

BANGLADESH  
UPDATE



243  
New cases in 24hrs



15,77,070  
Total cases



27,989  
Deaths



15,41,886  
Recoveries

GLOBAL  
UPDATE



5,254,691  
Deaths



264,848,351  
Total cases

# Malaysia to recruit security guards from Bangladesh

PORIMOL PALMA

Malaysia is going to recruit security guards from Bangladesh, the second country after Nepal that has so far been allowed to send people to the Southeast Asian nation for the sector.

Bangladesh's Sena Kalyan Sangstha and Malaysian Security Industry Association (PIKM) signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) in this regard at the Bangladesh High Commission in Kuala Lumpur on Thursday.

"Actually, there was an MoU signed in 2018, but security guards from Bangladesh could not be recruited in Malaysia as the then Mahathir Mohamad-led government had imposed a ban on recruitment from Bangladesh," a foreign ministry official told The Daily Star yesterday.

The development comes when Bangladesh and Malaysia are discussing the signing of a new deal and starting recruitment, which was frozen following allegations of high recruitment cost that led to forced labour in the past.

Malaysia, which faces shortage of security guards, wanted to recruit from Bangladesh, Indonesia and the Philippines. The PIKM, an association of the agencies that recruit security guards, has chosen Bangladesh because they liked the training and efficiency of Bangladeshis, he said.

The official said Sena Kalyan Sangstha has both a training facility and international recruiting agency licence for efficiently handling the training and recruitment jobs.

He said details of the recruitment mode, benefits and exact starting time of recruitment have yet to be finalised. However, he said the recruitment will start soon as there is an acute shortage of security guards in Malaysia.

PIKM President Ramli Yusuff told Malaysian online news portal Malaysiakini that the Malaysian home ministry recently said it might consider bringing in guards from Bangladesh, Indonesia and the Philippines.

From PIKM, they recommended only Bangladesh because they first came to Bangladesh in 2018 and signed the MoU with Sena Kalyan Sangstha, a trust owned and operated by Bangladesh Army.

"When we [PIKM] went there to see their training school, we saw how they were trained for three months, we felt that they were the best option," Ramili said.

Ramli also said PIKM has urged the Malaysian government to expedite approvals as there has been a shortage of security guards due to departures since the start of the Covid-19 pandemic last year.

He said while the Nepali security guards are permitted to work here for up to 10 years, many of them had requested to return home and the shortage was made worse with the freeze on new intakes for all migrant workers.

"We used to have around 40,000 Nepali guards but are now down to between 10,000 and 15,000.

"So in order to fill up the empty quota, we want the government to bring in Bangladeshi guards," he said.

Ramli, however, declined to comment when asked for a cost comparison between bringing in security guards from Nepal and Bangladesh, stating that it was a "subjective matter" which is still under negotiation.

He also insisted that locals are not keen to fill up the vacancies, much like in other "dirty, dangerous and difficult" sectors that are also reliant on migrant labour, Malaysiakini reports.

## Maldives seeks loan

FROM PAGE 1

The government has adjusted the fuel prices. But the prices of electricity, gas and fertiliser have not been adjusted yet, the senior secretary added.

"If the prices are not adjusted, the country's subsidies expenditure will just double, from 1 percent of GDP to 2 percent this fiscal year."

Rouf Talukder said the government was expecting some import-induced inflation and cost-push inflation.

Syed Akhtar Mahmood, a former lead economist of the World Bank, said Bangladesh has an ambition to become a higher income country within two decades.

"It is good to have an ambition. But it should also be accompanied by a certain degree of prudence."

History shows that many countries have aspirations to graduate from lower-middle income to higher-middle income, and from middle income to higher income. Not all those aspirations have been met. There are examples where countries have been stuck in the middle-income trap, said Akhtar Mahmood.

He said lack of adequate emphasis on innovation and productivity growth is one of the main reasons for those countries being caught in the middle-income trap, said Akhtar Mahmood.

So, investment should be made in innovation, product development, and improving processes and business models, he observed.

He said Bangladesh needs to move from business-friendly policy to market-friendly policy.

Mustafizur Rahman, a distinguished fellow of the Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD), said as Bangladesh becomes a developing country, it should move away from the predominantly market access competitiveness to the productivity and skills-driven competitiveness.

This is because upon graduation from the group of the least developed

countries, Bangladesh would lose the preferential market access to many of its export destinations, he said.

