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KL to open its labour market to compliant agencies here

MOHAMMAD JAMIL KHAN

Malaysia is going to open its labour recruitment market to all eligible Bangladeshi agencies under a new, uniform selection system.

While this promise will help expand opportunities for Bangladeshi workers, industry experts warn that only a few agencies have the capacity to meet the stringent criteria issued by the Ministry of Expatriates' Welfare and Overseas Employment yesterday.

In the past, only a select few Bangladeshi agencies were allowed to operate in Malaysia, while agencies from other countries enjoyed broader access, prompting calls for a more equitable and transparent system.

The ministry said the issue was discussed at the 3rd Bangladesh-Malaysia Joint Working Group meeting in Dhaka on May 21-22 this

SEE PAGE 7 COL 4



Despite a ban on vehicles stopping and people crossings on the Gulistan-Jatrabari flyover, the rule is violated regularly. People get off buses, scale over the median, and cross the flyover dodging vehicles at speed and putting their lives at risk. The photo was taken on Tuesday.

PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

Call grows for free media commission

Journos, media owners say it's needed for independent press

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The formation of an independent media commission is the need of the hour, said senior journalists, editors, and media owners yesterday.

They made the call at a discussion organised by the Prothom Alo at its office in Karwan Bazar in the capital. It was moderated by Prothom Alo Executive Editor Sajjad Sharif.

According to the recommendations made by the Media Reform Commission, all media should be brought under a unified, independent supervisory body tasked with ensuring fiscal transparency in media, setting ethical standards, maintaining journalistic quality, and regulating media licences.

Dhaka University Professor Geeti Ara Nasrin, also a former member of the commission, said the draft law on protecting journalists' rights, prepared by the information ministry, did not include the reform commission's recommendation to establish an independent media commission.

Political parties should include in their manifestos for the upcoming election a pledge to form a media commission to ensure the independence of newspapers.



AK Azad, president of NOAB

AK Azad, president of the Newspaper Owners' Association of Bangladesh, urged political parties to make a clear commitment to protecting press freedom. He said that political parties should include in their manifestos for the upcoming election a pledge to form a media commission to ensure the independence of newspapers.

Executive Director of Media Resources Development Initiative (MRDI) Hasibur Rahman Mukur said efforts to establish an independent media commission are "moving in reverse".

"Even if parties include a commitment to establishing an independent media commission in their manifestos, there is a risk that such commitments will remain merely words on paper."

Nagorik Oikya leader Mahmudur Rahman Manna dismissed the interim government's reform initiatives as "sound and fury signifying nothing". "There has been a lot of noise, but no results. What will ultimately come of all this remains unclear."

He noted that the bureaucracy had "removed key sections" from the proposed journalist protection law, and alleged that the current consultations about the law with stakeholders are "an eyewash".

Kamal Ahmed, former head of the Media Reform Commission and consulting editor of The Daily Star, said, "The changes they proposed completely undermine the purpose of the law. It would be better not to have the law at all than to pass it in this form."

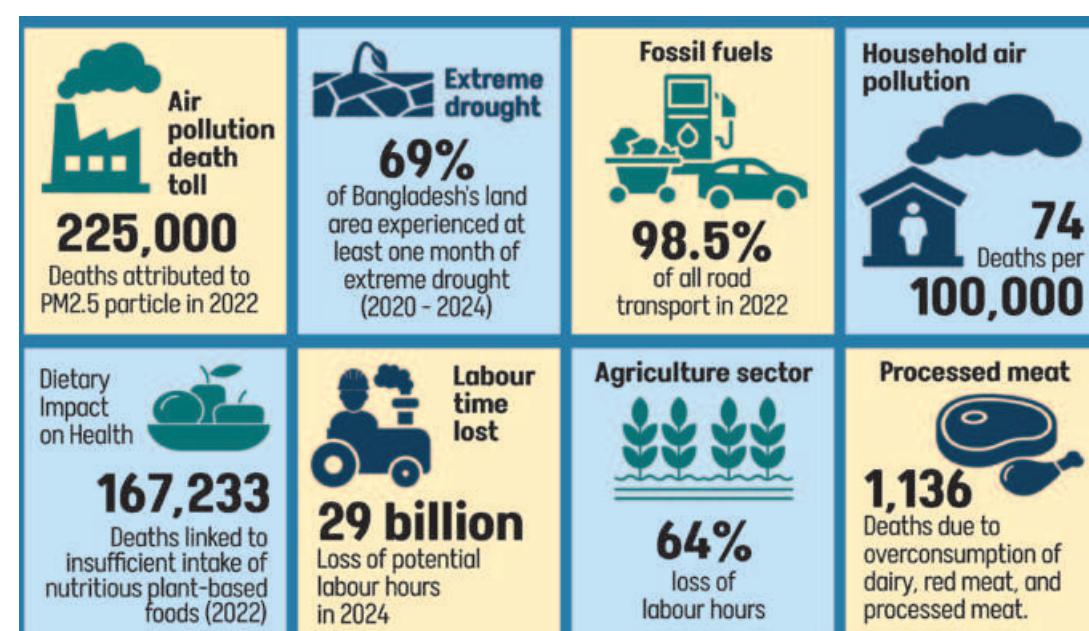
He added that the commission's report was submitted in May, as well as an action plan outlining immediate steps. "Naturally, we expected the government to take at least some quick measures based on those recommendations. Unfortunately, nothing has yet become visible."

