

Bangladeshi expatriates shows ray of hope

SHYKH SERAJ

It is in our thoughts that the Bangladeshi expatriates who are living in abroad are doing well and they have a great status in the society and a wonderful livelihood. It is a common thinking process. However, many of them lead a life of uncertainty. They spend less and save more to send some money to their home. Many of them lead a terrible life that we could ever imagine. These people left the country in the hope of doing something bigger and achieving something higher. We couldn't ensure their employment at home and thus they went abroad to fetch a secured and hard-earned life. Just to stay a bit well, they work tremendously hard. I have witnessed it with my eyes travelling to different parts of the world where I got close to so many Bangladeshi expatriates.

Recently 26 Bangladeshis were shot dead in Libya's Mizdah town. Many of us thought of this and it has put a strong mark into our hearts. These men left their homes in search of a new life, but they turned into dead bodies. As you all know, many Bangladeshis travel to the Middle East countries for a better life. And many of them also plot to illegally enter the European countries crossing the Mediterranean Sea with the full risk of life. Human traffickers are everywhere and they are very strong, particularly



Shykh Seraj poses for a photograph with some Bangladeshi expatriate workers in Qatar's Um Ubaydia region.

PHOTO: HRIDOYE MATI O MANUSH

Shykh Seraj is Bangladesh's pioneer development journalist. He received country's two highest civilian honours, Swadhinata Puroshkar and Ekushey Padak, respectively. He is a BIDS, Ashoka and Bangla Academy Fellow. He also received highest award for agricultural journalism from the United Nations, FAO A.H. Boerma Award, Gusi Peace Prize (Philippines) and many other prestigious accolades at home and abroad. At Channel i, he's the Founder Director and Head of News. He's also Director and Host of Channel i's popular agro-documentary, Hridoye Mati O Manush.



Libya to Europe route.

In 2016, I went to Germany and met some agricultural workers. One of them was Ashraful who first went from Bangladesh to Egypt and then to Libya. When Gaddafi was killed he was planning to leave the country and hence contacted a trafficker. That man promised Ashraful that he would arrange him a clear entrance to Italy. The journey through the Mediterranean Sea to Italy would have taken them only 10 hours. He boarded on a small boat with 350 people and nothing went well for him. The boat sunk and they were rescued by a ship and later kept at a camp in Munich from where Ashraful came to Lemgo

in Germany to start a new life. And this is why their hard-earned money is so precious because these desperate people put their life into risk. And we all know how remittance is so important for Bangladesh's economy. When the other economic sectors are going downwards, only the remittance came as a ray of hope amid the Covid-19 outbreak. However, during the coronavirus outbreak, around 700 thousand Bangladeshi expatriates have returned to the country. This would certainly affect the remittance flow. We are also hearing that another 500 thousand will come back. Hence, we should take the right measure for their safeguard and find out a flow for

the economic mechanism.

Recently, the Italian government took a wise and visionary decision that they will employ the foreign workers in the agricultural sector, instead of sending them back to their home.

Regarding the issue, I talked with the Consul General, working at the Bangladesh Consulate in Italy. Consul General Iqbal Mahmud told me that many Bangladeshi expatriates in Italy have already applied for the provision. I also talked with some Bangladeshi expatriates in Italy. All of them seemed very optimistic regarding this decision from Italy's government. We know that many Middle Eastern countries are sending back our Bangladeshi workers

during the spread of coronavirus. It would have been great, if they employ our workers in their farm sector. This skilled human resource can strengthen their food security with a new prospect.

Regarding this issue, I talked with Bangladesh's Foreign Minister AK Abdul Momen and recommended two vital issues to be pursued. First: the foreign countries, especially the Middle Eastern countries shouldn't return our workers; rather they should employ them in their agricultural sector. This would help the foreign countries and our workers will be effectively and timely employed during this coronavirus crisis. Second

one: livestock meat of Bangladesh has a high demand. And if our livestock farmers and entrepreneurs get the support they can export the Halal meat at the Muslim countries. This would boost up the meat sector.

'I must say these two proposals are wonderful, effective and very much timely during the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic. I tell you, we must pursue it and thank you very much for your kind thoughts,' said the Foreign Minister, after listening to my proposals. This definitely would help our workers and also boost up the agricultural production. I have also talked with the Agriculture Minister Dr Abdur Razzaque and he has assured me that he'll work on this. I am sure Honourable Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina will also take it significantly to improve the lives of Bangladeshi expatriates working in different countries across the world.

