Majority of districts falling behind

INT'L LABOUR MIGRATION

Although Bangladesh has seen a rise in overseas jobs over the years, in majority of the districts, international labour migration is quite low, largely due to lack of recruiting activities in those

Of about 87.6 lakh workers sent abroad between 2005 and 2019, about 63.91 lakh were hired from only 20 districts, according to Bureau of Manpower, Employment and Training (BMET).

These 20 districts, 16 of which are under Chattogram and Dhaka divisions, made up the national average of 1.36 lakh workers sent per district during the period. other districts Numbers in remained low.

For instance, the average number of workers hired from each of the eight districts of Rangpur during the period is only 19,197.

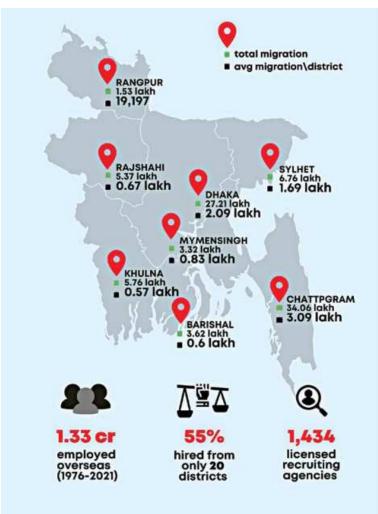
Overall, about 1.33 Bangladeshis got overseas jobs from 1976 till October this year, shows BMET data.

Sector insiders and labour migration experts said the reason behind lack of recruiting activities in many districts could be linked to people's economic condition in those regions.

In the existing recruitment process, agencies largely depend on sub-agents or intermediaries to hire workers from the field.

People in northern districts often cannot arrange Tk 3 to 5 lakh for migration costs. Since cash-flow is low there, the network of sub-agents or intermediaries is also absent, as they know business prospects are low.

> **SHAKIRUL ISLAM** CHAIRPERSON, OKUP



However, sub-agents usually do not operate in areas where people's economic condition is low, they

They added that the government needs to address the existing imbalance in district-wise worker

According to BMET, the top 10 districts in terms of workers hired between 2005 and 2019 Cumilla, Chattogram, Brahmanbaria, Tangail, Dhaka, Chandpur, Noakhali, Narsingdi, Munshiganj and Feni.

Syed Saiful Haque, chairperson of Warbe Development Foundation, said most of the country's licensed recruiting agencies are based in more than 1,300 enlisted members.

those districts or adjacent ones. Fakhrul Islam, former finance secretary of Baira, echoed Saiful's

Although recruiting agencies can open sub-offices in the "leftbehind" districts, they need to think twice about profit, he said.

Fakhrul, also president of Recruiting Agencies Welfare Organisation of Bangladesh, said district employment and manpower offices, and technical training centres can play vital roles in recruiting workers from leftbehind areas.

Baira, the apex trade body of the country's recruiting agencies, has

According to BMET, there were at least 1,434 licensed recruiting agencies in the country as of May this year.

Shakirul Islam, chairperson of Ovibashi Karmi Unnayan Program, said people in northern districts often cannot arrange Tk 3 lakh to Tk 5 lakh for migration costs.

"Since cash-flow is low there, the network of sub-agents or intermediaries is also absent, as they know business prospects are low," he added.

Poverty is also behind low international migration in Khulna-Bagerhat, despite the region witnessing internal migration, due to impacts of climate change, he added.

Shariful Hasan, head of Brac Migration Programme, international labour migration from supposedly poverty-stricken districts has been low for years.

"To improve the situation, initiatives should be taken to prepare workers, and if necessary, a quota system for them could be launched," he said.

"Besides, a directive could be given to recruiting agencies to hire a certain percentage of workers from left-behind areas," he added.

Shariful also said people in the northern region lack "migration behaviour", such as the desire to take risks. This could be behind the low migration. Traditionally, people from districts like Noakhali and Cumilla have been migrating within the country for years. Contacted, Shahidul Alam,

address the situation, they have recently been arranging job fairs, with participation of recruiting agencies, for direct recruitment of workers from the field. Already, such fairs were held in

director general of BMET, said to

12 areas of the country in October, the DG recently told The Daily

also said they have undertaken various other initiatives, which include encouraging traders to open recruiting agencies in leftbehind areas and existing agencies to open sub-offices.

Cultural centre with a defeated purpose



If you visit Old Dhaka's Loharpool area, you'll come across a structure that's quite hard to miss. Its sign reads in bold -- "Zahir Raihan Cultural Center". In the quest to accommodate the cultural practices of the citizens of Old Dhaka, the centre was established in 2008

But even after 13 and a half years of its establishment, the 400-seater auditorium is yet to accomplish its goal, as it remains empty most days of the month.

The cultural centre's journey started on March 22, 2008, at the initiative of the undivided Dhaka City Corporation, whose mayor Sadeque Hossain Khoka inaugurated it.

To mark the occasion, Bangladesh Group Theater Federation along with the city corporation organised a nineday theatre festival, after which a few more drama festivals were held as well.

With time, the cultural centre started to lose lustre, as mainstream theatre groups were not interested in staging plays there anymore.

Cultural activists said they don't come to the centre since it doesn't have an environment conducive to cultural activities. They also cited its high rent

According to Dhaka South City Corporation's website, the rent for any organisation within the Bangladesh Group Theater Federation and Sammilita Sangskritik Jote is fixed at Tk

For all other groups or organisations, the total rent for each day other than Friday is Tk 8,000 per day. On Friday, the rent goes up to Tk 12,000. However, due to various additional charges, the rent increases by another Tk 2,500 to

A person working at the centre said though the rent was set at Tk 5,000 initially, it's now almost double that.

