

5 lakh expats returned home after losing job

Minister tells JS
STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Since the Covid-19 outbreak, more than five lakh Bangladeshi expatriate workers have returned home after losing their jobs, Expatriates' Welfare Minister Imran Ahmad yesterday informed parliament.

The minister said this in reply to a query of Awami League MP Manzur Hossain from Faridpur-1.

Replying to another query, Ahmad told parliament that 5.4 lakh new migrant workers have been employed abroad till May 2022, due to various diplomatic initiatives of the government.

In response to a question of AL MP Didarul Alam from Chattogram-4, the minister said till May 2022, a total of 10.50 lakh female migrant workers have been working in 84 countries of the world.

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Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina observes a moment of silence after placing a wreath at the portrait of Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman at Dhanmondi-32, on the occasion of Awami League's 73rd founding anniversary yesterday.

PHOTO: PTI

Dhaka air remains 'unhealthy'

UNB, Dhaka

Though Dhaka did not take the spot of the world's most polluted city, its air quality remained "unhealthy" yesterday.

With an air quality index (AQI) score of 112 at 9:01am, the metropolis ranked sixth in the list of cities with the worst air.

Indonesia's Jakarta, Chile's Santiago and Pakistan's Karachi occupied the first three spots, with AQI scores of 171, 154 and 151, respectively.

An AQI between 101 and 200 is considered "unhealthy", particularly for sensitive groups.

A report by Department of Environment (DoE) and World Bank in March 2019 pointed out that the three main sources of air pollution in Dhaka are "brick kilns, fumes from vehicles and dust from construction sites".

As per the World Health Organization, air pollution kills an estimated seven million people worldwide every year, largely as a result of increased mortality from stroke, heart disease and other conditions.

PRAYER TIMING
JUNE 24

Fajr	Juma	Asr	Maghrib	Esha
AZAN 4-05	12-30	5-00	6-52	8-17
JAMAAT 4-40	1-15	5-15	6-55	8-45

SOURCE: ISLAMIC FOUNDATION

LIVEABILITY INDEX

Dhaka seventh least liveable city in world

HELEMUL ALAM

Dhaka is the seventh least liveable city in the world, according to the Economist Intelligence Unit's Global Liveability Index for 2022.

The annual global survey was published yesterday.

The Global Liveability Index ranked 173 cities and Bangladesh's capital became 166, with 39.2 points.

The index ranks the cities based on more than 30 qualitative and quantitative factors across five broad categories: stability, healthcare, culture and environment, education, and infrastructure.

In 2021, Dhaka ranked fourth least liveable among 140 cities in the world. It ranked third worst in 2019 and second worst in the 2018 index. No report was published in 2020 due to the pandemic.

Vienna of Austria has been ranked the most liveable city in the world with 99.1 points, while Copenhagen of Denmark and Zurich of Switzerland ranked second and third, respectively, with 98 and 96.3 points.

Damascus, the war-torn capital of Syria, remains the least liveable city with 30.7 points, while Lagos of Nigeria ranked second worst with 32.2 points and Tripoli of Libya ranked third worst with 32.5 points.

Karachi of Pakistan ranked 168th with 37.5 points.

WHAT EXPERTS SAY
Adil Mohammad Khan, former general secretary of Bangladesh Institute of Planners (BIP), said there has been no significant development in the city's quality of life in recent times.

He said the main reason behind Dhaka's present situation is the lack of growth control, which is crucial for advancing in the ranking.

Adil also mentioned failure to protect the environment, lack of proper management, unchecked number of vehicles, especially motorcycles, entering the city, and encroachment of waterbodies as major reasons behind Dhaka's gradual downfall.

TOP 3 LIVEABLE CITIES | TOP 3 LEAST LIVEABLE CITIES

Vienna	Damascus
Copenhagen	Lagos
Zurich	Tripoli

REASONS BEHIND DHAKA'S SITUATION

- No improvement in quality of life
- Lack of growth control, management
- Failure to protect environment
- Unchecked number of vehicles

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Decentralisation
- Shifting industries gradually
- Controlling city's growth rate strictly
- No new industries in city

"If there is no control on growth, it will not work even by increasing roads or recovering canals, as when one side of a canal is being recovered the other side is getting occupied again."

Padma Bridge has already been constructed, and now decentralisation of the city is very important, he said. "If we can reduce Dhaka's density of population through decentralisation, we will be able to proceed in other indicators gradually."

The industries, which are one of the main causes behind the low ranking, will have to be shifted gradually, he said. Then it will be possible to make Dhaka liveable, otherwise the pressure on the capital will continue to increase.

"The government will have to control the city's growth rate strictly. Also, it should not allow any new industrial and commercial facility for its improvement," he added.

Government celebrating, keeping flood victims hungry

Alleges Fakhrul

UNB

The government is indulging in Padma Bridge's celebration by keeping lakhs of flood victims hungry, alleged BNP secretary general Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir yesterday.

"Our people are starving and not getting treatment in flood affected areas, but they [govt] are occupied with Padma Bridge's inauguration festival," he said.

The BNP leader made the remarks while distributing relief materials among flood-affected people on the premises of Khazar Mokam High School in Sylhet's Jaintiapur upazila.

Fakhrul claimed that the government allocated only Tk 60 lakh for 30 lakh flood victims in Sylhet, while hundreds of crores of taka are being spent on the inauguration programme of Padma Bridge.