The recommendations made by the media reform commission were not reflected in the July Charter because the political parties did not hold any discussions on them, said Md Matiur Rahman Akanda, secretary of the Jamaat-e-Islam's central publicity and media department.

BNP Media Cell Convener Moudud Hossain Alamgir

SEE PAGE 7 COL 4

Air pollution killed 2.25 lakh in Bangladesh in 2022



PINAKI ROY

Bangladesh recorded 225,000 deaths linked to manmade air pollution in 2022, a 28 percent rise since 2010, an international team of experts revealed in a major study yesterday.

At least 30,600 of these deaths were directly attributed to fossil fuels, according to The Lancet's Countdown, a major annual study tracking the health impacts of climate change.

Globally, fossil fuel-related air pollution caused more than 2.5 million deaths in 2022 alone, the study said, criticising the practice of

subsidising fossil fuels. Bangladesh allocated US\$8.2 billion in fossil fuel subsidies in 2023 alone, exceeding its carbon pricing revenue and resulting in net negative carbon income.

Coal burning, mainly for power generation, accounted for 32 percent of fossil fuel-related deaths, while household air pollution caused 74 deaths per 100,000 people -- 88 in rural areas and 50 in urban areas, the report said.

In 2024, Bangladesh endured an average of 28.8 heatwave days, of which 13.19 could have been avoided without climate change,

according to the report.

Extreme heat caused the loss of 29 billion potential labour hours, 92 percent higher than the 1990-1999 average, with agriculture bearing 64 percent of the losses. The resulting income loss reached US\$24 billion in 2024, or 5 percent of GDP.

From 2020 to 2024, 69 percent of Bangladesh's land experienced at least one month of extreme drought per year -- nearly four times higher than the annual average between 1951 and 1960. Between 2019 and 2023, 84 percent of the population

SEE PAGE 7 COL 1



Police use water cannon with a blue dye to disperse protesting madrasa teachers who are demanding the nationalisation of Ebtedayee madrasas yesterday afternoon. Law enforcers intervened after their procession attempted to break through a barricade to go towards the Secretariat near the Jatiya Press Club.

PHOTO: RASHED SHUMON

DHAKA UNIVERSITY Evictions, bar on outsiders spark debate

MAHATHIR MOHAMMED

Dhaka University's recent move to restrict the entry of non-students and evict hawkers from its campus has sparked debate, as a section of students and teachers fear it may gradually turn the country's premier institution into an isolated space. Meanwhile, authorities describe it as an effort to restore order and ensure students' safety.

Concerns deepened after last year's July uprising, when DU authorities began treating outsiders "unwelcome" and imposed a ban on their entry in December.

Although the restriction was later relaxed, Dhaka University Central Students' Union (DUCSU) leaders have recently carried out fresh drives to evict hawkers and so-called "vagrants" from the campus.

DUCSU leaders said the drives, conducted alongside the administration, aimed to make the campus "drug-free" and safer for students.

DU Proctor Saifuddin Ahmed said, "Dhaka University is not a place for setting up habitats. The campus ecosystem was damaged by allowing makeshift shops and stalls. It was disrupted by vagrants who disturbed the natural environment, and we are working to restore that lost balance."

The emotions, political awareness, and culture of ordinary citizens are intertwined with DU. If there were no space for common people here, it would neither be accepted by them nor look right.

Rasheda Rawnak Khan
associate professor of anthropology

The campus ecosystem was damaged by allowing makeshift shops and stalls. It was disrupted by vagrants who disturbed the natural environment, and we are working to restore that lost balance.

DU Proctor Saifuddin Ahmed

"This place belongs to the students. Why should I allow floating shops here? This is an educational institution, not a market or bus stand. It has its own character and identity."

He added that restoring that identity had long been a student demand. "For years they couldn't voice it due to various pressures, but now they are speaking up. The university is working with all stakeholders -- the government, city corporation, Department of Social Services, DMP, Metro authorities, and Department of Narcotics Control."

However, several student groups and educationists said such operations should be guided by state policy and accompanied by a rehabilitation plan for those affected.

They warned that continued evictions could erode the university's long-standing connection with surrounding communities and undermine its identity as "a people's campus".

Rasheda Rawnak Khan, associate professor at the Department of Anthropology, said, "Dhaka University is, in truth, something extraordinary in its ordinariness -- a university that has grown by nurturing the consciousness

SEE PAGE 7 COL 1

50 hurt as cops disperse madrasa teachers' march

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

At least 50 Ebtedayee madrasa teachers were injured when police used water cannons and sound grenades to disperse them when their procession broke through a barricade and attempted to march towards the Secretariat.

The Ebtedayee madrasa teachers are protesting with five demands including swift implementation of the announcement to nationalise all Ebtedayee madrasas in phases, rapid approval and publication of a gazette notification for the 1,089 institutions whose files have already been scrutinised for MPO inclusion.

The other demands include the issuance of a circular inviting MPO applications from recognised, non-grant-receiving Ebtedayee madrasas, creation of pre-primary posts similar to those in primary schools and establishment of a separate directorate for Ebtedayee madrasas.

The Ebtedayee madrasa teachers were supposed to march from the Jatiya Press Club towards Paltan, according to their pre-announced programme.

SEE PAGE 7 COL 3