

# 110 female migrants return empty-handed from Saudi Arabia

RASHIDUL HASAN and JAMIL MAHMUD  
A total of 110 female migrant workers returned empty-handed from Saudi Arabia on August 26.  
Around 38 of them were forced to return after facing physical and sexual torture, while 48 came back home as they were not paid their salaries on a regular basis.  
The Ministry of Expatriates' Welfare and Overseas Employment yesterday came up with the statistics and an explanation for it at a parliamentary standing committee meeting held at the Jatiya Sangsad Bhaban.  
In the report, the ministry identified 11 reasons for which the female migrant workers were forced to return.  
The reasons include physical and sexual torture, unpaid salaries, no provision of adequate food or leave, "selling" them to another employer (kafil), sickness and/or being forced to work in several houses instead of one, family reasons, and the expiry of visa and/or work contract.  
The committee is to hold discussions on the report at its next meeting.

According to the report, of the 110 female workers, 23 were forced to return as they alleged that they were not provided enough food by their employers, while seven others alleged that they were forced to work in more than one house.  
Four female workers said they came back as they were not given their due leaves, and one worker alleged that she was "sold" to another employer.  
Ten migrant workers said they were forced to return as they fell sick.  
Another worker said she opted to return for family reasons, while eight of them returned because of expired visas. Sixteen female migrant workers said they returned as their two-year long contracts ended and two returned for other reasons.  
The ministry also identified, among others, inability to adapt to new environment, culture and food, language barrier, excessive workload, lack of skills, and homesickness as some other reasons behind the return of female migrant workers from different countries, especially those employed as domestic help in the Middle East.



Liquor, seized during a Rab raid on Fu Wang Club on the capital's Tejgaon-Gulshan Link Road, put on display yesterday.

PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

## Will needed to fix ills

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autonomy and accountability for the Bangladesh Bank -- and this is not the first time that the IMF has called for it.  
Back in 2011, this was tagged as one of the conditions for the \$1 billion Extended Credit Facility that Bangladesh took from the Washington-based multilateral lender.  
Then too, the Awami League-led government huffed and puffed and eventually stopped short of doing what the IMF prescribed.  
But giving full operational independence to the BB is the need of the hour.  
The best part of the banking sector's current woes stem from the state banks and they are outside of the full scope of the BB supervision despite the commitment in the Seventh Five Year Plan to bring them fully under the central bank's oversight.

insolvent banks and non-bank financial institutions to prevent further losses, which will ultimately be borne by depositors and other creditors.  
The move would not only send out a strong signal to banks but also reinforce public confidence in the banking sector.  
Does the government have the stomach for such bold, assertive steps? At the same time, there needs to be an embargo on giving out new licences for banks and NBFIs.  
Since the Awami League came to power 12 new banks came into being. Three more are in the pipeline, which would take the total to a staggering 63.  
Experts and stakeholders warned against having that many banks, but the government ignored the good counsel and went about giving permission to new banks, one after the other, mostly on political consideration.  
But, the recent entrants have not been effective competitors, struggling to attract funding and pursuing higher risk investment.  
Can the government finally exercise restraint?  
The IMF mission also called for requirements for loan classification to be aligned with the Basel III standards.  
The Basel III standards is an international regulatory accord that introduced a set of reforms in the aftermath of the global financial crisis of 2007-08 for enhanced regulation, supervision and risk management within the banking sector.  
Bangladesh started adopting Basel III standards from January 1, 2015 and was due to fully implement them this year.  
As per the Basel standards, all loans should be treated as defaults if the borrowers fail to pay instalments for at least 90 days, or there is subjective evidence to indicate that a loss may be incurred.  
But, earlier this year, the central bank relaxed the rules for loan classification to give borrowers more time to pay off their instalments, going against the Basel III standards.  
The stricter loan classification policy need to be supplemented with stronger enforcement mechanisms for debt repayment and a firmer bankruptcy law. But what is transpiring is the exact opposite of what the doctor prescribed.  
For instance, the central bank last month was compelled to reschedule the restructured loans of 11 business groups, which it swore not to four years ago.  
The BB had originally planned to allow banks to pursue these defaulters under the Bankruptcy Act of 1997. Instead, it was arm-twisted to give them another chance.  
The government and the central bank's leniency towards defaulters is not only restricted towards these 11 business groups.  
At a time when loan defaults were hitting new highs, instead of cracking down on the delinquent borrowers the central bank rolled out a set of extraordinary facilities for them, setting a terrible precedent.  
As per the new policy, defaulters would be allowed to reschedule their classified loans by providing slight down payment. They would get more time to pay back their loans and at a lesser interest rate.  
Last but not the least, the IMF called for a separation of politics from the decision-making for the sector.  
"There seems to be a capture of financial sector decisions by powerful borrowers in Bangladesh," it said.  
Could the government develop the gumption say no to such interference?  
To sum up, sound advices were always aplenty but the government lacked the will to execute them. Whether this time would be different -- is what remains to be seen.  
But as the oft-quoted saying goes: when there is a will, there is a way.

