

No special quotas for expatriats

Malaysian home minister says on recruitment

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Malaysian Home Minister Hamzah Zainuddin yesterday said his country will no longer give special quotas for the recruitment of foreign workers, reports The Star.

Hamzah said every application from Malaysian employers must now go through his ministry's evaluation committee to determine the number of foreign workers eligible to be employed by the set terms and conditions.

"Whatever people may say, take note that any employer who needs to hire foreign workers must obtain the committee's approval according to the law," Hamzah said.

If an employer wants to get the additional workers they have applied for, they need to submit another application to the human resources ministry, he added.

He, however, said if the quota system was not applied and recruitment could be carried out freely, foreign workers would simply enter the country without adhering to the conditions and criteria set, resulting in various welfare problems.

'Tamim doesn't want to play T20Is'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh Cricket Board president Nazmul Hassan yesterday said that Tamim Iqbal has expressed his desire not to play T20 Internationals anymore.

The BCB president, while talking to reporters, said that the national team opener informed him of his desire when they last had a talk on the issue.

"The last time I had a talk with Tamim, I asked him to return in T20Is. I told him he's the best opener and he should play while talking over phone. He asked me not to pressure him on this issue, but said he does not want to play in this format," Hassan told media.

"When he said that I felt there is nothing else to be said. If someone doesn't want to play in a format, he should not be forced," the BCB president added.

Tamim last played a T20 international in March, 2020 against Zimbabwe.

The left-handed batsman recently returned from an injury and scored two half-centuries for Minister Group Dhaka in the Bangabandhu Bangladesh Premier League.



People travel across the Buriganga on small dinghies as dense fog reduces visibility, which has been disrupting river traffic for the last few days, near the Showari ghat in the capital.

PHOTO: AMRAN HOSSAIN

Bail of militant suspects remains a concern

Officials stress on monitoring pending cases, suspects

MOHAMMAD JAMIL KHAN

Ariful Karim Chowdhury alias Adnan was arrested by police in 2015 over his involvement with banned militant outfit Harkat-ul-Jihad al-Islami (Huji). He was then a senior officer in a private bank.

Ariful, who completed a diploma in computer science, lost his job after being arrested in a case filed with Khilgaon Police Station under the anti-terrorism act.

Coming out of jail on bail, he got involved with Ansarullah Bangla Team (ABT), another banned militant outfit, and started activities using online platforms. Soon, he became the ABT chief of a part of Dhaka city and in-charge of fund collection, said Rab officials.

Rapid Action Battalion arrested him again in the capital's Mirpur on December 19, 2019. He has been behind bars since then.

Samiun Rahman alias Ibn Hamdan is one of the top militants with experience of fighting for the Islamic State in Syria. Detectives of Dhaka Metropolitan Police picked him up from Dhaka on September 28, 2014. But he too managed to secure bail.

He later collected an Indian passport illegally providing false information and fled the country. On September 17, 2017, New Delhi police arrested Samiun.

The cases of Ariful and Saimun are not isolated ones. Many other militants managed to secure bail and continued their activities.

A database of Police Headquarters (PHQ) shows 4,881 people were arrested over their involvement with different militant outfits in 16 years since 2005. Of them, 2,456

walked out of jail on bail. A total of 251 suspects out of 2,456 went into hiding.

As many as 1,324 cases were filed against 5,202 people during this period. Of them, 62 militant suspects were handed the death penalty, according to the database.

Officials working on countering extremism said collecting evidence against militant suspects often takes time which gives them the chance to secure bail.

Also, a lack of public prosecutors experienced in dealing with militant cases goes in favour of the suspects, they added.

"Militants going out of jail on bail is definitely a threat," said Md Moniruzzaman, additional deputy inspector general of the Anti-Terrorism Unit (ATU).

"To address the problem, we have already taken some measures like proper monitoring of every case pending trial. We are also analysing cases to check if there were any loopholes and holding talks with the prosecution," he told The Daily Star.

Steps have also been taken to monitor the militant suspects coming out of jail on bail, said Moniruzzaman.

In 2017, a small team of counter-terrorism unit (CTU) was formed in every police unit across the country. The ATU is communicating with CTUs regularly to monitor the whereabouts of militants who are on bail, said the officer.

"We often send dedicated teams to different districts to check and collect data on these militants, what they are doing, whom they are communicating with so that they do not have any scope to reorganise," the additional

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DiCaprio greets Bangladesh govt

STAR REPORT

Academy Award winning Hollywood actor Leonardo DiCaprio, who is an outspoken climate activist, has congratulated the government of Bangladesh on the recently established "marine protected area" around Saint Martin's Island.

