

MIGRANT WORKERS 'No govt step to protect their rights'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Although the migrant workers are making significant contributions to the national economy through sending huge amount of remittance, the government is not taking any appropriate measures to protect their rights, said the speakers at a seminar yesterday.

They also criticised the World Trade Organisation for not keeping any provision to protect the rights of migrant workers in Mode-4 of General Agreements on Trades in Services (GATS), which has a provision only for the skilled workers to migrate to the developed countries.

The seminar was organised by the Welfare Association of Repatriated Bangladeshi Employees (Warbe) in association with Actionaid Bangladesh at Dhaka Reporters Unity auditorium marking the International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women.

"The government appreciates the remittance of the overseas workers, but does not take any initiatives to protect their rights," said Taim Zahid Hossain, chief of Social Rights and Justice Unit of Actionaid.

There are many unscrupulous agencies and brokers who charge extra money and even give false promises of better salaries, which is why the workers, especially the unskilled female workers are cheated in foreign lands.

"If the government can ensure their security, the remittance would be double," he said, calling upon the recruiting agencies to be responsible for the protection of female migrants.

Presiding over the seminar, Warbe Chairman Syed Saiful Haque laid emphasis on upgraded training on domestic appliances and language of the receiving countries as a means to protect their rights.

Presenting a paper, Warbe Finance Secretary Sheikh Abdullah Al Raji stressed on the post migration management of the female workers whom he termed as the most profitable part of migrant workers, as they require comparatively less money for migration, but can save and send more.

Bangladesh Obibashi Mahila Srakam Association (Bomsa) President Lily Jahan, General Secretary Sheik Romana and Jago Nari Foundation President Nurunnahar Mary also spoke at the seminar.

'No alternative to independent EC secretariat'

BDNEWS, Dhaka

For holding free and fair elections, there is no alternative to an independent Election Commission (EC) secretariat, Election Commissioner AK Mohammad Ali said yesterday.

Talking to BDNEWS, Mohammad Ali contradicted Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) Justice MA Aziz who said that the EC is independent enough and there is no need to make its secretariat more independent.

The process and management of elections are dependent on the EC, Ali said, adding, "When there is any allegation regarding any election, it is the EC that has to shoulder the liabilities as it is involved in all electoral functions."

The EC secretariat should operate under the EC that should have financial freedom, he said.

Referring to the European Union's allegations of vote rigging, Ali said, "As the EC secretariat is under the prime minister's secretariat, investigations cannot be done independently."

Expressing dissatisfaction at the overlooking of his opinion on preparing a new voter list, he said, "Though the constitution says that the Election Commission will take decision collectively, the CEC is doing everything at will."

ATTACK ON JOURNALS

Action to be taken against policemen, says DMP chief

UNB, Dhaka

Dhaka Metropolitan Police (DMP) Commissioner Mizanur Rahman yesterday said that action would be taken against the policemen responsible for the attack on journalists.

"A one-member probe committee of DMP Deputy Commissioner (South) Mazhar is investigating the incident and punitive action will be taken against the offenders as soon as the committee submits its report," he said.

Several journalists, including Channel-i senior reporter Mahbub Matin and cameraman Zahid Siddique, were injured in the police attack in front of National Press Club during the opposition's grand rally at Paltan Maidan on Tuesday.

Meanwhile, three intelligence officials visited Zahid's Rampura residence yesterday and enquired him about the incident.



PHOTO: STAR

Bangladeshi Migrant Female Workers' Association forms a human chain in front of the High Court in the city yesterday demanding an end to trafficking in women in the name of sending them abroad for jobs.

One in six women suffers from domestic violence

WHO study reveals

BBC Online

A new international study of domestic violence says it is the most common form of violence against women.

The study by the World Health Organisation surveyed 24,000 women in 10 countries, including Bangladesh, Japan, Brazil and Ethiopia.

It found that one in six women worldwide had suffered abuse, and that violence was more prevalent in poorer countries.

It also found that women in poorer countries were more likely to think the violence was justified.

Joy Phumaphi, assistant director-general of family and community health at the WHO, said governments needed to recognise domestic violence as a problem and pass tough laws against it.

"What we want to accomplish is to take domestic violence out of the closet," she said.

The rates of women reporting having been victims of physical or

sexual violence in their lifetime varied from 15 percent in Japan to 71 percent in Ethiopia.

Intimate partner violence, as the study calls it, is more common than assault or rape by strangers or acquaintances.

The percentage of women who had been physically or sexually attacked by their partners in the preceding year was 4 percent in Japan and Serbia, compared with between 30 percent and 54 percent in Bangladesh, Ethiopia, Peru and Tanzania.

Seven-year study

High rates of sexual abuse were "particularly alarming" in regards to the spread of HIV and Aids, the report said.

Countries in North America and Europe were not included in the seven-year study, as they had been the subject of previous studies.

Previous research found abuse rates of about 20 percent in the US and Canada, and 23 percent in Sweden.

Researcher Lori Heise said it was not clear what was behind the differences between richer and poorer countries, but many of the areas with higher rates were more rural, traditional communities where the problem had remained largely hidden.

Women there "have less power, and it is more common for men and women to believe that abuse is the norm - as the norms change, rates do down", she said.

Study co-ordinator Claudia Garcia Moreno found one thing in common everywhere - the violence was often severe.

"We're talking about being choked, being hit with the fists, being dragged, being burned and up to half of women in some sites reported physical injury," she said.

Many women reported violent attacks by their partners during pregnancy.

Another big concern was the secrecy that continued to surround domestic violence -- up to half of the women surveyed had never spoken

of their situation to anyone.

Some said they did not report the violence because they considered it normal. Some women even said their husbands were justified in beating them.

More than three-quarters of women in urban areas in Brazil, Japan, Namibia and Serbia said there was no justification for domestic abuse, but the figure dropped to about one quarter in Bangladesh, Ethiopia, Peru and Samoa.

The report also found that despite the variations in abuse rates, victims of physical or sexual abuse were twice as likely to suffer from ill-health than those who had not been abused.

"Women who have ever experienced violence in their life end up having much higher levels of all kinds of ill-health, like poor general health, like being suicidal, like having more miscarriages, more abortions, long after the violence happened," researcher Henriette Jansen said.

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