





4,102,854



191,065,476

1,160 Gulf Returnees

# They lost Tk 1.8 lakh each in wage, perks amid pandemic

Says report by migrant rights group

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Some 1,160 Bangladeshi returnee migrants each incurred an average loss of about \$2,119 in wages and other entitlements in six Gulf countries amid the pandemic, according to a new survey report.

Of the returnees, 67.7 percent said they did not receive due wages after February, 2020, says the report of Bangladesh Civil Society for Migrants

The highest amount of loss a returnee migrant incurred was \$7,063

and the lowest was \$35, it says. The average monthly income of the respondents was \$329 or about Tk 27,970, it adds.

Findings of the report "Addressing Systemic Challenges of Wage Theft: Bangladeshi Covid-19 Returnees from the Gulf" were shared during a virtual ceremony yesterday organised by Migrant Forum in Asia, a regional migrant rights platform.

Titled "South Asian Perspectives on Wage Theft and Access to Justice", the event also saw sharing of similar study findings from India and Nepal.

Disclosing the report on Bangladesh, BCSM Chair Prof CR Abrar said the amount lost by Bangladeshi returnees is "quite a staggering sum".

Covid-19 had taken a huge toll on the respondents, most of whom were gainfully employed during the pre-pandemic period, said Prof Abrar, also executive director of Refugee and Migratory Movements Research Unit (RMMRÚ).

He said the experiences of workers Bangladeshi migrant exposed the "systemic weakness" of the protection structure of migrant

"Here, as we said, countries of destination, countries of origin, and private sectors in both countries -everyone is culpable," he said, adding the issue has to be addressed.

Seven BCSM member organisations including RMMRU conducted the

they had to walk tens of kilometres on

foot in the absence of public transport

for a movement control order to make

Nearly 30 percent of the garment

it to their factories, many are staying

workers will not go to their villages

this time because of such confusing

information regarding the lockdown

and factory operations, said Towhidur

Rahman, president of Bangladesh

"A clear and specific directive is

The workers will face a lot of

needed to remove the confusion on

such an important issue," Rahman said.

trouble in going to their villages and

coming back since all kinds of vehicles

including buses, trains and launches

will not ply during the lockdown, said

Nazma Akter, president of Sammilito

of lockdown rules for smooth

transportation of workers if the

workers, said Amirul Haque Amin.

president of the National Garment

many workers will set off by foot from

their villages to save their jobs, as they

had walked even 50 kilometres

Transport is a major concern for

If they do not find any transport,

"Unfortunately, many workers

factories are kept open, Akter said.

So, there should be an easing

Garment Sramik Federation.

Workers Federation.

did last year, Amin said.

Workers Federation, a

put in Dhaka this Eid.

garment workers' platform.

Uncertainty over workers'

survey in 45 districts between March

The Bangladeshi migrants, 14.7 percent of whom are female, returned from Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates, Qatar, Bahrain, Oman and

Aged between 20 and 49, they stayed in the countries of destination for up to more than five years. They were employed in various sectors including construction, domestic staff, hospitality, and services.

The BCSM report says 83.9 percent returnees had valid contracts.

As reasons for return, 63 percent respondents said they were forced to return or stay back in Bangladesh at the instruction of their employers, with 28.5 percent having come back on vacation and then got stranded.

When asked whether they had registered a complaint regrading wage theft, 92 percent of respondents said they did not, according to the report.

As reasons, they cited lack of information about where to file the complaint, finding "no reason" to believe that recovery was possible, and fearing retaliation from employers, it

says.

The report recommended that all dues of migrant workers be cleared before repatriation.