He also greeted the local communities and NGOs on the achievement, which will help protect the island's biodiversity.

The St Martin's Marine Protected Area is the second and by far the largest marine protected area in Bangladesh.

DiCaprio's tweet on Friday read, "Congrats to the Government of Bangladesh, local communities & NGOs on a newly established Marine Protected Area around Saint Martin's Island that will protect an incredible community of biodiversity and provide key habitat for Bangladesh's only coral reef."



Shafique Ahmed moved to ICU

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Former law minister Shafique Ahmed has been brought to the ICU of LabAid Hospital in Dhaka after he was admitted there with liver problems.

Upon doctor's suggestions, his family is considering sending him abroad for better treatment as his health condition is not improving, Mahbub Shafique, son of Shafique Ahmed, told The Daily Star yesterday.

Contacted, Law Minister Anisul Huq said he has been monitoring the health issues of the former law minister.

Eminent jurist Shafique Ahmed was technocrat law minister of the Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina led government from 2009 to 2014.

Lower courts will run physically as well Says SC administration

STAR REPORT

Judicial functions at all lower courts will run virtually as well as physically from today, said a notification issued by the Supreme Court administration yesterday.

All types of cases can be filed with the civil and criminal courts and tribunals physically by taking necessary protective measures, it added.

The judges can perform testimony at the courts in physical presence, and the accused in criminal cases can also physically file the surrender application with the courts.

Earlier on January 18, the administration issued two separate notifications stating all the judicial functions of both the Appellate and High Court Divisions of the Supreme Court will run virtually from January 19 due to the surge in Covid-19 transmissions.

UN chief 'convinced' Russia won't invade Ukraine

AFP, United Nations

UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres said Friday that a Russian invasion of Ukraine would be against international law and said he was confident that it would not happen.

"There should not be any military intervention. In this context, I think that diplomacy is the way to solve problems," Guterres told reporters.

"I'm convinced it will not happen and I strongly hope to be right," he added.

Deaths double

FROM PAGE 1 and Omicron variants were prevalent.

"We have to wait for a couple of weeks to see how much impact the Omicron variant will have. It is highly likely that it will be worse than in Europe and elsewhere because of low vaccination and slack virus curbs here."

Less than half of the targeted 70 percent of the population have been inoculated with both doses of vaccines, according to the DGHS.

Even though cases were rising rapidly since early this month, the number of deaths was low compared to the last wave.

The government has imposed some restrictions, including mandatory wearing of masks, while all educational institutions were closed yesterday.

Last week, the DGHS reported 61,741 Covid cases, more than triple the number recorded in the previous week. As of noon yesterday, 1,935 Covid-19 patients were in hospitals across the country. The number was 1,197 a week before.

In the 24 hours till 8:00am yesterday, the directorate reported 9,614 new cases and the positivity rate was 28.02 percent against 40,134 tests done countrywide.

Their TINs were abused without knowledge.

FROM PAGE 1 person registering the car on a valid TIN certificate.

We are reducing people's sufferings -- otherwise, they would have to face harassment in the hands of both BRTA and tax officials," one such middleman told The Daily Star asking not to be named for fear of reprisal.

In four tax zones of Chattogram, at least 565 vehicles were registered with the TINs of just six people, according to tax officials of the zones. They are yet to finish cross-checking the BRTA and NBR databases, but the actual number will most definitely be "huge".

Two of the six people

whose TINs were liberally abused are Jasmine and Biswas.

The Daily Star has managed to trace down the owners of 13 of the vehicles that were registered with Jasmine's TIN. Most said they resorted to the middlemen's service for want of TIN.

At present, 62.93 lakh have a TIN out of a potential net of crores.

Quizzed how middlemen were getting away with such fraud during vehicle registration, Touhidul Islam, assistant director of the BRTA's Chattogram office, said: "We don't know how the others used one person's TIN certificate. The NBR will be able to say

better as it is a matter of TIN forgery."

The days of getting away by using fake TINs for vehicle registration and fitness certificates are in the past, according to Muhammad Aminur Rahman, first secretary (tax rules) of the NBR.

Fake TIN users will be caught easily now because of the interlinking of NBR and BRTA servers.

After being caught for the fraud, the fake TIN users are being fined according to the law, Rahman told The Daily Star yesterday.

