

Fear of syndicates still remains

Recruiters say over reopening Malaysian labour market

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

After the Malaysian labour market reopened for Bangladeshi workers on Sunday, recruiting agencies yesterday voiced concern over the re-emergence of syndicates to send workers to Malaysia, a factor that led to corruption and closure of the market in the past.

The labour market reopened following signing of a memorandum of understanding (MoU) between the two countries in Kuala Lumpur.

However, organisations of recruiting agencies expressed their aforementioned concern, saying that they are still uncertain over how to send workers to the reopened market.

Fakhrul Islam, former finance secretary of Bangladesh Association of International Recruiting Agencies (Baira), told this newspaper that none of the governments have publicised the details of the MoU yet. They have concerns over whether there are any clauses on the document that may facilitate syndicates.

Meanwhile, welcoming the signing, recruiting agencies under the banner "Sammilita Ganotantrik Jote" organised a press conference at the capital's Dhaka Reporters Unity yesterday.

Addressing the conference, Mansur Ahmed Kalam, former secretary general of Baira, said they are yet to know about the procedure regarding their scope to send workers to Malaysia.

Baira member and lawmaker Lt Gen (ret'd) Masud Uddin Chowdhury said they might have to stage a protest, if the procedure does not fulfil their expectation.

Welcoming the MoU signing, another platform, "Owners of General Recruiting Agencies", organised a views-exchange programme on opening the labour market for licensed agencies at a city hotel on Sunday evening.

Tipu Sultan, president of Recruiting Agencies Oikya Parishad, who addressed the session, said although the government reiterated that there will be no syndicates, fear

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Putting himself at danger, an elderly man boards a rickshaw with three large sacks of goods. Two of the sacks placed at the front of the rickshaw is taking up so much space that the man had to sit on the thin edge of the vehicle's hood. Despite the obvious risk, this is a common scene on the capital's roads. This photo was taken yesterday from Dhaka University area.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

Navy to get more warships, equipment: PM

UNB, Dhaka

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday said the government



plans to include more advanced warships and war equipment for Bangladesh Navy as part of modernising defence.

She was addressing a function at Bangladesh Naval Academy (BNA) as chief guest, virtually joining from her official residence Gono Bhaban.

The event marked the "President Parade" of the passing out cadets of the Midshipman 2019 Alfa and Direct Entry Officer 2021 Bravo.

Hasina said the navy has been turned into a full-fledged, "three-dimensional" force through the inclusion of two submarines -- "BNS Navajatra" and "BNS Joyjatra" -- in 2017.

"The navy will be able to play a stronger role in ensuring the safety of the country's vast and resource rich maritime areas, prevent human trafficking and smuggling and

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Democracy, free press vital for peace

In conversation with Turkish writer, journalist Ahmet Coskunaydin



If a country is living under a dictator or a president of that kind of system, it is very dangerous. If a country has democracy and free press, waging a war is not that easy.

COSKUNAYDIN
MEMBER OF TURKEY-BASED GLOBAL JOURNALISM COUNCIL

PORIMOL PALMA

Dictatorship is a dangerous way of rule. It can demolish a country and poses risks for more conflict, said Turkish writer and journalist Ahmet Coskunaydin.

"If a country is living under a dictator or a president of that kind of system, it is very dangerous. If a country has democracy and free press, waging a war is not that easy," said Coskunaydin, a member of Global Journalism Council based in Turkey.

"...we have seen this in Libya and Iraq. They [dictators] demolished their own countries and their systems," he said.

Coskunaydin, who wrote a book on Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina in Turkish, visited Bangladesh recently. The book is expected to hit the shelves soon.

He was invited as a speaker at the World Peace Conference, organised by the foreign ministry in Dhaka on December 4-5.

Peace activists and a number of former heads of governments from 50 countries spoke at the conference, organised as part of "Mujib Year" and golden jubilee of the country's independence. It also marked the celebration of five decades of Bangladesh's peace-centric diplomacy.

In a conversation with The Daily Star, Coskunaydin lauded Bangladesh

for its socio-economic growth and for sheltering more than a million Rohingya, who had fled brutal military atrocities in Myanmar's Rakhine State.

