

Oman visa suspension temporary

Says its embassy in Dhaka

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Oman temporarily suspended recruiting Bangladeshis as an increasing number of laid-off workers were illegally working there without the full legal protection of their rights, said its embassy in Dhaka yesterday.

In a statement, the embassy said Oman is conducting a comprehensive review to maintain foreign labour market stability, and to protect the rights of expatriate workers and their employers.

Oman suspended issuing visas for Bangladeshis across all categories from Tuesday.

“The relevant authorities are exerting all possible efforts to complete the review process as quickly as possible, after which the issuance of visas will resume in accordance with the guidelines and instructions that will be concluded from the review process,” the embassy said.

Oman wants to ensure that companies and individuals who seek visas for foreign workers actually employ them in licenced work and do not exploit them by forcing them into illegal work or activities, the embassy said.

The review will also address “cumbersome, lengthy and costly” recruitment conditions and procedures that some states have imposed, read the statement.

Oman highly values and appreciates the contributions of the expatriate Bangladesh labour force in the development and economic growth of the country and is keen on maintaining and enhancing its close relations with Bangladesh in a way that serves the mutual interests of both the countries, it said.

Asked, Foreign Minister AK Abdul Momen yesterday warned recruiting agencies and brokers of resorting to illegal means to send people abroad. He also cautioned aspirant migrants about dishonest manpower brokers.

“The decision came suddenly. It could be a very temporary measure. We have talked to our ambassador. Hopefully, it would be resolved very soon through discussion,” he said at a briefing at the foreign ministry.



Fishermen prepare to go fishing in the Meghna in Bhola's Shibpur yesterday, hours before the 22-day ban on hilsa fishing and trading was set to expire midnight last night. The ban was imposed to ensure proper breeding.

PHOTO: STAR

HOUSING PROJECTS IN CAPITAL

Produce reports on approval process

Supreme Court asks government

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Appellate Division of the Supreme Court yesterday asked the government authorities to produce detailed reports on how various housing projects in Uttarkhan and Dakkhinkhan areas of the capital received government approval.

In a verbal order, the five-member bench led by Chief Justice Obaidul Hassan also wanted to know the timeline of the approval that allowed various housing companies to go ahead with their projects.

Other members of the bench were Justice Borhan Uddin, Justice M Enayetur Rahim, Justice Md Ashfaul Islam and Justice Md Abu Zafar Siddique.

The order came during a hearing of two separate Civil Appeals filed by the government and Bangladesh Environment Lawyers Association (Bela) as well as several other rights organisations in relation to the legality of the Ashiyan City

project in the same area.

The SC will hold the next hearing on Tuesday, Additional Attorney General Sk Md Golam Morshed said.

Bela Executive Director Syed Rizwana Hasan said they will present their arguments that day.

During yesterday's hearing, lawyers for the Ashiyan City said that their client has all the required approval from all relevant authorities.

They also said that various government and non-government housing projects, including those by Swadesh, Neptune, Basundhara, Jalshiri, Pink City, Lake City Concord, Police Administration Housing Project, BCS Cadre Association Housing and Judicial Officers' Housing are located in the area.

But the writ petitioners singled out the Ashiyan City project, the lawyers said.

The SC said if the Ashiyan City's

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Govt reduces hajj

cost by Tk 92,450

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government yesterday announced hajj packages for next year, reducing the cost by Tk 92,450.

Pilgrims will have to pay Tk 5.78 lakh under the general package, and Tk 9.36 lakh under the special package, Faridul Haque Khan, state minister for religious affairs, told a press briefing at the Secretariat.

Around 1.27 lakh pilgrims can perform hajj in 2024, like this year. Of them, 10,198 people will be able to make it under government management while the rest can go to Saudi Arabia through hajj agencies.

Hajj is likely to take place on June 16 depending on moon sighting. The issuance of visas will start from March 1, while hajj flights will start from May 9.

This year, the government had set Tk 6.71 lakh as the minimum cost for hajj pilgrims under government management and Tk 6.60 lakh as the minimum under private management.

Around 90 percent of the pilgrims perform hajj under private management.

Jail Killing

Day today

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party's central office on Bangabandhu Avenue, Bangabandhu Bhaban and its offices across the country today, reports BSS.

AL leaders will place wreaths at the portrait of Bangabandhu on Dhanmondi 32 at 7:00am. Wreaths will be laid at the graves of Nazrul, Tajuddin and Mansur at Banani graveyard around 7:30am. Prayers will also be offered there.

Floral wreaths will be placed at the grave of Quamruzzaman in Rajshahi. A milad mahfil will be held there.

The AL will arrange a discussion at the capital's Bangabandhu International Conference Centre at 3:00pm. Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, also the party president, will preside over the meeting.