In case of inability of the employers to clear such dues before the return of the workers, documents should be issued by the employers that can be presented in courts for settlement, it

Addressing the event, Andalib Elias, director general (multilateral economic affairs) of foreign ministry, said lack of manpower in the Bangladesh missions abroad is a major challenge in providing required services to migrant

However, the present government is fully aware and conscious of the problems, he said, adding, "We are taking all necessary steps that is possible in our periphery to address

last year because of such confusing

their body through the ordeal paid double or triple the fare for whatever

transport they got to return to their

from the government will come," said

Faruque Hassan, president of the

Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers

the end of the negotiations with the

will relax the lockdown but at the

final stage, the government might not

consider our application. So, nothing

is clear yet," Hassan told The Daily

However, the majority of the

three reasons:

workers might not leave their

transportation problems, fear of

infection of the coronavirus that

has spread to the hinterlands and

workers has started from yesterday

in two factories at Gazipur, Hassan

said, adding that more than 12,000

been asked to vaccinate the garment

workers as soon as possible to keep

the workers safe from infection, he

All the member factories have

workers have gotten the jab.

Mass vaccination for garment

Both decisions can be finalised at

"We are expecting the government

"We do not know when the direction

workplaces, Amin added.

and Exporters Association.

government.

Star over the phone.

workplaces for

vaccination.

DGHS worried over violation

Those who did not want to put

information on factory reopening."

25 and May 6 this year.

A cow being guided off a train bogey at the Kamalapur Railway Station in the capital yesterday. Bangladesh Railway has been operating a special service to bring cattle to the capital from all over the country ahead of

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

## Crimes behind Brahman cows

Eid-ul-Azha

agro farm named Dairy Sun in Dhaka secured 30 Brahman cows with a nominal penalty and an apology to the

Contacted on July 8 and again on July 9, Mohammad Imran Hossain, proprietor of the Sadeeq Agro, gave different versions about the import documents and the reason for importing the cows: "no document was submitted", he was "not aware of forged document submission", "there were mistake", "cows were for research purpose", and the "cows were a gift" and so on.

Imran also insisted that this is the first time Sadeeq Agro imported Brahman cows.

But this correspondent, who went to the farm posing as a customer, was offered a two-year-old Brahman cow -a livestock official confirmed the breed upon seeing a photograph -- at Tk 15 lakh with an expected yield of 800kg

Requesting not to be named, the owner of another agro farm who had earlier imported Brahman cattle illegally from the US, said he spent about Tk 58,000 on each cow.

Sources said Sadeeq Agro had earlier imported around 200 Brahman cows in five consignments -- a claim denied

Sadeeq Agro, established on two acres of land in Mohammadpur's Beribadh area, has around 3,000 cows of different breeds. Many portions of the farm were set up by occupying a canal, alleged locals.

The Daily Star obtained three documents, submitted by Sadeeq Agro, under which Turkish Airlines brought the Brahman cows in its cargo plane on July 5. A Turkish Airlines official said various other goods were transported to Bangladesh on the same cargo aircraft these cows were flown in.

The documents -- a no objection certificate regarding the cattle import, a letter from the Animal Quarantine Division of the Department of Livestock Services, and the cattle import authorisation from the US -- were found to be fake by customs officials.

Agro Trade International was mentioned as the exporter under the address 7020 Hwy 75, South Madisonville, Texas.

The Daily Star, on July 10, emailed the US consigner Agro Trade International listed -- asking if they had sent those cows to Sadeeq Agro for research purposes as claimed by the owner. This correspondent hasn't received a reply yet. All three documents submitted

by the importer, dated May 25, were signed by "Dr Mohammad Omar Farqe, assistant director (quarantine) AC, Department of Livestock Services". When showed the three documents,

Sadeeq Agro owner Imran said he States". Surprisingly, the certificate was not aware of submitting any such documents to the Department of Livestock Services or to the fisheries and livestock ministry.

The Daily Star found an official named Mohammad Omar Faruque, an upazila livestock officer, now on deputation at the Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport as veterinary pathologist of the livestock quarantine

Contacted, Faruque said he never signed any documents provided by

"Actually, I don't have the authority to issue such documents on behalf of the department. Sadeeq Agro didn't even spell my name correctly," he said.

