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GOVT URGED TO REALIZE LOST REMITTANCES OF MIGRANTS
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Govt Urged to Realize Lost Remittances of Migrants Forcedly Sent Back

Jun. 22, 2020

Staff Correspondent

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Ms. Shirin Akhter, MP
(Key speaker, policy)



Ms. Aroma Dutta, MP
(Key speaker, policy)



Mr. Md. Israfil Alam, MP
(Key speaker, policy)



Dr. Ahmed Munirus Salehin
Secretary, Ministry of Expatriates' Welfare
and Overseas Employment MoEWOE
(Key Speaker EWOE)



Mr. Nazrul Islam
Director General, Ministry of
Foreign Affairs (Key speaker MOFA)



Ms. Shaheen Anam
Executive Director, Manusher
Jonno Foundation
(Key speaker, national civil society)



Mr. William Gois
Coordinator, Migrant
Forum for Asia
(Key speaker, regional civil society)



Monday, 22 June 2020
3:30 p.m Dhaka time



Lawmakers, top government officials, civil society leaders and global migration experts on Sunday urged the government of Bangladesh to take effective steps to realize 'lost remittances'

of the migrants who were forcedly sent them back home amid COVID-19 pandemic.

Speaking at E-symposium, they focused on sending skilled manpower aiming to reduce vulnerabilities of Bangladeshi workers in the host countries as many returnees were arbitrarily repatriated amid the COVID-19.

The E- symposium was organized by the Refugee and Migratory Movement Research Unit (RMMRU) that also conducted a study with in-depth interview of 50 migrants.

The study found that 74% of migrants had left behind a significant amount of resource in destination countries while returned home.

RMMRU founding chair Dr Tasneem Siddiqui who presented the finding said that a substantial majority was unpaid wages. 'In addition cases were reported in which migrant lost money as they gave loans to friends from other countries, paid for visa renewal and were to theft by law enforcers.'

She mentioned that on average the affected migrants lost Tk. 175,000 (Minimum Tk.9500 and maximum Tk. 5,00,000).

Migrant Forum in Asia (MFA) regional coordinator William Gois said that officials at Bangladesh Missions at destinations could take the 'Power of Attorney' from the migrants before sending them back home by the chartered flights so that they (officials) could realize their dues to later remit to the migrants concerned.

Lawmaker Aroma Dutta said that the government should take steps to realize the dues of migrants who had left those in the destinations before deportation.

She stressed the need for making a robust database of the returnee migrants.

Another lawmaker Shirin Akhter said that steps should be taken to resend the migrants after pandemic to ensure their employment.

Expatriates Welfare and Oversees Employment Secretary Dr Ahmed Munirus Saleheen emphasized sending skilled manpower abroad to reduce vulnerabilities.

"If we can ensure quality migrants, they will not face vulnerabilities in the recipient countries. So, the people should not go abroad (for oversees jobs) without having any skills, rather go becoming skilled ones," he said.

Dr Saleheen said the government now focuses on grooming skill manpower for oversees jobs. In this regard, he mentioned the slogan "Mujib Borsher Ahban, Dokkha hoye bides jan" (Go abroad becoming skilled, it is call in Mujib Year).

He said the Expatriates Welfare and Oversees Employment Ministry will soon prepare the database of the returnees with support of 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 on 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 % 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 returned, while one-tenth returned voluntarily (mostly from Malaysia) and the rest came on leave or employers sponsored return for security (mostly from Malaysia).

Many returnees claimed that they didn’t get full salary or wages in 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, UAE and Qatar.

Dr Tasneem recommended that Bangladesh needs to join international campaigns against the arbitrary return of migrants and the Bangladeshi missions concerned should pursue settlement of claims of the returnees.

RMMRU Coordinator Prof CR Abrar said though the study conducted with very small sample can’t be called a representative study, it focused the range of problems and hardships the returnees faced in the recipient countries.

Director General at the Foreign Minister 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.

WARBE Development Foundation chairman Syed Saiful Haque, 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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