## A journey to the past with dancing Shiva

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"It is fascinating that one can still 'discover' images that are not known to scholars," she said, adding that she would mention about the statue in her next research.  
According to Slajka, the craft of Nateshwar statue was pioneered by Bangalore sculptors and later it spread outside.  
Slajka also wrote an essay on Nateshwar statue titled "Dancing Shiva Image from Bengal" providing a list of 39 statues of dancing Shiva discovered previously. Of them, 25 were found in different parts of Bangladesh and West Bengal.  
The essay was incorporated in the book, "Studies in South Asian Heritage Essays on Memory of M Harunur Rashid", published by the Bangla Academy in 2015.  
Talking about the statue, Prof AAMS Arefin Siddique, renowned educationist and chairman of the documentation committee, said the discovery would help researchers understand and explain the ancient history of this region.  
According to relevant sources, there are two variations of dancing Shiva -- Nataraj and Nateshwar -- in the heritage of Indian sculpture.  
Nataraj is the depiction of a four-armed Shiva dancing within a fire ring with his left leg lifted in the air and right leg on a base that symbolises Apasmara, a mythological character who represented ignorance.  
Nataraj statues are found in the southern India, not in Bengal. Only Nateshwar statues are found in Bengal.  
Nateshwar stands on his bull-carrying Nandi and is flanked by his two dancing wives -- Ganga and Gauri. Even Nandi appears to have lifted its face and two legs in rhythm.  
Prof Niranjan Adhikary of Dhaka University, an expert on Indian literature and culture, said Nataraj is the fearsome face of Shiva that destroys evil powers while Nateshwar is his amicable face which brings welfare to all.  
Nateshwar statues are on display at different museums across the globe, including Bangladesh National Museum in Dhaka, India's Delhi National Museum, and USA's Los Angeles County Museum of Art.  
Nalini Kanta Bhattasali, sculpture expert and one of the founders of Bangladesh National Museum, in his book titled "Iconography of Buddhist and Brahminical Sculptures in the Dacca Museum" mentioned that many Nateshwar statues were discovered in the south-eastern districts, especially in Dhaka and Tripura (currently greater Cumilla).  
Generally, there are two types of Nateshwar -- one with 12 arms and the other with 10. The making process of ten-armed Nateshwar is described in "Matsya Puran", one of the oldest of the 18 post-Vedic Hindu scriptures.  
The 12-armed Nateshwar statue holds a veena while the one with 10 arms does not.  
The statue discovered in Chawkbazar has 12 arms. It is 3 feet tall and 1 foot 10 inches in width and the length of the veena is about 1.5 feet.  
Shiva's two wives -- Gauri and Ganga -- are there on two sides in the lower part.  
Dr Niru Shamsunnahar, ancient art researcher and former keeper of the National Museum, said the statue is currently kept in the Sarangadhara Akhada, which itself is a heritage site of Dhaka.  
The presence of Nateshwar statue here can contribute to flourishing