The mobile phone number mentioned in the documents does not belong to Faruque. On calling the number through the Truecaller app, the name that appears is one SM Reza.
This correspondent repeatedly

called this number for several days, only to find it switched off.

Dr Shaikh Azizur Rahman, director general of the livestock department, told The Daily Star on July 9 that all three documents are forged as the department didn't provide any such documents to Sadeeq Agro.

He also confirmed that import of Brahman cows is banned since 2016 and said, "How dare Sadeeq Agro import those cows with all those forged

documents!' **CONTRADICTORY VERSIONS** 

On July 8, Imran claimed that Agro Trade International sent the 18 Brahman cows for research and development purposes to see whether Bangladesh's tropical weather "suits the Brahman cow"

Asked whether they had got the NOC from the ministry concerned, he said they were yet to get it though they submitted the necessary papers several months back to the livestock department and the ministry. Covid-19 pandemic delayed the ministry's process.

But, he claimed, the consignor had sent the consignment in the meantime. The supplier made some mistakes while sending those cows, he said, without elaborating what kind of mistakes.

He contradicted his own statements a day later, saying he didn't actually provide any documents to the livestock department or the ministry for an NOC -- presuming that importing cattle for research and development purposes would not require an NOC.

He then said, "As it was a gift from Agro Trade International, that's why we had thought NOC will not be required for receiving these gifts.

At one stage, Imran showed a paper to this correspondent titled "US Origin Health Certificate for Export of Cattle to the Bangladesh from the United issue date was written in Bangla. Imran, also president of the

Bangladesh Dairy Farmers Association, claimed they had submitted all other documents to the respective authorities including customs. Asked why customs officials had

seized the cows then, he said they did it because Sadeeq Agro hadn't submitted an NOC. Imran said two months an agro

farm named Dairy Sun in Dhaka had imported 30 Brahman cows, which vere seized by customs officials. That farm later got those cows back

after giving some penalty money to customs following filing of a case with the High Court, he said, adding his plan was to take the same course if his cattle were not released by customs. Masudul Islam Jesun, managing

director of Dairy Sun, admitted that they imported 30 Brahman cows though the farm only had an NOC for importing Australian Friesian cows.

As officials filed a case, the High Court asked customs to hand over those cows after paying a penalty. "We had to pay Tk 35 lakh to customs to

release those cows," he added. WHAT TURKISH AIRLINES SAYS

Asked why and how they carried a cargo consignment although Sadeeq Agro's documents were fake, a top official of Turkish Airlines in Dhaka said it is not their task to verify the papers provided by the importer and agent of the consigner specially when the imported items are not sensitive.

"According to our airline's rules, will just have to be sure whether the imported items are suitable for freighter service," he said, requesting

anonymity, earlier this month. "The importer sent documents of livestock ministry to the consignor in the US and his agent chose our cargo

service," he added. The official said as no representative from Sadeeq Agro was found after landing of the cargo aircraft. "The customs officials wanted to see the

documents from us and they later found those to be totally fake. Moazzem commissioner of Dhaka Customs House at HSIA, said they seized the cattle imported by Sadeeq Agro and

sent these to the custody of the Central Cattle Breeding and Dairy Farm, Savar, as the consignee could not submit the bill of entry. Asked about legal measures customs can take, he said, "From the day of

arrival, the consignee will get 21 days to submit all documents and then we will assess these. If they fail to give the documents, we will go for legal action,' he told The Daily Star on Saturday.

Queried as to what could be the

possible punishment for importing with forged documents, Moazzem refused to comment further.

# Pilgrims stream out of Makkah

and deputy commissioners [in all

districts]. They are all supervising [the issue of following health safety rules] . If everyone played his or her due role, the health safety guidelines can be maintained a little better," he said at a virtual briefing yesterday.

