

Formulate stringent laws to protect migrant workers

Participants urge govt at national conference

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A national conference in the city yesterday recommended framing of stringent laws both in labour sending and receiving countries to protect migrant workers and stop human trafficking and irregular migration.

It also suggested negotiations between these countries in these regards saying that some bad recruitment practices have made it difficult for the workers to get best out of their overseas employment.

The recommendations and suggestions came at the conference on migration and trafficking organised by National Action Forum (NAF), a platform of the NGOs working on the issues and supported by United Nations Office of Drugs and Crime, and

International Organisation for Migration (IOM) at Bangladesh-China Friendship Conference Centre.

Participants at the conference observed that many of the human traffickers, agencies and even employers could not be tried because of loopholes in the existing laws and lack of awareness among the jobseekers.

The recommendations gathered from 16 presentations at the daylong conference also included adequate training before joining overseas jobs, strict verification of documents regarding jobs, psycho-social treatment to the victims of trafficking and initiatives for proper use of remittances.

Speaking as chief guest at the concluding session, Women and Children Affairs Adviser Rasheda K

Chowdhury said, "We promote migration of people for overseas jobs, but surely oppose its irregular form because dark side of migration causes irreparable harms to people and society."

Stating that the remittances sent by the migrant Bangladeshis is the largest sector of foreign exchange, Home Secretary Abdul Karim said adequate measures have not been taken to train the migrant workers.

"Mobility without dignity does not bring good results," he said, adding that the government is working hard to stop illegal migration.

Speaking as chief guest at the inaugural session, Expatriates' Welfare and Overseas Employment Secretary Abdul Matin Chowdhury said, "We will

not be able to protect the overseas job seekers from unscrupulous agencies if we fail to frame a strong legal framework."

The government is working to strengthen the laws on emigration, he said, adding that expatriates' welfare centers are being set up at the deputy commissioner's offices across the country.

Twenty-six such branches have already been set up to help the job seekers at district level, he noted.

IOM Regional Representative for South Asia Babab Fatima said while remittance of the migrants is a positive side of migration, rights violation is the negative aspect of it that needs to be addressed.

"Legal and other interventions are important to ensure safe migration," Fatima added.

NAF Coordinator Sakiul Millat Morshed said Bangladesh migrant workers are the most efficient in most of the jobs they do, especially in the Middle Eastern countries, but they are paid the lowest salaries.

"We must bargain on the wage issues, otherwise we will fail to benefit from labour migration," he said.

Bangladesh National Women Lawyers Association Executive Director Advocate Salma Ali, migration and anti-trafficking experts Selima Sarwar and Raju Ahmed also spoke at the conference.

Trafficking survivor Sharmin Akter, successful migrant worker Rahima Begum and cheated migrant Shamsunnahar also shared their experiences at the opening ceremony.



Members of Council of Advisers receive Chief Adviser Fakhruddin Ahmed at Zia International Airport late Wednesday night on his return from Senegal where he attended the 11th OIC Summit.

CA returns home

UNB, Dhaka

Chief Adviser Fakhruddin Ahmed returned home late Wednesday night after attending the 11th OIC Summit in Dakar, the capital of Senegal.

On his way back home from Dakar, he had a three-day official visit to London from March 16-19.

Finance Adviser Dr Mirza Azizul Islam, Home Affairs Adviser Major Gen (Retd) MA Matin, Dean of diplomatic corps and senior civil and military officials received the Chief Adviser at the VIP terminal of the airport.

On March 11, the chief adviser left Dhaka for Dakar to attend the 11th Summit of the Organisation of the Islamic Conference (OIC).

Four held with pilfered fuel

OUR CORRESPONDENT, N'ganj

The Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) caught four members of an organised gangred handed yesterday when they were pilfering fuel from a government depot at Dapa Shaalakara area near Fatullah.

The Rab members also seized pilfered fuel worth Tk 15 lakh. The arrestees were identified as Kamal, 32, Selim, 27, Sirajul, 40, and Anis, 28.

Acting on a tip-off, a team of Rab Crime Prevention Company led by Captain Kawsar Jahan launched the drive at Atiq's garage and caught the pilferers and seized the fuel.

