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RECRUITMENT IN MALAYSIA

Syndicate siphons over \$1b out of Bangladesh

Money sent through hundi over 20 months

PORIMOL PALMA

When Malaysia resumed hiring Bangladeshis in August 2022 after a four-year hiatus, governments of the two countries agreed that a worker would have to spend just Tk 78,990 to get a job in the Southeast Asian country and fly there.

But in reality, a worker had to spend Tk 5.44 lakh or \$5,000, according to a survey published earlier this month by the US-based non-profit Verite.

On March 28, four UN experts wrote to the Bangladesh and Malaysia governments about the situation of Bangladeshi migrants in Malaysia and mentioned that each migrant spent between \$4,500 and \$6,000.

Several migrant workers who spoke to The Daily Star from Malaysia said they spent over Tk 5 lakh to get there.

On December 19, 2021, Bangladesh

MONEY TAKEN FROM EACH WORKER GOING TO MALAYSIA (ESTIMATE)	
Local and Malaysian syndicate	Tk 107,000
Fees workers not supposed to pay	Tk 190,000
Recruitment agent	Tk 70,000
BMET	Tk 5,000
Medical test, registration	Tk 10,000
Plane ticket	Tk 100,000
Local brokers	Tk 60,000
Total	Tk 542,000

and Malaysia signed a memorandum of understanding, according to which, a worker would need to spend no more than Tk 78,990 for the passport, health checkup, registration, welfare, insurance, identity card, clothing, and recruitment agency fees.

Malaysian employers were supposed to pay for the plane ticket, visa, security deposit, insurance, medical test, document attestation by the Bangladesh High Commission in Kuala Lumpur, and the Malaysian recruiting agents.

Industry insiders and researchers say a syndicate of 100 Bangladeshi recruitment agents, who were selected by Malaysian authorities, created a monopoly-like situation, in which a worker had no way of getting to Malaysia without spending hefty sums.

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Janata Bank's 57pc bad loans taken by 7 firms

MD MEHEDI HASAN

Seven large borrowers, including AnonTex, Crescent, Ratanpur, and S Alam groups, account for 57 percent of the total default loans at Janata Bank, highlighting the risks lenders face if a handful of firms eat up most of the credit.

The borrowers hold Tk 14,210 crore out of the Tk 25,008 crore total defaulted loans of the state-run bank.

Of the seven, AnonTex's bad loans stood at Tk 7,708 crore, Crescent Group's at Tk 1,806 crore, Ratanpur Group's at Tk 1,227 crore, S Alam Group's at Tk 1,215 crore, and Rimex Footwear's at Tk 1,077 crore.

Chowdhury Group has bad loans of Tk 625 crore and Ranka Group Tk 552 crore, according to the published financial statements of Janata Bank.

AnonTex Group and S Alam Group defaulted in the last quarter of 2023, said a senior official of the bank.

He said that the bank is now in trouble because of the high defaulted loans.

At the end of last year, Janata Bank's default loans rose 64.55 percent to Tk 25,008 crore, the highest in the banking sector. It was Tk 15,197 crore in 2022.

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WB to give \$500 million as budget support