Hours later, the DGHS in its daily press release reported a spike in Covid-19 casualties and new cases in the 24 hours till 8:00am yesterday.

On July 11, the country logged the highest daily deaths -- 230. July 15 saw the second-highest death toll of 226.

With the latest count, the total number of deaths rose to 17,894, which is around 1.62 percent of the virus cases detected so far.

In the 24 hours, 11,578 people tested positive for the virus -- up from 8,489 the previous day. The positivity rate was 29.09 percent

yesterday. It was 29.06 percent the previous day. The total number of Covid patients

undergoing treatment stood at 154,087. Of them, 13,901 were receiving treatment at various Covid-dedicated hospitals across the country as of yesterday noon, according to the Covid-19 Dynamic Dashboard of the

As in the previous day, Dhaka

Division saw the highest 60 deaths from the virus, followed by 54 in Khulna Division. Among other divisions, 40 Covid

patients died in Chattogram, 20 in

Rajshahi, 14 each in Sylhet, Rangpur

and Mymensingh, and nine in Barishal. RAPID COVID TEST AT 9 CATTLE MARKETS Brac has launched antigen-based

Covid-19 rapid tests at nine cattle markets yesterday, said a press release.

The initiative is being implemented with the help of Dhaka North City Corporation (DNCC). The DGHS is providing necessary support to set up a Surokkha corner in each of these cattle

The Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office (FCDO) of the Government of UK is supporting BRAC and the DGHS in this effort.

DNCC Mayor Atiqul inaugurated it at the cattle market at ayeednagar in Bhatara area yesterday.

The service will be available from 8:00am to 8:00pm every day and will continue till July 20.

Speaking as chief guest at the inauguration, Atiqul said, "This is truly a praiseworthy initiative from Brac at this moment of crisis of the pandemic. We are calling on other organisations to come forward with such initiatives...'

each year into a vast encampment for Pilgrims were brought there

vesterday on buses which were only half-filled to respect social distancing rules, and authorities provided 3,000 electric cars to transport the elderly and those with limited mobility.

"We have applied social distancing inside the camps where there are four pilgrims in each room. We have put barriers between each bed to apply social distancing," tour operator Hadi Fouad told AFP.

"For the common areas at the camp, like the prayer area and the cafeteria, we have assigned a security company whose guards are spread throughout the camp to make sure there is no crowding."
GOLDEN TICKET

In the high point of the Hajj, worshippers will climb Mount Arafat

Also known as the "Mount of Mercy", it is the site where it is believed that the Prophet Mohammed (pbuh) delivered his final sermon. Worshippers will undertake hours of prayers and Koranic recitals there.

After descending the following day, they will gather pebbles and perform the symbolic "stoning of the devil". The Hajj, usually one of the world's

largest annual religious gatherings, is one of the five pillars of Islam and must be undertaken by all Muslims with the means at least once in their lives. This year's pilgrimage is larger than the pared-down version staged in

2020 but is drastically smaller than in normal times, creating resentment among Muslims abroad who are barred once again. Participants were chosen from more than 558,000 applicants through an

online vetting system, with the event confined to fully vaccinated adults aged 18-65 with no chronic illnesses. 'A PRIVILEGE' "I thank Allah that we received approval to come, even though we

did not expect it because of the small number of pilgrims," said Abdulaziz bin Mahmoud, an 18-year-old Saudi. Saddaf Ghafour, a 40-year-old Pakistani woman travelling with her friend, was among the women making the pilgrimage without a male

"guardian", which was a requirement

until recently.

"It is a privilege to perform Hajj among a very limited number of pilgrims," she said.

Saudi Arabia has so far recorded than 507,000 coronavirus infections, including over 8,000 deaths. Some 20 million vaccine doses have been administered in the country of over 34 million people.

The Hajj Ministry has said it is working on the "highest levels of health precautions" in light of the pandemic and the emergence of new zariants.

