

Bangladeshis returning from India with deadly silicosis

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Many Bangladeshis are facing slow death from silicosis after their return from India following years of work at stone crushing fields in different states of the neighbouring country.

Silicosis is a form of lung disease that is usually caused by many years of inhalation of silica dust.

Most of these Bangladeshis, especially residents of bordering districts, had long been working illegally at various stone crushing sites in a number of Indian states including Haryana, Rajasthan and Delhi.

The Bangladeshis entered the neighbouring country in search of jobs and none of them have any valid travel documents.

The Daily Star recently interviewed several such returnee workers who are from Biral upazila in Dinajpur and Pirganj upazila in Thakurgaon.

All of them said that they used to work at different stone crushing plants in India for many years and are now suffering from silicosis.

According to lung disease specialist Prof BK Bose, who is the director of Institute of Nuclear Medicine and Allied Sciences in Dinajpur, silicosis is a fibrotic lung disorder caused by inhalation, retention and pulmonary reaction due to long term exposure to crystalline silica at mines, stone crushing plants and stone quarries.

High exposure to silica can cause silicosis within a month with significant impairment of lungs within few years, he said. "Life becomes shorter if anyone gets infected with silicosis."

Most people in Bangladesh still have little knowledge about the deadly but preventable disease. If anyone gets infected and the stage is at an acute level, the person will surely die at an early age, the professor also said.

Idris Ali, a 35-year-old man from Narabari village in Dinajpur's Biral upazila, crossed into India illegally in search of a job when he was 20.

He said he later got a job at a stone crushing site in Delhi and his initial monthly wage was 5,000 Indian rupees.

Idris returned home in 2016 after working there for ten years.

He fell sick soon after he came home and he primarily took treatment from local quacks. But after his health condition started to deteriorate, he recently saw a doctor in Dinajpur town and was soon diagnosed with silicosis.

Talking to The Daily Star over phone, Idris said many people in his village are

still working at various stone crushing fields in different states of India. "If I knew [about the risks], I would not have taken the job," he sighed.

Till date, at least 11 people died of silicosis in Narabari village alone, he also said.

Since the treatment of the disease is highly expensive, he recently stopped getting allopathic treatment in favour of homoeopathic treatment.

Moinul Islam, a 26-year-old from the same village, said he went to India in 2013, looking for a job.

Most of these Bangladeshis, especially residents of bordering districts, had long been working illegally at various stone crushing sites in a number of Indian states including Haryana, Rajasthan and Delhi.

He later got a job at a stone crushing company in Haryana where he worked for six years. He returned home in 2019 and was diagnosed with silicosis recently.

His monthly medicine costs now go as high as Tk 6,000, which is beyond the affordability of his poor family.

While talking with this correspondent, Moinul said around 200 young people, mostly from Dinajpur, Rangpur and Lalmonirhat, work at nearly 200 stone crushing fields in India.

Another returnee worker, Khairul Alam, 29, from Pirganj of Thakurgaon, said he too was unaware of the risks and worked at a stone crushing field in India for five years to support his family in financial hardship.

He returned home in 2019 and was diagnosed with silicosis recently.

Dr BK Bose, the lung specialist in Dinajpur, said five of his silicosis patients had worked at different stone crushing sites in India.

Termining the trend of going to India for job a social problem, he said there are many job opportunities in Bangladesh now. "Awareness could be a solution to the problem."



Locals join voluntary service to construct an embankment on Louhajang river to save an Eid congregation ground, a graveyard and a dakhil madrasa from erosion.

PHOTO: STAR

Villagers themselves building dyke to stop erosion of Louhajang river in Tangail

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Tangail

People of Doshokia union in Kalihati upazila of Tangail have been constructing a 300-metre embankment through voluntary work to save their houses, an Eid congregation ground, a graveyard and a dakhil madrasa from erosion by the Louhajang river.

Erosion of the Louhajang river hit the Doshokia union since the increase of water level of the river from the beginning of the monsoon, devouring a number of structures, including dwelling houses, and croplands.