"Conscious policy choices have to be made in order to make our transition sustainable."

Brac Executive Director Asif Saleh said Bangladesh has ensured basic services in health and education in the last 50 years.

But the current Bangladesh aspires to ensure affordable and quality services because people are not getting quality services despite spending money, he said.

Asif said now the question arises as to how the emerging Bangladesh sees the role of social sectors going forward.

"Our social sectors played a very complementary role to the government to ensure that the benefit of the growth goes to the last mile," said Asif Saleh.

Md Jashim Uddin, president of the Federation of Bangladesh Chambers of Commerce and Industry, said Bangladesh needs local and foreign direct investment, capacity building, need-based skills and product development to turn the country into a developed one.

He called for offering the same policy support to all exporting sectors that is currently being given to the garment sector.

Shamsul Alam, state minister for planning, Ahmad Kaikaus, principal secretary to the prime minister, Mashur Rahman, economic affairs adviser to the prime minister, Pradip Ranjan Chakraborty, secretary of the planning division, Binayak Sen, director-general of the BIDS, Zaidi Sattar, chairman of the Policy Research Institute of Bangladesh, and Nihad Kabir, president of the Metropolitan Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Dhaka, also spoke.

Sultan Hafeez Rahman, director of the BIDS Graduate School of Economics, chaired the session.

## Brace for Omicron

FROM PAGE 1

Kasai urged countries to fully vaccinate vulnerable groups and stick to preventive measures such as mask wearing and social distancing.

Omicron has been listed as a "variant of concern" by the WHO and scientists are still gathering data to establish how severe and contagious it is just as parts of Europe have been hit by surges of winter infections by the more familiar Delta variant.

"I have not seen reports of Omicron-related deaths yet," WHO spokesman Christian Lindmeier told a UN briefing in Geneva.

But vaccine makers should prepare for the likelihood of adjusting their products to protect against Omicron, he said.

WHO's chief scientist Soumya Swaminathan yesterday urged people not to panic over the emergence of the Omicron variant and said it was too early to say if Covid-19 vaccines would have to be modified to fight it.

Speaking in an interview at the Reuters Next, Swaminathan also said it was impossible to predict if Omicron would become the dominant strain.

'COMMUNITY SPREAD' A preliminary study by researchers in South Africa, where the new variant was first reported on November 24, suggests the strain is three times more likely to cause reinfections compared to the Delta or Beta strains.

Doctors there said there had been a spike in the number of children under five admitted to hospital since Omicron emerged, but stressed it was too early to know if young children were particularly susceptible, although infections have spread faster than in previous waves.

Nine cases have been confirmed in France and 10 in the United States. One case each in Hawaii and Minnesota involved residents with no recent international travel history -- showing that Omicron is already circulating inside the country.

"This is a case of community spread," the Hawaii Health Department confirmed.

US President Joe Biden on Thursday unveiled his plan to battle Covid-19 during the winter, with new testing requirements for travellers and a surge in vaccination efforts.

All incoming travellers will need to test negative within a day before their flights, and rapid tests that currently cost \$25 will be covered by insurance and distributed free to the uninsured.

In Norway, officials said at least 17 people who contracted Covid-19 after an office Christmas party in the capital Oslo last week are suspected of having the Omicron variant, reports AFP.

Malaysia yesterday reported its own first Omicron infection in a foreign student arriving from South Africa on November 19. Sri Lanka also announced its first case, a citizen returning from South Africa.



Students of Khulna University of Engineering and Technology (Kuet) leave Rokeya Hall yesterday after the authorities closed the institution till December 13. Tension was growing on the campus as teachers and students started protesting about the death of faculty member Prof Md Selim Hossain, allegedly due to mental torture by Chhatra League members, on Tuesday.

PHOTO: STAR

## Drastic changes designed for DU

FROM PAGE 1

in the name of development.

They fear that the high-rise model may affect the educational environment if the buildings cannot offer visual pleasure of a modern architectural establishment and befitting to the country's culture and heritage.

Another school of thought believes no development works would make Dhaka University, traditionally known as the "The Oxford of the East", sustainable if it fails to keep the number of students to a desired level.

The DU has around 40,000 students, 2,000 teachers and 4,000 staffers.

They also said the authorities should make efforts simultaneously to improve the standard of education.