Pilgrims are being divided into groups of just 20 "to restrict any exposure to only those 20, limiting the spread of infection", ministry undersecretary Mohammad al-Bijawi said.

Aside from strict social distancing measures, authorities have introduced "smart Hajj card" to allow contactfree access to camps, hotels and the buses to ferry pilgrims around religious

The Hajj went ahead last year on the smallest scale in modern history.

Authorities initially said that only 1,000 pilgrims would be allowed, although local media said up to 10,000 eventually took part.

# Shakib guides

Shakib's 109-ball innings featured eight boundaries as he mixed caution with aggression while losing partners at regular intervals. All-rounder Mohammad Saifuddin, batting at No 9, gave Shakib good company with an unbeaten 28 off 34 deliveries, the second highest score of the innings.

Earlier, Shakib contributed with the ball too, taking two wickets for 42 runs as Bangladesh restricted Zimbabwe to 240 for nine after being asked to field The best performer for Bangladesh

with the ball, though, was young pacer Shoriful Islam, the left-armer taking career-best figures of four for 46 in his 10 overs. Bangladesh had won the first match

of the series by 155 runs on Friday, courtesy of a Liton Das's century and Shakib's five-wicket haul.

The series concludes on Tuesday at the same venue.

## 78 healthcare

FROM PAGE 1

said the DGHS circular.

If the antigen test results of individuals showing Covid symptoms are negative, their samples will be tested again using RT-PCR machine for confirmation, added the circular.

The fees for a rapid antigen test

have been fixed at maximum Tk 700. In case of collecting samples from a patient's home, he or she can be harged Tk 500 maximum as an additional fee.

This charge will be applicable once n every household irrespective of the number of patients. The 78 healthcare organisations

have to use the rapid antigen kits developed by two companies -- SD Biosensor of South Korea and Panbio of the USA. On September 17 last year, the government permitted antigen-based

rapid testing at public healthcare centres, which have so far been expanded to 457 government healthcare facilities across the country. In the rapid antigen testing, a suspected patient will get the result within 30 minutes after the collection

of samples. For the detection of Covid-19, the RT-PCR test is considered the golden standard and is widely used in Bangladesh. It, however, takes at least

#### 24 hours to get results. Syria regime fire kills seven in rebel bastion: monitor

Syrian regime artillery fire killed seven civilians including three children in of Idlib, a Britain-based war monitor

said yesterday. The shelling hit in the village of Ehsim late Saturday, in the south of the Idlib region, the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said.

A family member told AFP that visitors had gathered to congratulate a male relative on getting married when the shelling struck their home.

Earlier in the day, rockets fired by pro-government forces killed six civilians in the village of Sarja, including three children and a rescue worker, meaning at least 13 were killed in total in Idlib on Saturday.

The shelling in Ehsim came hours after President Bashar al-Assad took the oath of office for a fourth term, pledging to "liberate" areas still peyond government control.

The deaths are the latest violations of a ceasefire deal agreed by rebel backer Turkey and government ally Russia in March 2020 to stem a regime offensive on the jihadist-dominated stronghold.

### Japan landslide toll rises to 15

Агр, Токуо

The death toll in a landslide that hit the Japanese resort town of Atami has risen to 15, a local official said yesterday, as hundreds of rescuers continued the search for over a dozen

missing residents. "Two more people were confirmed dead during the weekend, with the number of victims now totalling 15, disaster-management spokesman Yuta Hara told AFP.

14 people remain unaccounted for, the official said.

Dozens of homes were swept away when a landslide descended on the resort town in several violent waves on July 3.

It came after days of intense downpours in and around Atami, which lies about 90 kilometres (55 miles) southwest of Tokyo. Japan was in its rainy season when

the floods struck, with many parts of

the country vulnerable to landslides because homes are built on slopes where ground can loosen and collapse suddenly after heavy downpours. Scientists say climate change is

also intensifying the country's rainy seasons because a warmer atmosphere holds more water.