

INTERNATIONAL MIGRANTS DAY OBSERVED

'Recast process to ensure rights of migrant workers'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

International Migrants Day was observed yesterday with a call to recast the whole migration process in a bid to reap more benefits and ensure the rights of migrant workers.

A few hundred returnees and aspirant migrant workers marched city streets wearing colourful T-shirts and holding banners and festoons containing slogans for safe migration, reduction of its cost and ratification of the UN Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of their Families.

Labour migration, which is already contributing to the national economy immensely, is still run on an ad-hoc basis that results in curtailing its benefits and causes harassment to the workers both at home and abroad, said the speakers at a discussion.

The discussion on 'Raising voice of women migrant workers' was organised jointly by Bangladesh Ovivashi Mahila Sramik Association, Welfare Association of Repatriated Bangladeshi Employees (Warbe) and Ovivashi Karmi Kalyan Forum (Okkaf) at the National Press Club

following the rally from National Museum to the Press club.

Presiding over the discussion, economist Hossain Zillur Rahman said the annual remittance could be 10 to 15 billion dollar if the workers are trained up properly.

Referring to a study, Zillur Rahman, also executive director of a research-based organisation PPRC, said poverty situation in the region from where people migrate to other places is likely to be better.

"If there is a certain source of financing for the aspirant migrant workers, many problems would be solved automatically," he said responding to the issues of borrowing money at high interest rates or selling land for migration.

There should be a coalition with the policy makers and workers for giving an institutional shape to the migration process, and it would be convenient for the planners if there is a comprehensive data on the returnee migrants, he noted.

Speaking as chief guest Joint Secretary to the Ministry of Expatriates' Welfare and Overseas Employment Amir Hossain said lack of awareness among the migrant workers is one of the major reasons that cause some harassment.

The government has arrangements to protect the workers abroad, especially the female ones, but there are many who stay abroad on irregular status and the government cannot do anything for them, he noted.

Saying that there is tremendous demand for trained workers worldwide, most of the workers who migrate from Bangladesh do not have enough training.

In her keynote presentation on 'Convention on the Elimination of All forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and Rights of Migrant Workers', Professor Tasneem Siddiqui of Dhaka University said the convention does not speak about the migrant workers separately, but this covers all the women who either stay at home or abroad.

Though Bangladesh did not ratify the UN Convention on the migrant workers, the Bangladeshi women who live abroad to work can be protected under the CEDAW, said Dr Siddiqui, also chairperson of Refugee and Migratory Movements Research Unit.

Warbe Chairman Syed Saiful Haque said it is mysterious why Bangladesh government is not ratifying the UN Convention on

migrant workers that recognises the irregular migrants and ensure their rights.

Okkaf President Syed Mahbub Elahi said the migrant workers of Bangladesh, who should have been given special honour for their contribution to the national economy, have now become modern slaves.

Okkaf General Secretary Omar Faruk demanded that the political parties should pledge through their manifestos to ensure the rights of the migrant workers.

Bomsa President Lily Jahan said it is not only the responsibility of the government alone to ensure safe migration, but also the responsibility of the workers who in many cases do not care about their job conditions and calculate cost-benefit factors.

Bomsa Project Coordinator Sumayia Islam and Warbe General Secretary Anisur Rahman also took part in the discussion.

Cadet College Club executives

Major (Retd) M Taneem Hasan and Major (Retd) Imroze Ahmed were elected president and secretary general of Cadet College Club Limited for the year 2007 at its fourth annual general meeting on December 15, says a press release.

The AGM was held on its premises at Gulshan-2 in the city.

Other office-bearers are: Vice-president: Shahadat Musharraf Khan, Joint Secretary General: Arik Morshed and Treasurer: Khandakar Omar Farhan and Maj (Retd) Zulfiqur Hossain Choudhury - member FCC, Maj (Retd) Mahbubur Rahman member JCC, Enayet Kabeeer - member MCC, Mostafizur Rahman member RCC; Anifur Rahman - member SCC, Iftekhar Alam Khan - member CCR, Maj (Retd) Reaz Rashid - member BCC, TM Shahidul Islam - member PCC, Nahid Sultana - member MGCC, Dr Mohammad Zahurul Islam - member CCC and Air Cmdr (Retd) Iqbal - member WPCC.



Visitors to the military hardware display at the National Parade Square in the city watch a member of the Air force descending by a parachute yesterday. The display began on Friday on the occasion of the Victory Day.

PHOTO: STAR

Prospective voters stage demonstration

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

A group of agitated people from city's ward no-13 (Pahartali) led by its Commissioner Md Hossain Hiron staged a demonstration in front of the district election commission (DEC) office here at Jamal Khan Road yesterday alleging that over 500 voters have not been included during the voter list correction work.

Sources said the ward commissioner along with the agitated people of his area came to the election commission office with

filled-up forms of 566 prospective voters to submit them at around 1:45pm. But finding that the concerned Election Officer Md Abdullah is not there to receive the forms, they became angry and began demonstration.

"These 566 people live in my ward and are eligible to be the voters. I went to the election commission after taking an appointment from Mr Abdullah, yet he was not present at the scheduled time," Commissioner Hiron alleged to the journalists.

When contacted Election Officer Abdullah refuted the charges and said the appointment was never made.

"The ward commissioner phoned me yesterday (Sunday) saying that he had a list of around 1,000 probable voters and he wants to submit them directly to me, but I advised him to submit the forms to the nearest field level officials for the convenience of all," he said.

"Anybody can lodge any complaint to us even after December 18 deadline," Abdullah assured.

LDP blames BNP-Jamaat for manipulating elections

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) President AQM Badruddoza Chowdhury yesterday accused the BNP-Jamaat alliance of trying to capture power through manipulated elections to protect themselves from future prosecution for corruption and irregularities.

Speaking at a view exchange meeting with its grassroots leaders, Chowdhury said LDP would ensure the people's right to vote by continuing the movement for free and fair elections.

He said the resignation of four advisers from the caretaker government was a protest against the monopoly on power by the President/Chief Adviser.

Speaking at the programme, LDP Executive President Col (Retd) Oli Ahmed said elections would not be free and fair under the President/Chief Adviser Iajuddin Ahmed.

Without a reconstitution of the Election Commission (EC) through the removal of certain election commissioners, as well as the correction of the voter list, no political party except the BNP and Jamaat would participate in the elections, he added.

Oli said it wouldn't be improper if election date is deferred for creating a congenial atmosphere for free and fair elections.

LDP Secretary General Maj (Retd) Abdul Mannan also spoke at the programme which was attended by Sheikh Razzak Ali, Maj Gen (Retd) Anwarul Kabir Talukder, Syed Manjur Hossain, Prof Jahan Ara Begum, Mani Swapan Dewan, Muhammad Ali Zinnah and Prof Nurul Amin Bepary.

Earlier, LDP president, executive president and other presidium members interviewed the party nomination seekers.

Rubel new jt secy of JP (Monju)

Jatiya Party (JP) Chairman Anwar Hossain Monju and General Secretary Sheikh Shahidul Islam selected Enamul Islam Rubel as Education and Student Affairs joint secretary of the party, says a press release.

As per the rules, JP chairman and general secretary selected Rubel for the post during the last council session.



Newly elected office-bearers of Cadet College Club Limited pose for photograph on the club premises at Gulshan in the city on December 15.