I have watched all the progressive agricultural ventures and effort from Bangladeshi expatriates in Oman, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Kuwait and many more countries. These entrepreneurs and workers have started the new dream economy in the desert land. The stories of the Bangladeshi expats are awesome and I have been closely following them for quite a long time. The Qatar government is already providing a 70 percent subsidy in the farming sector. Many workers in Qatar have turned into agricultural entrepreneurs. When I visited Qatar during February this year, a couple of them shared their thoughts and said they should be able to import Bangladeshi seeds. The immigration at Bangladesh airport causes different troubles for them but when they reach Qatar, they witness the opposite scenario.

I believe there can be a solid diplomatic step to employ the Bangladeshi expatriate workers in the farming initiatives taken across the world, especially in the Middle East countries. This huge number of more than 10 million can contribute to the economies of the world and also can assist the remittance flow in Bangladesh. The development thoughts must focus on the working class where bilateral objectives are well met. Assistance from the Bangladesh government can trigger our economy at a rapid speed.

Awful drainage a nuisance at Kushtia General Hospital

AMANUR AMAN, Kushtia

Believe it or not, it takes just a moderate rain to flood the main entrance and the road leading to Kushtia General Hospital with the dirty water and waste from the adjacent drains.

The 250-bed hospital, serving as a major treatment centre for about 50 lakh people of Kushtia, Jhenidah, Meherpur and Chuadanga districts, has to provide treatment for indoor and outdoor patients numbering much more than its usual capacity every day.

The hospital, which is also the temporary centre of Kushtia Medical College, attracts rising number of patients as many specialist doctors attend there.

Added to that, a PCR Lab has been set up here recently to provide treatment for the Covid-19 patients.

There is a mosque and the town's main post office next to the main entrance of the hospital.

But the two drains along the sides of the road often remain clogged, causing problem for disposal of the waste from the toilets and urinals in the whole area.

As the road leading to the hospital is old and low, it gets littered with garbage if there is a little rain or waterlogging on the road for any reason.

"The years-long problem poses serious health risk but the municipal authorities did not make any positive response, despite our written request on several occasions," said the hospital's resident medical officer Dr Tapas Kumar Sarkar.

Numerous patients and their relatives expressed extreme anger.

A relative of a patient named Nur Alam Dulal said that he refrained from entering the hospital to avoid the nuisance of passing through the filth.

Kushtia-3 Sadar constituency lawmaker Mahbub-ul-Alam Hanif, also joint general secretary of ruling Awami League, said, "Kushtia municipality had planned to construct the

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drain along with the road a long time ago but unfortunately it is yet to be implemented. I will inquire into the matter."

Kushtia Municipality's Executive Engineer Rabiul Islam claimed that he did not know anything about the written complaint of the hospital authorities about the matter.

"A work order has been issued for the construction of new roads and drains. The contractors will start work soon," he said.



Like many others of the kind, this handloom used for making silk cloth lies idle at Laharpur village in Shibganj upazila of Chapainawabganj for over two months as sale of the item remains virtually closed due to the adverse situation amid the outbreak of Covid-19.

PHOTO: RABIUL HASAN

Fate of GPA-5 holder Jumara uncertain

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Moulvibazar

She mainly studied during daytime as her poverty-stricken family could not afford kerosene to light a lamp at night. After all this, 16-year-old Jumara Akther from Prithimpasha village in Kulaura upazila did not give up hope. She has secured GPA-5 in the current year's SSC examinations, from the Science Group, from Ali Amzad High School.

But Jumara's day labourer father Shaher Uddin is now very worried about her enrolment in the college due to acute financial hardship.

The admission procedure may be started after the end of coronavirus but he is yet to manage money for her daughter's admission to a college, said Shaher, adding that he is now struggling to run the four-member family from his wages as he now gets job thrice a week due to Covid-19 outbreak.

"I have appealed to a number of my relatives and neighbors for extending their helping hands, but did not get any response from anyone yet," said an anxious Yarnun Begum, wife of Shaher.

"Sometimes we have to pass our days half-fed but my two daughters never lose concentration in their study," said Yarnun Begum.



GPA-5 holder Jumara Akther (clad in maroon and black dress) along with her parents and younger sister stands in front of their house at Prithimpasha village in Moulvibazar's Kulaura upazila.

PHOTO: STAR

Local resident Syed Ashfaq Tanvir, general secretary of Robirbazar Club, said Jumara is the only golden GPA-5 holder in the school. She also secured golden GPA-5 in PEC and JSC examinations.

He further said as there is no electricity in the house of Jumara, she studied during

daytime. Besides, her father has not much ability to buy kerosene to light a lamp so that she could study at night.

Tanvir added Jumara has been a bright student from her childhood. Bright future awaits her if she gets financial support for higher education.



People wade through dirty water on the premises of Kushtia General Hospital that gets flooded after a moderate rain.

PHOTO: STAR