

BANGLADESH

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Export skilled manpower to reduce vulnerabilities: Experts

Independent Online/UNB



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Speakers at a webinar in the capital on Monday stressed the importance of exporting skilled manpower, aiming to reduce their vulnerabilities in their host countries as many have been arbitrarily repatriated amid the Covid-19 pandemic recently.

“If we can ensure skilled migrants, they will not face vulnerabilities in their recipient countries. So, people should not go abroad (for overseas jobs) without having any skill,” said Expatriates Welfare and Oversees Employment Secretary Dr Ahmed Munirus Saleheen.

The Refugee and Migratory Movement Research Unit (RMMRU) arranged the webinar titled “The other face of globalisation” to highlight the experiences and hardship of the migrant workers who returned home in the wake of Covid-19 pandemic in line with the findings of a study conducted on 50 returnees.

Dr Saleheen said the government now focuses on grooming skilled manpower for overseas jobs.

In this regard, he mentioned the slogan “Mujib Borsher Ahban, Dokkha Hoye Bides Jan” (Go abroad becoming skilled, it is call of the Mujib Year).

He said the Expatriates Welfare and Oversees Employment Ministry will soon prepare a database of the returnees with support from the a2i programme and International Organization for Migration (IOM). “We’ll soon start preparing the database of returnees,” he added.

The Secretary, however, said the number of migrant workers who returned home amid the coronavirus crisis is not statistically very significant.

About the loss of remittance caused by forcibly return of expatriates, he said many workers go abroad, particularly the Middle East countries, with free visa and work in informal sectors there. “In many cases, the workers have no proper documents or papers. So, it is tough to collect compensation,” he added.

Placing the findings of the interview based study, RMMRU founding chair Dr Tasneem Siddiqui said 78 percent returnees were arbitrarily sent back to Bangladesh, while 10 percent returned home voluntarily and six percent on leave.

Dr Tasneem said three-quarters of the returnees claimed that they were picked up from public places like roads and stores, detained and forcibly sent back, while one-tenth returned voluntarily (mostly from Malaysia) and the rest came on leave or employers sponsored return for security (mostly from Malaysia).



Some 74 percent returnees claimed that they left behind a significant amount of resource (mostly unpaid wages) when they returned. "On average the affected migrants lost Tk 1,75,000."

Many returnees claimed that they did not get full salaries or wages for several months before they returned due to the Covid-19 crisis, she said.

She said those who forcibly returned home are mostly from Saudi Arabia, the UAE and Qatar.

Dr Tasneem said Bangladesh needs to join international campaigns against the arbitrary repatriation of migrants, and the Bangladeshi missions concerned should pursue the settlement of claims of the returnees.

RMMRU Coordinator Prof CR Abrar said though the study conducted with very small samples which cannot be called a representative study, it focused on the range of problems and hardship the returnees faced in their host countries.

Director General at the Foreign Ministry Md Nazrul Islam said the number of expatriates Bangladeshis across the world is some 1.30 crore. But only 16,783 Bangladeshi migrant workers returned home by special flights during the Covid-19 situation, he added.

Shirin Akhter, MP, Aroma Dutta, MP, Executive Director of Manusher Jonno Foundation Shaheen Anam, Director (Training) of BMET Dr Md Sakawat Ali and BAIRA secretary general Shameem Ahmed Chowdhury Noman, among others, spoke on the occasion.

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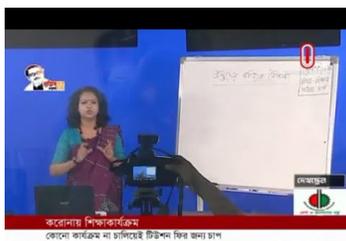
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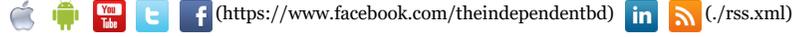
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