He said he is a great admirer of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, who advocated for social justice, freedom, democracy and peace with neighbours and all other countries, which he observed is similar to the values of Turkish founding father Kemal Ataturk.

The fact that Bangladesh organised such a global gathering means this country carries the flag for global peace. This has made its responsibilities even greater, he said. "It means you have the willingness to solve global conflict, to realise peace all over the world," Coskunaydin remarked. "Every conflict should be solved over the table through peaceful process."

He said Bangladesh has the commitment to establish peace, and this conference is a testimony to that. However, he said, there should be actions, rather than only words.

He went on to say that it is important to establish peace at home first.

"If your family has problems and fight each other, how can you help the neighbours for peace? Bangladesh... does not have internal problem. It is positive, it is an advantage," the journalist said.

'We will send aid for Afghans'

Says foreign secretary at OIC council

BSS, Dhaka

Bangladesh has announced a humanitarian aid package, which includes food and medical assistance, for the Afghan people.

Foreign Secretary Masud Bin Momen revealed the information during the 17th Extraordinary Council of Foreign Ministers of the OIC on Afghanistan -- held on Sunday in Islamabad, Pakistan -- a foreign ministry press release said yesterday.

The foreign secretary is leading a high-level delegation, which includes Bangladesh Ambassador to Saudi Arabia and Permanent Representative of Bangladesh to OIC, Bangladesh High Commissioner to Pakistan, and Director-General of the International

Organisation Wing of the foreign ministry.

During the council meeting, Masud expressed deep concern on the economic and humanitarian crisis looming over the majority of the Afghan population, due to acute shortage of food, shelter and social services, which may worsen as winter approaches.

He hoped that inclusive socio-economic development of Afghanistan will continue uninterrupted, so that all segments of the society can effectively contribute to the rebuilding process of their country and maintain regional harmony.

Masud also remarked that Bangladesh can be a partner in Afghanistan's developmental process,

as his country seeks to enhance regional cooperation for attaining a vision of shared prosperity for the region.

While appreciating the OIC for convening this extraordinary council, he urged the leaders to intensify cooperation within and beyond OIC in support of the Afghan people.

Bangladesh also reiterated its support to the Palestinian cause for an independent and viable state of Palestine, with East Jerusalem as the capital.

The Extraordinary Council of Foreign Ministers was preceded by a Senior Officials Meeting.

Earlier, the foreign secretary inaugurated the Bangabandhu Corner on the High Commission premises.

Two Star journo get Unicef awards



Nilima Prabir
STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Two journalists of The Daily Star have been awarded Unicef Meena Media Awards-2021, in recognition of their excellence in journalism promoting child rights.

The newspaper's staff reporter Nilima Jahan has been awarded the "Special

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BCL leader, ringleader?

Police suspect after arresting four over yaba trade

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

In the name of going to the beach for picnics, they used to smuggle yaba from Cox's Bazar to Gazipur.

Purchasing the pink tablets at Tk 70 each, they used to sell it in Gazipur for Tk 250. For carrying the consignments, they made a special chamber beneath private cars so that no one would be able to trace the pills even after inspecting the vehicle.

Police's Detective Branch (DB) disclosed the findings following the arrest of four people from the capital's Jatrabari area, with 25,000 yaba pills last Saturday.

The arrestees are Rubel Islam, Rakibul Hasan, Surja Barman Shanto, and Rony Ahmed.

DB is now interrogating the arrestees on a three-day police remand in a case filed with Jatrabari Police Station. Of the arrestees, Rubel is the personal car driver of Mohammad Jahangir Sarkar, organising secretary of Gazipur

district's Chhatra League (BCL).

Rubel was also arrested earlier in Dinajpur and is wanted in a narcotic case filed in the district.

Investigators said the arrestees have already admitted to smuggling over two lakh yaba pills from Teknaf in the last three months alone and handing them over to Jahangir. This has led police to suspect that the BCL leader has been leading the narcotics syndicate over the years.

The Daily Star, however, wasn't able to verify the claim, as Jahangir's phone was found switched off when this correspondent tried to contact him. Police said he has been on the run ever since Rubel and his three associates were arrested.