To ensure quality education, they advocated dropping some unnecessary subjects, reducing the number of students in some specific faculties, and making the digital system available in all aspects of DU to reduce the huge number of staffers.

Professor Emeritus Serajul Islam Choudhury said, "Of course we need development, but we shouldn't make any radical changes. We should maintain our own history and tradition."

"The development plan should be devised on the theme of not creating any disturbance for the existing character," he told The Daily Star.

He said the university's open space is directly related to the educational environment and culture.

"There should be a lot of trees, open space, and attractive structures which could be a cultural-educational destination for every Dhaka resident."

Prof Serajul said the DU should emphasise on how to raise the quality of education within the next 10 to 20 years.

"It will not happen only by allocating a big [development] budget. For creating a knowledge-based environment, everybody should work together. And there should be a plan," he added.

Eminent educationist and author Prof Syed Manzoorul Islam demanded transparency in every step of the plan.

"There should be a public session in every step to collect feedback on the designs and all the buildings should have modern architectural views," he said.

"The planning is not to be done only by the engineers -- it should involve the country's best modern architects, aestheticians, urban planners and environmentalists who understand ecology and forestry," said Manzoorul, a former professor of English at DU.

THE MASTER PLAN

Apart from new academic buildings,

the master plan, prepared by a private firm Datex (Data Expert private Limited), includes a standard library, modern medical centre, gymnasium and swimming pool for girls and car parking.

It also contains new roads with cycling lane and walkway, development of playing fields, improvement of drainage system, increasing greenery and waterbody.

The plan will be implemented in three phases with 28 buildings, including a 20-storey administrative building, the tallest of them all, to be constructed in the first phase.

A 12-storey Central Library building has also been proposed, demolishing the extended north-west part of the existing one.

According to the draft master plan, DU campus is located on 304.21 acres of land. The main campus spreads over 276.28 acres in Shahbagh, Kataban, Palashi, and Curzon Hall areas.

It houses a total of 985 buildings, which take up 26 percent of the total space.

If the plan is adopted, concrete structures will occupy 21 percent of the total space, according to the master plan.

The authorities say the high-rise concept will greatly alleviate accommodation and other problems of the increasing number of DU students, teachers and staffers.

Against the huge number of students, teachers and staffers, the university can provide accommodation for 41 percent of its students, 29 percent teachers and officers and 22 percent staffers.

After the implementation of the project, student accommodation will go up to 76 percent, teacher and official to 53 percent and staffers to 35 percent, according to the master plan.

Faiz Ullah, president of the DU unit of Bangladesh Students' Union, said, "The authorities are trying to accommodate thousands of employees in the campus at a time when they should introduce a digitalised system to facilitate the students and teachers."

He also questioned the necessity of a 20-storey administrative building.

WHAT EXPERTS SAY

Adil Mohammad Khan, general secretary of Bangladesh Institute of Planners, said the DU's main attraction is its human scale model that offers low-carbon mobility options and alternatives to urban sprawl.

"This is the main attraction of Dhaka University and we have already started destroying it by constructing some high-rise buildings," he told this newspaper.

High-rise scale is appropriate for commercial places, he said. "If we bring the model to a university, the human values among the students could be hampered."

Adil said high-rise structures will increase open space for a while, but when the space will be used by more people, it will become unusable and affect the whole environment.

AFM Yousuf Haider, a former pro-VC of DU, said, "The university area should not be a concrete jungle. It will create a heavy burden on the environment."

Stressing the need for special efforts to improve the standard of education, he said there should be a proper plan to build modern research laboratories and to improve research standards.

Admitting that building high-rises is the demand of the time, Syed Manzoorul Islam said a coordinated architectural design should be in place and the buildings should be environment-friendly structures.

"We must protect the historical structures like Madhur Canteen and the Fine Art [Faculty of Fine Art] building,"

WHAT AUTHORITIES SAY

DU Pro-VC ASM Maksud Kamal, convener of the technical committee of the master plan, said they got feedback from all stakeholders, including students, teachers, urban planners, geography experts and engineers.

"We took the opinions of students online, passed the plan in the syndicate and finally sent it to the prime minister," he said.

Some necessary changes will be made if the PM gives any instructions, he said, adding that expanding the campus vertically is the "demand of the time".

Maksud, however, asserted that no tree will be felled for implementing the development project.