"People are being washed away by the floods, not getting food and treatment. But the government is paying no attention to it," Fakhrul said.

Fakhrul along with BNP standing committee member Iqbal Hasan Mahmud Tuku reached Sylhet from Dhaka by road at noon to witness the flood situation and distribute relief materials.

LEARNING LOSS IN FLOOD Redress it right away: speakers

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Speakers at a discussion yesterday said the government needs to measure the learning loss of students caused by the recent flood situation across the country and respond with proper mapping and adequate budget allocation for the recovery.

The discussion, titled "Education Budget: Trends and Expectations", was organised by Campaign for Popular Education (Campe) and Education Watch, in cooperation with Unicef and British High Commission in Dhaka at a city hotel.

Pointing to children's learning loss amid the pandemic, Campe Executive Director Rasheda K Chowdhury said the country is facing another disaster in recent floods in terms of learning loss.

She suggested the authorities immediately start mapping and collecting data to measure the loss and allocate the budget accordingly.

Rasheda said the out-of-pocket expenses for education are higher than the budgetary allocation in the sector, and the gap is widening gradually.

She urged for launching a "special stipend" to bring back students, who were dropped out amid the pandemic, to the classroom.

"We could have an alternative fund for students who are facing learning loss", said lawmaker Aroma Dutta.

Campe Programme Manager Mostafizur Rahman, in his presentation, said the proposed budget for education in the 2022-2023 fiscal year

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Be vocal to save rivers: speakers

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

People should be united and speak out against river encroachment and pollution to save the waterbodies across the country, said Saber Hossain Chowdhury, chairman of parliamentary body relating Environment, Forest and Climate Change Ministry, yesterday.

He made the remark on closing day of a seminar titled "Inclusive Water Governance" organised jointly by Oxfam Bangladesh, Nagar Unnayan Kendra and Centre for Natural Resource Studies. Referring to transboundary rivers, he said there is a unanimous international agreement titled "Principle of No Harm" that says countries won't do anything within its territory that will harm other countries. "We should follow the same principle when it comes to rivers."

He said the navigation of rivers must be enhanced, early warning system must be made effective to lessen the damages by flood and flash flood. He also emphasised to look at the disaster management and climate change issues through the same lens.

M Mukhlisur Rahman, executive director from Centre for Natural Resources Studies, also spoke at the event, moderated by Nuzhat Nueary, programme officer of Oxfam Bangladesh.

TK 135CR GRAFT CASE Hall-Mark GM denied bail

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The High Court yesterday refused to grant bail to Hall-Mark Group's General Manager Tushar Ahmed in a Tk 135-crore money laundering case.

The HC, however, ordered the lower court concerned to finish the trial proceedings in six months.

If the trial court cannot dispose of the case in six months it will consider Tushar's bail, the bench of Justice ASM Abdul Mobin and Justice Md Atoar Rahman said in the order.

Deputy Attorney General Sujit Chatterjee Bappi told The Daily Star Tushar has been in the custody for 10 years.

Tortured while on video call with family

Victim shares ordeal of being held captive by trafficking syndicate in Iraq

MOHAMMAD JAMIL KHAN

Find your fellow Bangladeshis. Bond over the sweet homesick feelings. Be friends. Invite them over for a meal.

Once they are in your den, confine them amid their utter surprise.

This is how an Iraq-based transnational human trafficking syndicate members have been trapping Bangladeshi expatriates, along with their Pakistani and Iraqi cohorts.

In the first 24 hours of captivity, syndicate members torture the victims physically and record the whole ordeal. The videos are later sent to the victims' family members to blackmail them for a ransom.

These horrific accounts came to the fore after seven Bangladeshi victims were released from the syndicate's captivity in Iraq in the last 48 hours. Of them, three have managed to establish

communication with the Bangladesh embassy in Iraq and back to their work. Five remain untraced.

Following the arrest of two members of the syndicate — Imran Hossain and Alamgir Hossain — from Narayanganj and Dhaka by the economic and human trafficking team of Counter Terrorism and Transnational Crime (CTTC) unit on Monday, the victims were released.

According to CTTC officials, the released victims have been identified as Apel Ali, Sher Ali, Bablu, Maruf, Zihad, Foyzal and Mazlu Ar Rahman.

Tohidul Islam, CTTC additional deputy commissioner, told this correspondent that victim Apel, Sher Ali and Mazlu went back to work safely.

"We are currently trying to trace the five other victims," he said.

The investigators have managed to get details of five Bangladeshi syndicate



A large part of the main road at Dhaka Udyan was dug up by authorities over two months ago to install an underground cable line. Makeshift bamboo planks have been set up, using which pedestrians have to cross the area, putting themselves at risk of accidents. This photo was taken from Mohammadpur yesterday.

PHOTO: RASHED SHUMON

29 hospitalised with dengue

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

At least 29 dengue patients have been hospitalised across the country in the last 24 hours, till 8:00am yesterday.

With the new cases, three of them outside Dhaka, the total number of dengue cases has risen to 864, according to Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS).

A total of 109 patients are still undergoing treatment; 754 patients have been released from hospitals, and one has died so far.

Warning city corporations of a major outbreak this year, experts suggested the corporations take extensive measures immediately to control Aedes mosquitoes.

Clear, stagnant water, the breeding ground for Aedes mosquitoes,

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