

Migrant workers victim of exploitation, not graft

Claims Khandaker Mosharraf

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladeshi migrant workers become victims of exploitation by different stakeholders including private recruiting agencies; not of government corruption, claimed Expatriates' Welfare and Overseas Employment Minister Khandaker Mosharraf Hossain yesterday.

The workers often become victim of exploitation by their own relatives and private recruiting agencies while making payments for their visas, he said.

The minister made the observations at a press briefing at the ministry in the capital; two days after Transparency International Bangladesh (TIB) in its survey report mentioned that "labour migration tops the list in corruption rate" this year.

The report said, 77 percent households that received services from the sector became victims of corrupt practices.

Due to bribery and irregularities, a household had to pay on an average Tk 1, 99,676 in excess for getting overseas jobs, it said.

Talking about the report, Mosharraf said it did not mention any involvement of government in the irregularities.

Rather it focused on the irregularities

which occurred at individual level, he said.

The minister, however, admitted that the ministry does not have much scope to check such irregularities, except verifying validity of visas.

To reduce irregularities in the sector, the ministry has cancelled the licence of some 65 private recruiting agencies in the last four years as they were found involved in irregularities, he said.

Mentioning that the ministry was trying to break the control of the brokers and recruiting agencies down, he said the workers who become victim of exploitation and betrayal often do not cooperate with the ministry's agencies concerned.

Mentioning the recent signing of a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with Malaysian government for sending workers there, Mosharraf said the government became successful in the initiative.

"We welcomed the report of TIB and hoped that the people will be conscious in spending any extra money," he added.

Expatriates' Welfare Secretary Dr Zafar Ahmed Khan and Manpower Employment and Training Bureau Director General Begum Shamsoor Nahar were also present.

Just-engaged couple mugged of Tk 7 lakh valuables

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Some muggers snatched around Tk 7 lakh worth valuables from a couple who were hanging out with their cousins just after their engagement ceremony in the capital's Dhanmondi Road-9 area early yesterday.

The muggers took away three tolas of gold ornaments, five cellphones and the groom's watch, worth over Tk 1.6 lakh, said Anwar Parvez Halim, maternal uncle of the groom, Faysal Hasan Chowdhury.

He said the couple was chatting with four of their cousins in two cars just a stone's throw from their residence around 1:00am when two cars suddenly appeared and four muggers, armed with three machetes and a firearm, came out.

Although the muggers took away the valuables, the bride was able to hide her ornaments under her seat just as she saw the suspicious vehicles approach. Before leaving, the muggers broke a window of one of the victims' cars, said Anwar.

However, in their hurry to escape, the muggers dropped some papers, including a visiting card belonging to, as the card read, a Supreme Court advocate, Mahbubur Rahman, and his ATM card.

When this correspondent called the contact number on the visiting card, Mahbubur answered and claimed that he was also mugged of Tk 20,000 and some important documents on the same area in Dhanmondi just 15 minutes to 1:00am.

Dhanmondi police said they heard about the incident but nobody had filed any case in this regard.

Clarification

Epic Garments Manufacturing Company Limited in a statement yesterday clarified that several of its workers sustained minor injuries while rushing out of its canteen in panic after a steam generating machine went out of order with a big noise in Narayanganj's Adamjee Export Processing Zone on December 25.

In response to media reports on this incident, the Epic authorities gave the clarification claiming that it was not a "boiler blast", rather malfunctioning of a steam generating machine.

It also stated that the Epic authorities rushed the injured to nearby medical facilities and none was critically injured.

Hasina rejects interim govt formula

UNB, Dhaka

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday heavily criticised Dr Akbar Ali Khan, former adviser to a caretaker government, saying a person who has failed to hold a simple election has no right to talk about the formula of an interim government.

"These days many persons came up with the formula of an interim government. One former adviser also came up with a formula. This person, while he was an adviser under President Iajuddin Ahmed, failed to hold an election," she said, without mentioning any names.

The Awami League chief made the remarks while addressing her

party's councillors and delegates from different districts of the country, when they greeted her at Gono Bhaban yesterday on her re-election as the party chief.

Hasina said, "A failed person's formula is not effective. It will also fail."

Dr Akbar Ali Khan on Saturday suggested four proposals, including the formation of an interim government comprising Awami League and BNP lawmakers, to end the political deadlock over holding free and fair general election.

In his proposal, he said that the AL will select five from BNP's existing 36 lawmakers while BNP will select five, including the prime minister, from AL's 274 MPs. The new

cabinet will conduct the next parliamentary polls.

Akbar's proposals came against the backdrop of concerns raised by different quarters that a chaotic situation may arise in the country if the two arch political parties fail to reach consensus over the burning issue.

The AL-led ruling alliance abolished the caretaker government system on June 30, allowing general elections to be held under elected partisan government.

The delegates and councillors of each district also greeted Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina with bouquets yesterday.

The prime minister greeted the councillors with snacks.

Families should help end corporal punishment

Say rights activists

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Every family should build social awareness and take initiatives to end corporal punishment against children for their smooth mental and physical growth, said rights activists and policy makers yesterday.

They emphasised coordinated efforts of government, NGOs, rights defenders, parents and schools teachers to end corporal punishment.

They told the launching ceremony of "Campaign to end corporal punishment against children in Bangladesh" jointly organised by the Bangladesh chapter of South Asian Initiative to End Violence Against Children (SAIEVAC) and National Action and Coordination Group (NACG) at a hotel in the capital.

SAIEVAC is an intergovernmental body of SAARC countries in partnership with

children and civil society members to end violence against children.

Addressing the function as chief guest, State Minister for Women and Children Affairs Shirin Sharmin Chaudhury emphasised implementation of the government's directive to end corporal punishment against children.

She also focused on taking necessary initiatives to end early marriage and to prevent children from being addicted to drugs to promote their rights.

SAIEVAC Director General Rinchen Chopel said bringing all to a common platform is essential to end corporal punishment against children.

NACG Co-chair Advocate Salma Ali said political commitment and implementation of existing laws are important to end violence against children.

Tariq-ul-Islam, secretary, Ministry of Women and Children Affairs also spoke.



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