AN UNHAPPY HOMECOMING

Every year Bangladesh exports millions of unskilled labour at a cheap rate, and their remittance increasingly is becoming an important contribution to the economy. In 2012, remittance alone amounted to $14.1 billion, which is more than 10 percent of the country's gross domestic product (GDP). While many have been able to send enough money home to make life better for family members, there are others who have failed to make it abroad. When these migrants return after a few years, they are met with a new challenge – reintegration into the Bangladeshi society. Often, they come back ill, with empty pockets or suffering from trauma. As failed migration is still a social taboo, they struggle on their own. *The Star* met with many such migrant workers, spoke with grassroot level activists and international organisations. They all emphasise on the urgent need for reintegration support.



PHOTO: STAR FILE

ANJA BURRI

When Mamun came back after nine years of illegal work in Manchester, UK, his body went on a strike. He had a high fever which refused to go away, and he had to be hospitalised. The doctors could not find out what it was. "My sadness made me ill," Mamun says. He has been back on his homeland for a few months now, but the returned migrant still cannot handle the weather in his native land: he often faces breathing difficulty.

"I know that this is my country, but I cannot feel it anymore," the 31-year-old says and wipes the sweat off his forehead. Mamun's physical suffering is the visible expression of his despair. But there are problems even worse than his.

In order to finance his travel to the UK, Mamun's parents sold their house. Now, they expect him to pay back the money. But Mamun has come back – like many of the returning migrants – with empty pockets.