট, রংপুর মোবাঃ ০১৭৬৫-৯৪০৩১৮
টিএমএসএস রাজশাহী জোন বাসা নং-৪ম দেবিনাথপুরা (ইসলামপুর), হাজারাবাদ মোবাঃ ০১৭১৩-৩৭৭২৫৮	টিএমএসএস শাহবাগ অফিস, ঢাকা পরিবারিক (পেট্রোল পাম্প সংলগ্ন) মোবাঃ ০১৭৫৫-৫৮৮৯৪৯	অধ্যাপক ডাঃ মোঃ শাহজাহান আলী সরকার অধ্যক্ষ টিএমএসএস মেডিকেল কলেজ, বগুড়া।