



ENSURING MIGRANT FEMALE DOMESTIC WORKERS' RIGHTS Ex-diplomats question Saudi assurance

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Expressing doubt over Saudi Arabia's recent assurance of ensuring the rights of female Bangladeshi to be employed in the Kingdom's homes, former diplomats who had served in the Arab state yesterday suggested that the government instead ensure jobs at factories or shopping centres.

They also questioned the viability of providing female migrant workers cellphones which, the expatriates' welfare and overseas employment minister's recently said, would help them contact families and people concerned if needed.

"Where employers usually confiscate passports of workers after they enter the houses, how will their protection be ensured?" questioned former ambassador M Shafullah.

"I have reservations about sending maids because they will not get proper protection there. There are many incidents of abuse of maids in Saudi Arabia," he added.

He was addressing a roundtable,

"The door for manpower export opens in Saudi Arabia: the creation of immense possibilities," Bangla daily Bhorer Kagoj organised at its conference room in the capital, moderated by the editor, Shyamal Dutta.

On February 10, Riyadh signed an agreement with Dhaka over recruiting

POINTS THEY MADE

- Check why neighbouring countries refusing to send theirs
- Opt for factory, shopping centre jobs
- Providing cellphones, setting up shelter homes not enough

10,000 maids from Bangladesh.

Mohammad Zafor, a former consul general in Jeddah, said Saudi Arabia's interest in Bangladesh arose as neighbouring Southeast Asian countries declined providing female jobseekers.

The government must find the

reasons behind the refusal, he said, adding, "I do not think the problems domestic workers face in Saudi Arabia will go away after providing mobile phones or setting up shelter homes there."

Employers in Saudi Arabia and Middle Eastern countries are supposed to bear the migration costs. But Bangladeshi manpower agents are carrying out a "visa trade", instigating, sometimes even paying, the employers to refrain from bearing the cost and in turn extracting it from the jobseekers, he added.

"I doubt that the government can send workers to Saudi Arabia at low migration costs," said Ataur Rahman, a former labour counsellor in Saudi Arabia.

He also expressed doubt over whether the minimum monthly wage, Saudi Riyal 800, equivalent to Tk 16,000, as recently stated by the ministry secretary, can be duly ensured to the workers in domestic services. Some lawmakers and Mohammad Abul Bashar,

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Security at Shaheed Minar beefed up for tomorrow

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Rapid Action Battalion yesterday took steps to provide security surrounding the capital's Central Shaheed Minar ahead of International Mother Language Day on February 21, said

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Govt's nod last drag on DCC election

been done.

EC Secretary Sirazul Islam told The Daily Star yesterday, "The ministry is required to send a copy of the gazette and a letter requesting us to hold the election. Only then we can move ahead."

There was no need to redraw the boundary of the north.

Asked, State Minister for LGRD Moshiur Rahman Ranga said they hoped to start the Dhaka South City Corporation has

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