President Mohammed Shahabuddin and PM Hasina yesterday issued separate messages on the occasion of the Jail Killing Day.

In his message, the president said when Bangabandhu was imprisoned in Pakistan jail during the Liberation War, the four national leaders made outstanding contribution in forming the Mujibnagar government, devising war strategy and tactics, carrying out administrative activities, conducting the war, and keeping an eye on refugees to turn the Liberation War into a people's war in 1971.

He said the nation will always remember the contributions of the four national leaders with due respect.

Hasina in her message said the killing of the four national leaders were the sequel to the assassination of the Father of the Nation and most of his family members.

“The purpose of the killers was to break the state structure of the non-communal democratic Bangladesh and undermine our independence achieved at a huge cost,” she said.

India overwhelm SL

on way to semis

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and humid day at the Wankhede Stadium.

But it was all India from then on as Virat Kohli (88) and Shubman Gill (92) combined in a second-wicket stand of 189 while Shreyas Iyer quickfired a 56-ball 82 to help the hosts post 357 for eight.

Structured to fail through?

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BNP Senior Joint Secretary General Ruhul Kabir Rizvi from an undisclosed location told The Daily Star, “Who will join [the dialogue]? All [BNP leaders] are either in jail or on the run ... If your hands and legs are tied and good food is served, would you be able to eat? Can this Election Commission go beyond the directives of Sheikh Hasina?”

BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia is in hospital, party Secretary General Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir is in jail, and Rizvi himself is on the run.

Several cases have been filed against the BNP top brass following clashes and incidents over the BNP rally on October 28.

The EC courier yesterday could not even find a leader at the BNP headquarters in Nayapaltan and Khaleda's Gulshan office to hand over the invitation for the talks.

The courier went to the Nayapaltan headquarters, which was locked and heavily guarded by police, in the morning. Unable to find anyone to give the invitation letter, he went to Khaleda's office.

Failing to find anyone there, he returned to Nayapaltan in the afternoon, hung the letter from an empty chair kept inside the collapsible gate of the BNP office and left.

Law enforcers said the courier hung the letter through the gaps of the collapsible gate.

The experts said the EC has to ensure the BNP is at the table for a meaningful dialogue. As an independent and constitutional body, it can ask the government to ensure an environment so that talks can be held with the BNP and other parties waging a movement to restore the caretaker government system.

According to the EC schedule for tomorrow, it will sit with 22 parties, including the Awami League, at

The EC courier yesterday could not even find a leader at the BNP headquarters in Nayapaltan and Khaleda's Gulshan office to hand over the invitation for the talks.

10:30am. It will sit with 22 more, including the BNP and Jatiya Party, at 3:00pm.

“If 44 representatives from 44 political parties talk for 10 minutes, how much time is required? There will be arguments and counterarguments during the talks. Is it possible to have a meaningful dialogue with so many parties in such a limited time?” said former cabinet secretary Ali Imam Majumder.

This dialogue will not bear any fruit, and will not be meaningful, he told The Daily Star.

Minimum wage for RMG workers

may be fixed Nov 7

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Association (BGMEA) yesterday asked owners to reopen the near-300 factories that have been shuttered amid workers' unrest in Mirpur, Gazipur, Savar, and Ashulia.

The BGMEA asked owners to take law enforcers' assistance if need be.

At yesterday's briefing, Monnujan said the workers demanded ration cards for some daily essentials, adding that the matter is in government's consideration.

Monnujan said she and the prime minister recently discussed how a ration card can be launched for garment factory workers.

Amirul Haque Amin, president of IndustriALL Bangladesh Council (IBC), a global trade union, who was present at Monnujan's press briefing, said the basic salary should be 65 percent of the gross salary.

At present, basic salary is 51 percent of the gross, which starts at Tk 8,000 a month, he said, adding that the annual increment should be raised to 10 percent of the basic from the current 5.

Amin also proposed reducing the number of grades in garment workers' jobs from seven to five.

Towhidur Rahman, president at Bangladesh Apparel Workers Federation, said delays in fixing the minimum wage will deteriorate the situation in the sector.

He demanded compensation for the deceased workers and withdrawal of police cases against the workers.

In Ashulia, demonstrating workers yesterday vandalised a factory gate because it remained open while in the capital's Mirpur police used teargas and water cannons to disperse protesting workers.

This EC assumed office around two years ago but since then did not take any meaningful initiative to create a level playing field, he said, adding, “... The EC should take initiatives so that a meaningful talk with BNP is ensured.”

Shushashoner Jonno Nagorik Secretary Badiul Alam Majumdar said, “It's a dialogue game by the Election Commission, not a real dialogue. It is just an eyewash.”

Badiul said the EC alone cannot hold a credible election but it can prevent an election that will not be participatory and credible. He too criticised the EC for its failure to ensure a level playing field for all parties.