After an Eid congregation ground, a graveyard and a dakhil madrasa and many other houses faced the threat erosion, the

villagers took an initiative to resist the erosion by constructing a temporary embankment on their own to save the area from going to riverbed, local sources said.

They started works to construct the embankment on Friday and first constructing bamboo fence at a 300 metres stretch. Later, they will dump sand bags on there. The works may take few more days for completion, they said.

Villagers Masum Khan, Ramjan Ali, Dulu Miah, Faruk Sarkar, Nurul Islam, Sobur Ali, Lal Miah and Abul Kasem said erosion was devouring dwelling houses and different other structures as well as croplands for the last two years, making many local families displaced. However, the authorities

and public representatives did nothing to solve the problem.

As the erosion of the river posed threats to the Eid Gaon, graveyard used by the people of the three villages and also the madrasa and dwelling houses in the area, the villagers decided to do something to check the erosion and save these by their own, they said.

Immediately after the decision, they raised a fund of Tk 2 lakh by the contribution of the villagers and also taking donation from local markets to construct an embankment on there, they said.

Motiur Rahman Bhuiyan, member of 8 Ward No 8 of the union, said the villagers were working to construct the embankment voluntarily and

taking donation from the locals for it.

Being informed of the villagers' initiative, Abdul Malek Bhuiyan, chairman of Doshokia union parishad, also came ahead, expressed his solidarity with the villagers and provided his supports to implement the initiative.

Malek Bhuiyan, the UP chairman and also the general secretary of upazila unit of Awami League, said he has already extended his help, including financial supports, to the villagers' initiative.

"I'll also request the Water Development Board and Upazila Administration for taking initiative to construct a permanent embankment in the erosion affected area," he said.

Lightning kills 2 in Joypurhat

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Dinajpur

Two farmers were killed in lightning strikes in Joypurhat's Panchbibi upazila yesterday.

The victims are Delwar Hossain Dulal, 50, son of late Biraj Mollah of Jorapukur village, and Mozaffar Hossain, 48, son of late Hossain Ali of Chowdhurypara village.

Four others were also injured during the incident.

Injured Emdad Haque, 35, Sabbir Hossain, 17, Khalidur Rahman, 55, and Sirajul Islam, 40, took treatment at Joypurhat Modern Hospital.

Quoting witnesses, Officer in Charge of Panchbibi Police Station Polish Chandra Deb said a thunderbolt hit them while they were sowing Aman sapling at Ratanpur village amid rain yesterday morning, leaving two dead on the spot and four others injured.

3 arrested for murder

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Brahmanbaria

Three people, including two siblings, were arrested yesterday in connection with a case for killing an Imam of a mosque in Sarail upazila on July 20.

The arrestees are Abdullah Mia, 40, and Shahed Mia, 50, and his son Junaid Mia, 20.

Criminal Investigation Department (CID) arrested the three, raiding Teigaon and Khilgaon areas of the capital, Special Superintendent of Police Mukta Dhar said at a press conference at the CID Headquarters yesterday.

According to the case statement, there had been a longstanding feud between slain Abdur Rahim and his two younger brothers Abdullah and Shahed over a piece of disputed land at Dhamaura village.

On July 20, Shahed and Abdullah locked into an altercation with Rahim, and then hit Rahim with a spear.

Neighbours took injured Rahim to Kuliarchar Upazila Health Complex in nearby Kishoreganj, where the doctors declared him dead.



Due to continuous rainfall for the last couple of days, nearly 550 fish enclosures in six out of the eight upazilas of Patuakhali were flooded. The photo was taken from Rangabali upazila on Sunday.

PHOTO: SOHRAB HOSSAIN

Office of the Chief Engineer, Jashore University of Science & Technology. Invitation for e-Tender for Goods. JUST/Engg/731/Purchase of 80KVA Generator-21/741. Date: 01/08/2021.

Sylhet City Corporation, Nagar Bhaban, Sylhet. Corrigendum Notice (Expression of Interest (EOI) for CONSULTING Firm). Date: 02/08/2021.

গণপ্রজাতন্ত্রী বাংলাদেশ সরকার. দরপত্র বিজ্ঞপ্তি (OTM). দরপত্রের বিস্তারিত বিবরণ...