But for those whose TINs were abused, a different penalty awaits them for no fault of their own: from

this fiscal year, ownership of more than a single car, sports utility vehicle (SUV) or minivan means one must pay 50 percent more income tax for each of the vehicles.

For Biswas, a returnee migrant worker who is getting by by leasing out the auto-rickshaw he bought with the savings he had remitted before packing his bags in the Middle East, this is beyond his mental faculty.

He has four auto-rickshaws, a microbus, one car and one pick-up registered with his TIN.

"We have only one car and I have mentioned it in our income tax file," said Elias Hossain, Jasmine's

husband. Hossain lodged a written complaint with the Chittagong Tax Zone-1, where they file their income tax returns, and the BRTA about amending Jasmine's record.

She has 70 auto-rickshaws, eight cars, eight covered vans, five trucks, four SUVs, four minibuses, one bus, one prime mover and one human hauler.

"I went to the BRTA office six times with my wife but they failed to solve our problem," said a frustrated Hossain.

As a result, the couple has failed to submit their income tax files on time, meaning further woes await them.

EC bill to be placed

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Huda said there should be a clear outline for eligibility and ineligibility for the posts of CEC and other commissioners. Those with allegations against them should not be considered, he added.

Just a month before the expiry of the five-year tenure of the incumbent EC, led by CEC KM Nurul Huda, the cabinet on January 17 gave the approval for the bill.

As per the proposed law, an EC search committee would be formed with approval from the president. The committee would recommend suitable candidates to the president.

The new CEC and commissioners must be 50 years or older

Bangladeshis with at least 20 years experience in important government, semi-government, private or judicial positions, according to the bill.

Even though the constitution said the CEC and other commissioners must be appointed under law, the law was never formulated. The president has been appointing the CEC and commissioners without the law.

In order to give legal protection to previous ECs, it would be considered that those were formed under this law, the draft says.

President Abdul Hamid has had a dialogue with registered political parties since December 20 to discuss the EC formation issue. Most of the parties that took part either gave

names for the search committee or demanded a law be made for EC formation.

The next general elections slated for late 2023 or early 2024 would be held by the new EC.

Fire kills two in high-rise building in Mumbai

REUTERS, Mumbai

At least two people were killed and over 15 injured when a large fire broke out in a multi-storey residential building in India's financial capital Mumbai yesterday, authorities said.

Decision after talks with students

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the lives of 23 fasting students, he doesn't have human values. We appeal to the president and the prime minister to take immediate action to save the lives of our fellow students," a student spokesperson said before they began marching on the campus of Shahjalal University of Science and Technology.

The fasting students have been given intravenous rehydration and nutrition supplements. Sixteen of them were hospitalised as of yesterday afternoon. They have not

broken their fast.

Twenty-four students began the strike at 2:50pm on Wednesday. One of them had to leave after his father had a heart attack, hearing that his son started a fast unto death.

On January 13, a group of resident students began demonstrating, alleging that their provost, Zafarin Ahmed Liza, misbehaved with a student who called her to report bad food and other issues.

The protest gained momentum after police fired rubber bullets and

threw sound grenades in a clash that left over 30 students injured on Sunday evening.

During the meeting yesterday at Dipu Moni's residence, UGC Chairman Prof Kazi Shahidullah, Sust Teachers' Association President Prof Tulshi Kumar Das, General Secretary Prof Muhibul Alam, Physical Science Faculty Dean Prof Rashed Talukder, Applied Science Faculty Dean Prof Ariful Islam and Business Faculty Dean Prof Dr Khairul Islam were present.

The education minister also said the police action on students and harassment of teachers should be investigated.

In response to the minister's call for discussion, the demonstrating students said they wanted to sit for the discussion without any further delay as those on hunger strike were suffering.

"No matter what, we want the VC to step down. If needed, all of us will join the hunger strike," a spokesperson for the students said during a briefing.

Biden, Japan's Kishida vow to 'push back' on China

AFP, Washington

US President Joe Biden and Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida agreed to "push back" against China and

condemned North Korea's spate of missile tests, while Biden underlined US commitment to defending Japan, in virtual talks Friday.

In a video meeting that

lasted about one hour and 20 minutes, Biden also agreed to travel to Japan in late spring of this year for an official visit and summit of the Quad, which groups Australia,

India, Japan and the United States, a senior US official said.

Biden has made restoring the importance of the US-Japanese relationship a priority

since taking office exactly a year ago, following his predecessor Donald Trump's questioning the benefit of even longstanding US alliances in both Asia and Europe.