A Dhaka University professor, wishing anonymity, said there is a strong possibility the EC's initiative will fail like it did before.

After taking over in February last year, this EC, led by Chief Election Commissioner Kazi Habibur Awal, invited all registered parties for talks twice but on both occasions the BNP refused to join.

The commission also did not implement important recommendations made by eminent citizens and political parties during talks.

Many have doubts about how much the EC can do since the problem is a political one and the EC has all along been saying that it has nothing to do with political matters.

At Mirpur-II intersection, a woman worker of Apollo Garments said, “We are protesting because the ruling party men assaulted us for demanding better wages.”

On Tuesday, unidentified men – at least one with a firearm – assaulted workers abstaining from work in Mirpur.

The incident happened in front of Epyllion Garments. Security guards at the factory said when the workers ran inside the factory, the men followed them and assaulted them again.

Officials of Islami Bank Hospital, where most of these injured workers were treated, said they received two workers with critical injuries. Twenty others received injuries to the head and spine.

The government yesterday deployed Border Guard Bangladesh in Ashulia and Mirpur.

JS passes labour law

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Labour leaders also asked the factories to ensure the workers' right to strike, which they claimed was overlooked.

EU Ambassador to Bangladesh Charles Whiteley, the European Parliament and European Commission, along with parts of the EU had said early last month that the EU will see whether Bangladesh's labour laws conform to international standards to provide preferential trade benefits under a proposed Generalised Scheme of Preferences (GSP) Plus – a special incentive for developing countries to pursue sustainable development and good governance.

Bangladesh is supposed to lose its current trader scheme of wholly duty-free trade access to the EU from 2029, when the country will graduate from a least-developed country to a developing country.

After 2029, Bangladesh has to be eligible for the much-needed GSP Plus.

Since 2001, Bangladesh exports duty-free to different EU countries under its Everything but Arms (EBA) scheme.

Around 50 percent of Bangladesh's export earnings come from the EU bloc.

At the US-Bangladesh Trade and

Investment Cooperation Forum Agreement (Ticfa) Council held in Dhaka in mid-September, the US said that workers' rights, especially freedom of association and collective bargaining, are a top priority for the Biden-Harris administration.

It urged Bangladesh to allow freedom of association and collective bargaining in the EPZs.

Jatiya Party MPs yesterday in parliament raised their voices for protecting the rights of garments workers and increasing their monthly wages.

Participating in the discussion on the amendment bill, they said the country will not be stable if the workers are not in a pleasant situation.

JP MP Shameem Haider Patwary said some quarters argue that if garment workers' salaries are increased by a large margin, some factories may be forced to shut down.

“You [RMG factory owners] have been profiting for the past 25 years, but you can't take this risk for two years? They [the owners] already have 3-5 houses each and send their children abroad to study ... Meanwhile, the price per unit should be increased through negotiations with foreign buyers.”

A World Cup of top-order

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and it cannot all be about carnage. Teams have looked to contend with the swing for at least the first six to seven overs before the batters start playing their shots. Once a team manages to build partnerships and keep wickets in hand, the score can only rise – seemingly the natural order of things at this World Cup.

To be precise, the first 30 overs is where teams have done the bulk of their scoring. Tournament stats till the halfway point of the World Cup showed that 63.84% of the runs have been scored in the first 30 overs of an innings – highest for any World Cup since 1999. The runs scored between 11 to 30 overs have also been the most since the 1999 World Cup in England.

The intention of teams seems to be to curb the threat of big chases early instead of taking things deep. New Zealand's aggression and solidity in the opening game against England could be a good example in that regard.

South Africa, for instance, have not always looked to smash it around in the first 10 overs and it has paid dividends too as they entered the final 15 overs with lots of wickets in hand in most cases.

The likes of Quinton de Kock, Virat Kohli, Rachin Ravindra, David Warner, and Rohit Sharma's success in this tournament reflects very

proportionately on the successes of their teams at this World Cup.

The day-night affairs have also contributed a bit in terms of producing low-intensity affairs – another major characteristic of this edition. Even though seam and swing have come down 0.1 degrees in this World Cup compared to ODIs taking place in India before the start of the mega event, the ball still seems to grip the surface better under the lights. This facet also might have contributed to top-order domination at this tournament.

It remains a strange affair, difficult to judge with theories going around that the batch of balls being used has not been conducive to swing.

The likes of Jasprit Bumrah, Mohammed Siraj, and Marco Jansen have however shown how to make the ball talk on such surfaces.

Reading the conditions have become key too. In Pune on November 1, New Zealand chose to field after winning the toss but only managed 167 in reply to South Africa's 357 for four. Batting first is becoming more and more important at some grounds especially given the ball does a bit more under light.

But one thing that has been a constant is that whether batting first or second, top-order has been the difference.