This newspaper also tried to reach Jahangir's father Iqbal Hossain Sarkar, a former member of Ward-2 of Tilahati Union Parishad of Gazipur, but he was not at home, while his phone was also found switched off.

Mashiur Rahman, deputy

commissioner of DB Gulshan Division, told The Daily Star that the arrestees had brought yaba consignments from Teknaf to Gazipur through Dhaka several times.

"We have come across some names during investigation. Everyone who's found involved will be brought under law," he said.

Mohammad Amir Hossain, inspector of Gazipur district DB police, said they have come to know Jahangir has several associates to smuggle yaba. "Once the consignments reach Gazipur, he distributes them to different areas."

Police sources said Jahangir is accused in at least six cases with different police stations in Gazipur and Dhaka under explosives and narcotics acts. He was also found involved in extortion and illegally grabbing property.

Meanwhile, allegations are rife against Jahangir even among his BCL cohorts.

Mahim Sarkar, publicity secretary of Sreepur Upazila Chhatra League unit, claimed that last August, Jahangir and his followers took over their generator business for not paying tolls.

Rona Mia, a BCL activist of Gazipur's Mawna, claimed Jahangir and his followers beat his associates for protesting his extortion activities in MC Bazar area.

Regarding the criminal activities, Zahidul Alam Robin, general secretary of Gazipur BCL unit, said they have already sent a letter to central BCL committee, requesting stern action against Jahangir.

SM Shafiqullah, superintendent of Gazipur police, said they are investigating the incident and conducting drives to arrest those involved. "No matter their identity or how powerful they are, action will be taken against all those found involved with narcotics trade."

Our Correspondent in Gazipur also contributed to this report.

Khaleda's health still unchanged

Says BNP

UNB, Dhaka

BNP yesterday said the health of Khaleda Zia, who is currently undergoing treatment for liver cirrhosis at the capital's Evercare Hospital, did not improve.

"Our leader Begum Khaleda Zia's condition is critical, and there's no sign of improvement," said BNP's senior joint secretary general Ruhul Kabir Rizvi.

He also said Khaleda's condition is still showing signs of deterioration for lack of necessary treatment.

He alleged that the government has been behaving like a "ruthless and cruel ruler" by depriving Khaleda of advanced medical treatment.

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NO EVICTION WITHOUT REHABILITATION... Transport workers under the banner of "Battery-run Rickshaw-Van-Easy Bike Sangram Committee" staged a demo blockading Barishal city's Ashwini Kumar Hall area yesterday, demanding implementation of the draft of the Battery-run Transportation Licence Guideline.

PHOTO: TITU DAS

84pc women faced sexual harassment

Says BNWLA

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Approximately 84 percent of women in Bangladesh are constantly subjected to sexual harassment on streets, while using public transport, at educational institutes, workplaces and in the confines of their homes.

Advocate Salma Ali, president of Bangladesh National Women Lawyer's Association (BNWLA), said this in a statement.

According to the statement, 1,194 incidents of rape were reported from January to November this year, as per news reports published in various national dailies and online news portals. Of them, 489 were women and 705 children.

The statement also mentioned that BNWLA has been closely

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Stolen from 30ft below sea level!

13 held for stealing construction materials from sunken ship

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Chattogram river police early yesterday arrested 13 people for allegedly stealing construction materials of Padma Bridge.

The materials were stolen from a sunken ship about 30 feet below sea level.

"We seized the engine boat and arrested 13 people from Shahamirpur area of Karnaphuli river, with 4.5 tonnes of galvanised iron angles, which was meant for construction work of Padma Bridge, around 3:10am," said Kritiman Chakma, additional superintendent of river police, Chattogram region.

Two divers were also among the arrestees, said the police official.

"The arrestees confessed that they had stolen the precious iron angles... with the help of some scrap dealers in Chattogram," said Kritiman.

"The contractor has already been able to remove about 45 percent materials from the sinking ship. As the contractor has stopped its work for the last ten days, the gang started stealing the materials" said the ASP.

On July 13, the vessel MV Hang Gang-1, carrying 1,200 metric tonnes of iron angles, capsized in the Bay of Bengal after hitting a sunken lighter vessel near Bhasanchar, the official said.