Fuel is pilfered and sold in the black market from the lorries that take oil from Jamuna Oil Depot under Bangladesh Petroleum Corporation at Panchabati.

Relax new point-based immigration policy

Foreign adviser urges British govt

UNB, Dhaka

Foreign Adviser Iftexhar Ahmed Chowdhury yesterday hoped that the British government would relax its newly announced point-based immigration policy to allow Bangladeshi chefs to work in popular curry restaurants in the UK.

Iftexhar said Chief Adviser Fakhruddin Ahmed raised the matter and other problems facing the Bangladeshi community over there with British Prime Minister Gordon Brown during the bilateral talks at 10 Downing Street on March 18.

He said this while he was talking to press at the foreign ministry.

Iftexhar said some 10,000 to 12,000 curry restaurants mostly run by Bangladeshis contribute \$ 4 billion to the economy of the United Kingdom and the British government is aware of it. "There is a mutual benefit on board," he said.

"Now, if it could be proved that Bangladeshi cuisine of 'chicken, curry and masala' is a specialised art and it cannot be prepared by Polish chefs, there

is a chance of sectoral exemption of the immigration policy," he said. Already, he added, some problems emerged in Scotland for shortage of staff in curry restaurants.

However, he noted that a catering institute is being set up in Sylhet with the assistance of DFID to train chefs and caterers.

The certificate from this institution will be tantamount to recognition of skilled manpower to get jobs in the UK.

Iftexhar said he had meetings with DFID Minister Douglas Alexander who announced financial support for setting up the institute. "And we've kept pressure over the matter," he said.

Around 5 lakh Bangladeshi-British are living in the UK and a major part is involved in the traditional restaurant business. But the point-based immigration policy has apparently threatened this promising industry in the UK due to shortage of chefs who used to go from Bangladesh.

He termed Fakhruddin-Brown talks "very fruitful", saying that it would bolster political and economic cooperation between the two countries.

Cartoonist Arifur Rahman discharged

COURT CORRESPONDENT

A Dhaka court yesterday discharged former Prothom Alo cartoonist Arifur Rahman in connection with a case filed against him for a cartoon "hurting religious sentiments" published in the daily's satire magazine "Aalpin" on September 17 last year.

Metropolitan Magistrate Mosammat Ismat Ara passed the order, as the complainant of the case Jane Alam Khan, the then officer-in-charge (OC) of Tejoanga police, did not appear before the court on several consecutive dates.

The court had earlier summoned the complainant to appear before the court repeatedly, but he failed to comply with the court order.

On September 20 last year, OC Jane Alam filed the case against Arif with the Chief Metropolitan Magistrate's Court for committing the offences.

Before filing the case, Arif was arrested under Section 54 of the Criminal Procedure Code (CrPC) on September 18 and later he was shown arrested in the regular case.

He was also given detention order under the special Powers Act 1974 that had earlier made illegal by the High Court (HC) following a writ petition challenging the legality of the detention order by the government.

Following yesterday's order, there remains no bar to his release from the jail.



Members of Bangladesh Federation of University Women pose for photograph with Dhaka University Vice Chancellor Prof SMA Faiz at the golden jubilee celebration of the Federation at Sheraton Hotel in the city yesterday.

Tibet matters are China's internal affairs: Dhaka

UNB, Dhaka

Bangladesh expressed solidarity with China over the Tibetan troubles, saying that matters pertaining to Tibet are China's internal affairs.

When his attention was drawn to reports of rioting in Tibet, a spokesman for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs yesterday further stated that "Bangladesh looks forward to the successful holding of 2008 Olympics in Beijing and believes that no quarter should seek to politicise the Games".

Foreign Adviser Iftexhar Ahmed Chowdhury also telephoned the Chinese envoy in Dhaka, Ambassador Zheng Qingdian, to apprise him of Bangladesh's position in this regard.

3 chargesheeted in Dr Mofakkarul Murder Case

COURT CORRESPONDENT

The Detective Branch (DB) of police yesterday pressed charges against three persons in a case for killing Bangladesh Medical College Hospital registrar Dr Mofakkarul Ahmed Sohel in January this year.