the heritage site-based tourism, she added.  
The monastery was mentioned in James Wise's book titled "Notes on the Races, Castes and Trades of Eastern Bengal", published in 1883.  
"One Mansha Roy founded the Akhada in the 17th century. The Akhada was dedicated to the name of Sarangadhara or Tirandaj Vishnu," said the book about the Akhada, also known as Sarangasthan.  
Ramanuja had established Sree community, the largest group of the Vaishnavas, in the Indian subcontinent. Sree community used to worship Vishnu Avatar.  
A section of people who came to Dhaka from North India for job or business purposes were devotees of the Sree community.  
Parmeshwar Maharaj, an elderly member of the Sree community, is involved in the management of the monastery since 1940s.  
He said he came to Dhaka from Uttar Pradesh to manage the monastery and has been residing here since then. "The statue has been here all along."  
A statue of Shiva is not usually found in a Vaishnava Akhada. According to the documentation committee, there might have been an Akhada of Shivas here during the Chandra dynasty. Shaivism gradually decayed following fourteenth century.  
This Akhada might have been abandoned around that time, the committee said in a report, adding that the forsaken Shiva Akhada was transformed into a Vaishnava monastery during the Mughal rule.  
(The writer is a member of the documentation committee. Translated by Shahariar Sajib, sub-editor, The Daily Star.)

Where is Samrat?  
STAFF CORRESPONDENT  
Rumours run rife on the whereabouts of Dhaka South Jubo League President Ismail Hossain Samrat, one of the alleged kingpins of "casino" business in the capital.  
Samrat had reportedly been holed up in his Kakrail office since September 18, the day Dhaka South Jubo League Organising Secretary Khaled Mahmud Bhuiyan was arrested for his links with running a gambling den at a club in Fakirerpool.  
Following Khaled's arrest, law enforcement agencies also detained a number of leaders of Jubo League, Krishak League and the Awami League in the capital. But Samrat remained untouched.  
On September 22 afternoon, multiple sources, including several Jubo League leaders, told this newspaper that Samrat was staying at his office.  
He was also available on his mobile phone till that afternoon.  
But at night, Samrat went out of his office, and has been traceless since then, said Jubo League insiders. His mobile phone has been switched off since then.  
Even the scene in front of Samrat's office changed on September 23 morning. Only a few people were seen there that morning whereas around a hundred of his supporters were guarding his office building round-the-clock the previous day.  
Sources in a law enforcement agency said Samrat is now hiding in the capital and is desperately trying to flee the country.  
The government on September 24 imposed a travel ban on Samrat, meaning he cannot leave the country.  
Bangladesh Bank also sought details of Samrat's bank accounts.  
On Tuesday, AL General Secretary Obaidul Quader said many leaders of the ruling party are now under surveillance.