As organisations look away from the centre due its high charge, its authorities are faced with a double whammy, as they have to spend additional money on maintenance to keep the empty auditorium afloat.

Fourteen out of 18 ACs at the auditorium are damaged, while the condition of light and sound projection systems are also appalling.

In August, it staged only one play, five in September, and seven in October, all of them by Old Dhaka-based theatre

During a visit on Monday morning, this correspondent noticed that there was no one inside the centre. One individual standing there said people

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'Militants scheming against Bangladesh, India'

Say speakers at event of Ghatak Dalal Nirmul Committee

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Speakers at a discussion yesterday said militant organisations are scheming against Bangladesh and India to avenge the defeat

This has created a security threat in the South Asian region, they said.

They mentioned that the government and citizens of Bangladesh have to be united to fight against the militant groups.

Pro-Liberation War platform Ekattorer Ghatak Dalal Nirmul Committee, with support of Bangladesh-India Friendship Society, organised the discussion at the capital's Bangladesh Shilpakala Academy, marking the 13th anniversary of the Mumbai terror attack, says a press release.

The discussion was part of the inauguration of a three-day photography and film exhibition.

The speakers said militants supported by Pakistan carried out an unprecedented terror attack on Taj Hotel in Mumbai on November 26, 2008, in which citizens of 22 countries including Indians were killed.

They further said several killings and criminal attacks took place during the tenure of BNP and Jamaat government, which included the grenade attack on Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, then opposition leader, on August 21, 2004.

Addressing the discussion as chief guest, Home Minister Asaduzzaman Khan Kamal said like India, Bangladesh also came under militant attacks on multiple occasions.

He alleged during BNP's tenure after 2001, militants were harboured in the country. Gradually, they started to take action to erase Bangladesh's history, tradition and culture.

However, after assuming power in 2009, Sheikh Hasina eliminated them with strong hands, he further said.

Addressing the event as special guest, Indian High Commissioner to Bangladesh Vikram K Doraiswami said during the Mumbai attack, some Pakistani terrorists equipped with firearms brutally killed Indians and foreign citizens.

By carrying out such an attack, they wanted to destroy peace and harmony and establish terrorism in South Asia including India, he said. Nirmul Committee President Shahriar

Kabir said Pakistan should be labelled as a "terror state", adding its "policy to export militancy and fundamentalism" has been a threat to security across the globe.

Former justice Shamsuddin Chowdhury Manik and security analyst Maj Gen (rtd) Abdur Rashid, among others, spoke at the discussion.

Dhaka's Brahma Samaj

Reminiscent of an enlightened past







Inside the Brahma Samaj premises lie its library and temple, first built in 1869. As followers of a formless, monotheistic religion, Brahma Samaj does not keep any image or idol in their prayer hall.

PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

MD SHAHNAWAZ KHAN CHANDAN

In a corner of Old Dhaka's Patuatuli neighbourhood sits a temple where all faiths are respected, and followers of various faiths join in prayers and ceremonies. The temple belongs to Brahma Samaj, a monotheistic faith that evolved through the reformist movement of Hindu religion during late 18th century.

Founded by Raja Ram Mohan Roy in 1828, Brahma Samaj, from late 18th to 20th century, attracted many urban elites under its banner and pioneered the Bengal Renaissance. Some of the most famous educational institutions in Bangladesh like Jagannath University, Eden College, and Ananda Mohan College were founded by

The temple was visited by many notable followers of this faith, such as Nobel laureate Rabindranath Tagore in 1926, Debendranath Tagore, philosopher Keshab Chandra Sen, Nawab of Dhaka Khwaja Abdul Ghani and many other historic figures. Its library was one of the richest libraries in Bengal, where Bankim Chandra Chatterjee, Dr Muhammad Shahidullah and many other littérateurs and scholars gathered regularly.

Presently, Brahma Samaj is struggling to survive, due to lack of resources and decreasing number of followers. The samaj is now maintained by a seven-member committee and a seven-member trustee board.

"At present, the conversion into Brahma belief has completely stopped in Bangladesh. As a result, the number of original Brahma (Brahma by heredity) is also decreasing subsequently," said Dipak Paul, acharya (high priest) of Brahma Samai.

General Secretary of Brahma Samaj Ranabir Paul said, "Although the number of our followers have decreased significantly, we're practising our faith peacefully all over

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Bike for Buriganga A day of raising awareness over

river's conservation

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

With the aim to raise awareness over Buriganga river's conservation, Waterkeepers Bangladesh Consortium and Buriganga River Coalition jointly organised a variety of events yesterday, including cycle rally, dinghy boat race, and a drawing competition for children.

The day began with the cycle rally, which started from Manik Mia Avenue and ended at Basila Primary school. Around 11:30am, the boat race was held at Basila ghat, while the art contest and a mime performance was held at Basila Primary School premises.

"We held the events to raise awareness among the city's people and let them know that we must save our rivers from all kinds of threats, like grabbing, encroachment, and pollution," said Sharif Jamil, coordinator of Waterkeepers Bangladesh.

"We're extremely happy to see a lot of young people showing up for the programmes, especially the cycle rally,'

Attending the rally, actor and film director Nader Chowdhury said he wants to go back to the time when he travelled around the capital. He also urged people to step up their efforts to protect Buriganga.

The rally opened with a welcome speech by Prof Ahmed Kamruzzaman Majumdar, chairperson of Stamford University's Department of Environmental Sciences, while Md Aminul Islam, president of the implementation council of the events, presided over the opening session. SEE PAGE 4 COL 3