REJAUUL KARIM BYRON

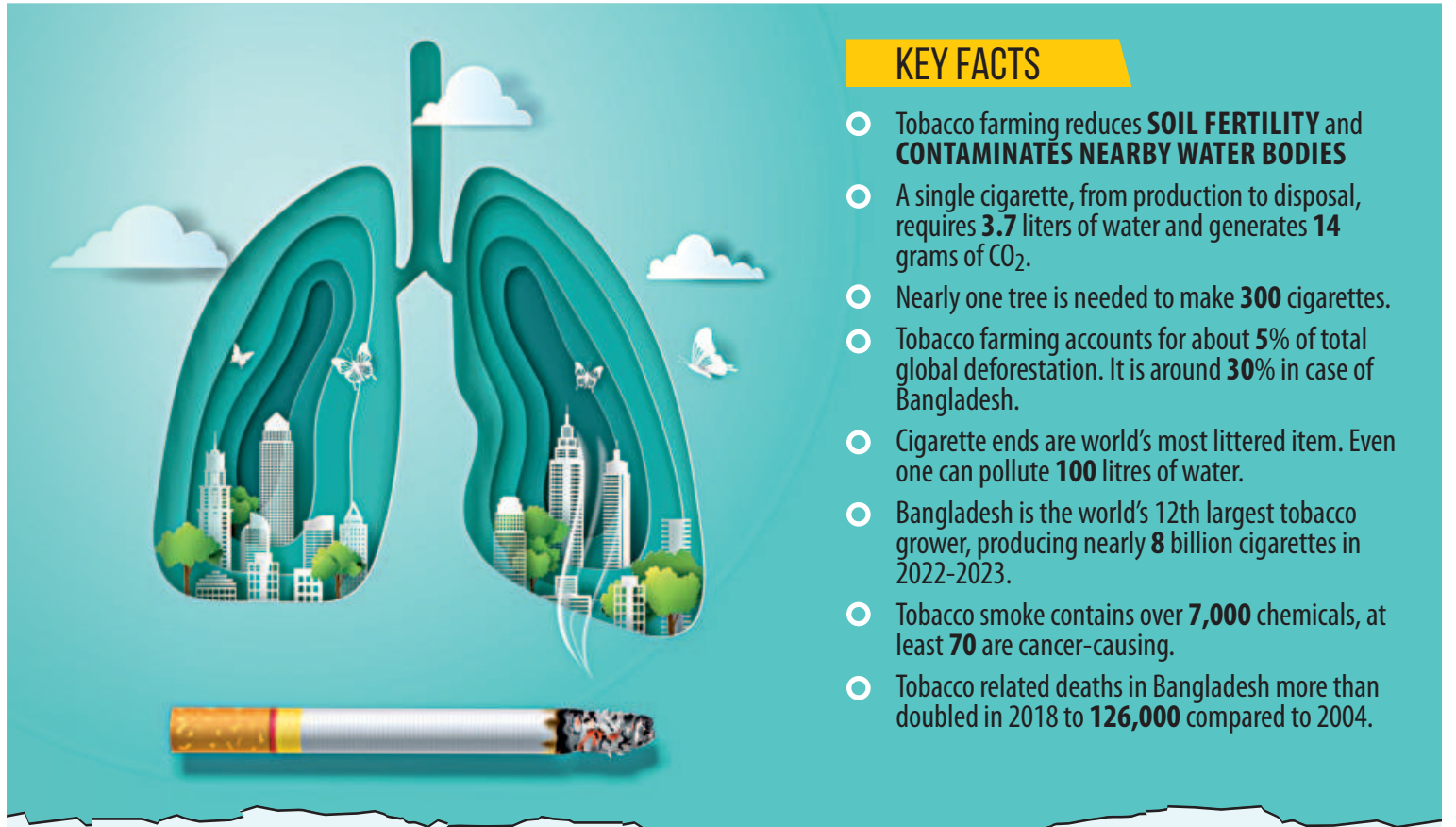
After the IMF's loan, the World Bank is now going to provide \$500 million in budget support to Bangladesh, double from what it had initially planned, by the end of June, said finance ministry officials.

This will ease pressure on the country's dwindling foreign currency reserves.

The Washington-based multilateral lender's budget support is part of a \$1.15 billion loan package, of which \$650 million will be spent on building the Bay Terminal in the port city of Chattogram.

The WB in the last fiscal year had planned that it

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KEY FACTS

- Tobacco farming reduces SOIL FERTILITY and CONTAMINATES NEARBY WATER BODIES
- A single cigarette, from production to disposal, requires 3.7 liters of water and generates 14 grams of CO₂.
- Nearly one tree is needed to make 300 cigarettes.
- Tobacco farming accounts for about 5% of total global deforestation. It is around 30% in case of Bangladesh.
- Cigarette ends are world's most littered item. Even one can pollute 100 litres of water.
- Bangladesh is the world's 12th largest tobacco grower, producing nearly 8 billion cigarettes in 2022-2023.
- Tobacco smoke contains over 7,000 chemicals, at least 70 are cancer-causing.
- Tobacco related deaths in Bangladesh more than doubled in 2018 to 126,000 compared to 2004.

BIG TOBACCO PUSH drives up per hectare production

MARTIN SWAPAN PANDEY

Bangladesh's tobacco production per hectare has grown by nearly 21 percent over the last five years, indicating a hard push by big tobacco companies for more profit from a product known to be a serious health and environmental concern.

In 2018-19, tobacco leaf production was recorded at 2.04 tonnes per hectare. It rose to 2.46 tonnes per hectare (20.58% increase) in 2022-23, according to Department of Agricultural Extension.

