

**On an average, the affected migrants lost Tk175,000 – minimum Tk9,500 and maximum Tk5 lakh each**



Photo: UNB

Some 74 percent of returnee migrants had to leave a significant amount of resources in their destination countries while they were arbitrarily sent back home, according to a study of the Refugee and Migratory Movement Research Unit (RMMRU).

They mainly lost money in the form of their unpaid wages. Besides, they also could not realise the money they gave in loans to friends from other countries.

On an average, the affected migrants lost Tk175,000 – minimum Tk9,500 and maximum Tk5 lakh each.

The remaining 26 percent returnees do not have any payments due.

The findings of the research were published at a webinar titled "The Other Face of Globalisation: Arbitrary Return of Bangladeshi Migrants and Their Unpaid Dues" on Monday.

Dr Tasneem Siddiqui, founder chairman of RMMRU, presented the findings.

The research, led by the RMMRU and supported by the Manusher Jonno Foundation, was conducted through an in-depth interview of 50 migrants who returned in the last three months.

All the respondents, who returned from the United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia, Qatar and Malaysia, were males aged 36 years on an average.

They are from 16 districts of the country who were engaged in multiple professions in the destination countries.

This research looks into two issues – experiences of their return from the Gulf states and Malaysia, and the settlement of dues before their return.

Atiq, 55, a returnee from the UAE, said in his interview, "I have been working in a steel factory for 14 years. As part of my payment procedure, I used to get a small amount per month, and after a while, the owners used to clear all dues. I have an outstanding amount of around Tk5 lakh, including the last two months' wages."

According to the research, the majority of the returnees were facing hardship as they lost jobs, received partial or no payment from employers. That is why they had to venture out disobeying lockdowns to secure food. A section of them was able to maintain subsistence.

### **Why did they return?**

Three-quarters of respondents were picked up from public places, detained and forcibly returned. One-tenth returned voluntarily (mostly from Malaysia).

The rest came on leave or employers sponsored return for security (mostly from Malaysia).

Ashraf, 25, from Qatar, in the interview, said, "For a few days I did not eat. It was Eid day. Although it was a lockdown situation, I went out to a nearby place in the hope that people may give me some food. When police came, all others ran away. I was arrested as they thought me a tea stall owner."

None of those who have been arbitrarily sent back was in detention before. They were picked up from stores and roads, according to the findings.

On an average, the interviewees were detained or jailed for 20 days.

A section of them experienced proper treatment in detention camps, and the rest narrated inhuman treatment.

Many were subjected to beating. Two-three people shared a bed. Inadequate and low-quality food was provided.

Most had to stay in one pair of clothes for days. Toilet and shower facilities were extremely inadequate. For instance, a diabetic person did not receive medication.

Those who have been forcibly sent back home have gone through trauma and been subjected to mistreatment.

These migrants were shifted from the detention centres/jails to airports. Hence, they could not bring back their belongings (money and other items) that remained in the camps/dormitories.