The three accused are Sohel's driver Saiful Islam, 25, Mohammad Miah, 27, and Mohammad Bulu, 25. Sub-inspector Shahjahan Mia (IO) of the case, submitted the charge sheet against them to the Dhaka Chief Metropolitan Magistrate's Court showing 38 people as prosecution witnesses.

The IO dropped the name of another accused Shahin Miah from the charge sheet as his involvement with the killing was not proved.

Saiful and Firoz gave confessional statements to magistrates on different dates admitting that they had killed Sohel to steal valuables from his house.

According to the prosecution, Sohel went missing from his West Dhanmondi residence on January 10. His driver Saiful also disappeared from the house.

DB and Rab personnel arrested Saiful, his cousin Firoz and Shahin in the city's Dhanmondi. Bulu was arrested in Gaibandha on January 18.

Following their confessional statements, the law enforcers recovered Sohel's body cut into several pieces at Shimultoli village of Polashbari upazila.

Firoz and Saiful said they stabbed Sohel to death at his residence at midnight on January 10. Later, they cut the body into several pieces.

They put the pieces in a sack and took it to Gaibandha on January 11 morning.

Firoz said Saiful was very angry with his employer as Sohel often misbehaved with him. Saiful had been looking for an opportunity to kill him.

Sohel, along with Saiful and two other employees, lived at his Dhanmondi residence, while his family members were living abroad.

SANITATION FOR ALL BY 2010

Eco toilets in 4500 unions soon

Says LGRD adviser

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

With a view to achieving sanitation for all by 2010, eco toilets will be set up soon in 4500 unions of the country.

This was stated by LGRD Adviser Anwarul Iqbal while addressing a press briefing at Cirdap auditorium in the city yesterday on the eve of the launching of International Year of Sanitation and National Hand Washing Campaign tomorrow.

The United Nations designated March 22 as World Water Day and this year the theme of the day is '2008, the International Year of Sanitation'.

The adviser said eco toilets, from where the human wastes to be converted into fertiliser, are also cheaper and environment-friendly.

He said the government is also planning to set up eco toilets in the capital which will be used as community latrines in areas of low-income group.

He said still 10 percent of the total population is accustomed to open defecation that leads to diarrhoea

and different types water borne diseases.

Due to diarrhoea some 1.25 lakh children aged between 1 and 5 die every year and Bangladesh spends Tk 500 crore every year for the treatment of water borne diseases, he added.

While presenting the keynote paper Prof Dr Muhammad Mujibur Rahman of Buet said sanitation is vital for human health and it generates economic benefits, contributes to social development and helps protect the environment.

He said continual improvement of sanitation needs sustained political commitment, greater emphasis on education and raising awareness with effective participation of all

stakeholders.

At the same time, public and private sectors investment must be increased with greater attention to the poor, he added.

Chief Engineer of the public health directorate Muhammad Mostafizur Rahman and representatives of different stakeholders were present on the occasion.

The press briefing was organised jointly by National Sanitation Task Force Media Committee, Local Government Division of LGRD ministry, Forum of Environmental Journalists of Bangladesh (FEJB) and International Training Network Centre, Buet in collaboration with the Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands and Brac.

'Form tribunal to try war criminals'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangabandhu Smriti Parishad yesterday demanded that a tribunal is immediately formed under the International Crimes Tribunal Act 1973 to try the war criminals.

Expressing solidarity with the Sector Commanders' Forum, they also demanded including the war crime issues in the textbook.

They made these demands at a press conference at Dhaka Reporters' Unity (DRU) in the city.

Member of the Parishad Dr Nirmal Kanti Nirvar said trial of the war criminals has become a demand of time and it is the duty of the government to form a special tribunal to start the trial of the war

criminals.

"We have to reject the war criminals and anti-liberation forces socially," he said adding that the civil society members, and social, political and cultural organisations will have to play a significant role in this regard.

They urged the Election Commission to take necessary steps so that the war criminals and the anti-liberation forces cannot participate in the upcoming election.

Prof Panna Kaiser, Parishad members Dipak Kumar Nath, Abdur Rahim Mia and Abdul Haque Sabuj, publicity secretary of city Awami League, were also present at the conference.

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