This rise has been consistent too. Each of these five years saw an increase of about 1-14

percent, never recording a negative growth.

Earlier in 2009-2010, per hectare production was 1.41 tonnes, according to World Bank data.

This means, per hectare tobacco production has gone up by about 73 percent in the last 14 years.

DAE officials, experts and farmers say this consistent gain in harvest is the result of the introduction of high-yielding varieties by tobacco companies and the application of high dose of chemical fertilisers and pesticides in tobacco farms.

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TOBACCO PRODUCT LIFECYCLE IMPACT



Farming: Land, water, Farmers, Health system, Environment

Manufacturing

Air, land, water, Workers, Health system, Environment



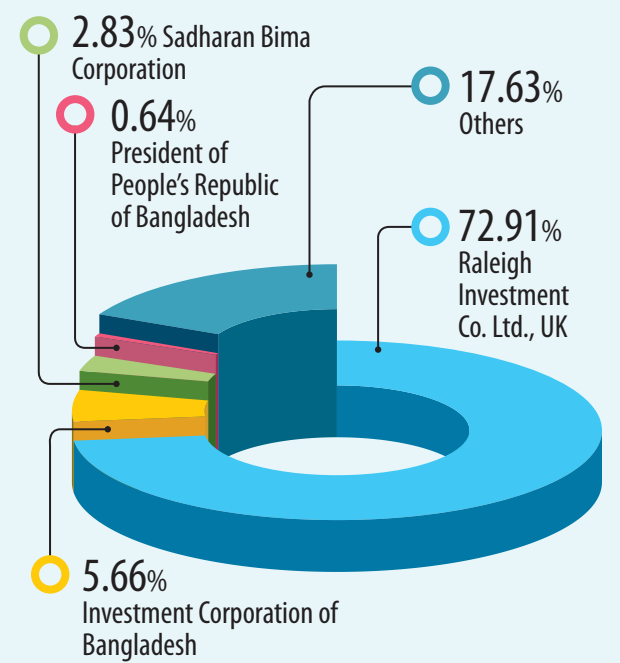
Smoking: Indoor air, Consumers, non-consumers, Health system, Businesses, governments, Productivity, Environment

Disposal

Land, water, Consumers, non-consumers, Businesses, governments, Environment, Health system



SHARES IN BRITISH AMERICAN TOBACCO



'Will stand by you as long as needed'

PM tells cyclone-hit people in Patuakhali

UNB, Patuakhali

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina has assured the cyclone-hit people that her government and the Awami League will stand by them as long as they need assistance to rebuild their lives.

"We stand by you. We will provide all kinds of assistance that is needed," she told a relief distribution programme at Government Mozahar Uddin Biswas Degree College in Patuakhali's Kalapara yesterday.

The PM said the overall development of the country's southern region has been possible only because the AL has been in power with the people's mandate.

"Many parties came to power before us, but they did not do anything for the development of this region."

Hasina said improving the living standards of people has been the main objective of her government.

"Natural calamities will strike, but we have to face those to reach our goal of maintaining the living standards of the people. We are working on this."

PHOTO ON PAGE 2

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Two elderly men struggling to wade through the flooded main road of Lafnaut area in Sylhet's Gowainghat upazila. The road has been under water since yesterday as water has been gushing down from surrounding hills due to nonstop rain since Cyclone Remal's landfall.

PHOTO: SHEKH NASIR

Flash floods maroon 5 lakh people in Sylhet

DWOHA CHOWDHURY, Sylhet

More than five lakh people in Sylhet remain marooned as flash floods hit five upazilas. The floods were triggered by heavy rains in the border areas of the district and India's Meghalaya.

The district administration opened 470 shelters and started distributing relief among the flood-hit people.

With the Surma, Kushiara, and Sarigowain flowing above the danger level since Wednesday, most areas of Gowainghat, Companiganj, Jaintiapur, Kanaighat, and Zakiganj upazilas have gone under water.

Lutfur Rahman, an elderly man of Rangpani area in Jaintiapur upazila, took shelter on a truck on Sylhet-Tamabil highway with his family.

"Water began entering my village yesterday [Wednesday] evening. Around 3:00am, my house was waist-deep in flood water. We rushed to the highway and took shelter on the parked truck," he said.

The Sylhet-Tamabil highway and many other roads of the five upazilas have been flooded, disrupting road

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Prime Bank