## Make Myanmar take back the Rohingyas

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country's own resources. Since then, nearly \$450 million have been spent on several hundred projects, mostly on adaptation and a few on mitigation, Hasina added.  
The other significant challenge to Bangladesh's economic progress is terrorism and violent extremism. The government has taken "zero tolerance" policy against these social menaces, she mentioned.  
She recommended four measures to fight against terrorism and violent extremism. They are: Must stop the source of supply of arms to the terrorists, must stop the flow of financing to terrorists and their outfits, must remove the divisions within societies and must pursue the principle of peaceful settlement of international disputes through dialogue for a win-win situation.  
Hasina said the government has equipped the law enforcement agencies and taken steps to socially isolate the extremists and terrorists.  
"We have also taken digital measures to stem the spread of lies and hate narratives. In countering terrorism, we have excellent cooperation with both regional and global partners. As a result, since the Holey Artisan attack on July 1, 2016, there has been no major incident. Our people remain increasingly vigilant as we are committed to ensuring the safety of our people and supporting security situation beyond our borders," she said.  
Later, the PM replied to questions on various issues, including Rohingya, the unity of Muslim Ummah, the situation in the RMG sector, food security, social safety net programmes and women empowerment.  
Responding to a question on Rohingya repatriation, she said Bangladesh had talks with Myanmar and the discussions were underway and the international community also supported it. "The problem is that these people [Rohingyas] don't want to go back as they feel insecure."  
Hasina said Myanmar changed its constitution in 1982 without mentioning the Rohingyas as their citizens and called them outsiders. "At one stage of our dialogue, Myanmar agreed to take back their nationals from Bangladesh. But in the Rohingya camps, some people instigated them not to go back home."  
She said Myanmar should create an atmosphere so that the Rohingyas can go back and live on their own land.  
The PM, however, said the international pressure is very important for the repatriation of the Rohingyas.  
"But somehow it seems to me that the organisations working in Cox's Bazar Rohingya camps don't want these people to go back and they [organisations] are trying to prevent them."  
About the Muslim Ummah, Hasina said when she joined the OIC Summit in Makkah, she raised the issue that if there is any problem between the Muslim countries, it should be resolved through a dialogue or discussion. "But somehow it is not happening and you know where in the problem lies."  
The PM said there are many resourceful countries which cannot use their resources on their own and those who are helping them have some games to play and they have been pursuing the "divide and rule" policy in this regard. "This is very unfortunate and Muslims should realise it."  
"Every time in OIC, I raised the issue that the OIC should take some steps. But it is not happening anyway," she added.  
PM's ICT Adviser Sajeeb Wazed Joy, Foreign Minister AK Abdul Momen, Commerce Minister Tipu Munshi, Health Minister Zahid Maleque, Environment, Forest and Climate Change Minister Md Shahab Uddin,

State Minister for Foreign Affairs Md Shahriar Alam, Bangladesh Ambassador to USA M Ziauddin, CFR President Richard N Haas and distinguished members of CFR were present at the event.  
No politics  
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for any religion-based politics here. The Ducsus has urged the university administration to remain careful so that they [religion-based student organisations] cannot carry out their activities on the campus."  
Speaking to The Daily Star, Ducsus Assistant General Secretary Saddam Hussain said, "Religion-based politics was banned on the campus long ago. The meeting officially banned it yesterday."  
Asked about Rabbani's absence at the meeting, he said Rabbani could not attend the meeting due to "personal reasons."  
The meeting also discussed issues relating to the university's evening courses, the seat crisis at the library and the accommodation programme at dormitories.  
At the meeting, Ducsus Vice-President Nurul Haque Nur claimed that Golam Rabbani lost his organisational post because of his moral degradation. He demanded that the Chhatra League leader be removed from the Ducsus post as well.  
Talking to The Daily Star later in the day, two Ducsus leaders, wishing not to be named, said union leaders elected from the BCL panel are against Nur's demand.  
Nur also demanded scrapping studentship of seven Ducsus leaders who allegedly got enrolled in the evening programmes without sitting for any admission tests.  
This was the third executive meeting of the Ducsus after its election was held on March 11, 2018.

RAKHINE STATE  
Create proper environment  
UNHRC tells Myanmar, adopts resolution  
BSS, Dhaka  
The UN Human Rights Council yesterday adopted a resolution urging Myanmar to create a conducive environment in northern Rakhine State and convince Myanmar to take back the Rohingyas with full safety and dignity as per the bilateral agreement with Bangladesh.  
The resolution was adopted by a vote of 37 in favour and two against with seven abstentions during the ongoing 42nd regular session of the UNHRC in Geneva, says a press release of Bangladesh Permanent Mission to the UN in Geneva.  
The resolution, proposed by Bangladesh, was finalised by all member countries of the OIC and the European Union, said the release.  
The resolution laid emphasis on intensified investigation into all human rights violation and atrocities committed against the Rohingyas in Myanmar for bringing perpetrators to book under national, regional and international criminal justice systems.  
The UN also highly lauded the Bangladesh government for sheltering the Rohingyas and urged the international community to be partner of Bangladesh for continuing humanitarian assistance until the displaced people return to their homeland.  
Addressing the session, Shamim Ahsan, ambassador and permanent representative of Bangladesh Mission in Geneva, said this resolution would be a landmark to ensure accountability and justice over indescribable atrocities committed against the Rohingyas.