"The master plan was prepared keeping in mind the greenery, heritage, transportation, pollution, solution to waterlogging, etc.," he added.

DU VC Prof Akhtaruzzaman said they prepared the master plan in consultation with engineers and urban planners in a way so the environment, open space, and heritage sites are protected.

"Open space will increase after the plan is implemented. Our first target is to fulfil the academic and research demands," he added.

Asked about any comprehensive plan to improve the quality of education, he said planning academic development is an ongoing process.

"The master plan is prepared considering the academic needs," the VC said.

## Kuet closed till Dec 13

Decision 'sparked' by death of teacher

STAR REPORT

Khulna University of Engineering and Technology (Kuet) has been closed till December 13.

The decision was made at a university syndicate meeting around 11:00am yesterday, reported our correspondent, quoting Kuet Vice-Chancellor Prof Dr Quazi Sazzad Hossain as saying.

After the meeting, students were asked to leave dormitories by 4:00pm, said the VC.

Prof Md Selim Hossain, a teacher of the university's electrical and electronics engineering (EEE) department, was found dead at his home on Tuesday.

Selim, also provost of Lalan Shah Hall, died hours after several Chhatra League activists confined him to his office and mentally tortured him, alleged faculty members of the university.

The university authorities formed a three-member committee to probe the incident.

Kuet teachers and students announced that they would boycott academic activities till further notice demanding a fair investigation.

## Schoolgirl

FROM PAGE 1

Battery-run auto-rickshaws are illegal under the existing rules and not registered with the Bangladesh Road Transport Authority.

The recent deaths -- of Notre Dame student Nayeem Hasan and SSC examinee Mainuddin Islam -- both involved drivers and vehicles without proper documentation.

Hafiza's death is the third in less than 10 days at a time when students have been demonstrating for safe roads in the capital and elsewhere in the country.

Yesterday, students of different schools and colleges continued their ongoing protests in Dhaka's Rampura area.

They demonstrated near Rampura Bridge and chanted slogans demanding the authorities meet their 11-point demand, including road safety, half fare for students in all public transport across the country and justice for their fellows killed in road accidents.

Khilgaon Model College student Shohagi Samia, who led the protest, said, "The protest cannot be stopped by any threat or fear. This protest will continue in realising the 11-point demand."

Shohagi said, "Many others are protesting for safe roads. Some gave a nine-point demand while others gave a six-point demand. There is no dispute among us. We just place our demands by strengthening some points after discussing with students from some schools and colleges."

She said considering the ongoing HSC exams, they have become tactical in the movement, but will not leave the road.

She said around 12:00 noon today, students will stand on the sidewalk of Rampura Bridge, display red cards and organise a cartoon exhibition against "corruption and mismanagement" in the road transport sector.

Many drivers are operating vehicles without licences and the vehicles themselves are without fitness clearances due to corruption, Shohagi said, adding that these are reasons for accidents.

This must be stopped, she added. Meanwhile, while students were checking papers of drivers and vehicles on the road in Rampura, a scuffle took place between police and students yesterday.

Later, senior police officials came and calmed the students. Additional police were deployed in the area to maintain law and order.

Meanwhile, Bangladesh Gono Adhikar Parishad -- a newly formed political platform led by former Ducus vice-president Nurul Haque Nur -- expressed solidarity with the ongoing student protest.

At a protest rally in front of the Jatiya Press Club around 3:00pm, Nur warned the government against harassing agitating students as they had done during the road safety movement in 2018.

He said the government must reduce prices of fuel and ensure half fare for students at public transport across the country.

## Bangladesh

FROM PAGE 1

have Covid negative test certificates done using RT-PCR machines, within 48 hours of starting a trip. The time frame was 72 hours before Omicron was detected, the notice added.

While in quarantine, a Covid test will be conducted on the seventh day of the stay and another after 14 days. The cost of the tests will also have to be borne by the travellers, read the notice.

The travellers will also have to book hotels before boarding the flights. If the Covid test result is positive after seven days, the respective passenger will be sent to isolation, the notice explained. If the result comes out negative, the individual still will have to stay in quarantine for the remaining seven days at the hotel, it added.

On the 14th day, a Covid-negative report will allow the returnee to go home.

Health Minister Zahid Maleque on Thursday announced the 14-day quarantine protocol for passengers arriving from the seven countries. He also warned of stern action against the hotel authorities concerned and incoming passengers for breaching the protocols.