

Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh  
Ministry of Expatriates' Welfare and Overseas Employment  
71-72 Eskaton Garden, Ramna, Dhaka  
Mission and Welfare Wing

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Date: 12/05/2020

**Minutes of video conference with development partners and UN organizations on the welfare and re-integration of returnee Bangladeshi workers from different countries due to Corona pandemic.**

Chair: Dr. Ahmed Munirus Saleheen  
Secretary  
Ministry of Expatriates' Welfare and Overseas Employment.

Date and time: 12/05/2020 11.00 a.m.

**Participants present:**

1. Dr.Khallilur Rahman, Additional Foreign Secretary, MoFA.
2. Md. Shamsul Alam, DG ( Additional Secretary), BMET.
3. Md. Hamidur Rahman, DG ( Additional Secretary), WEWB,
4. Md. Shahidul Alam, Additional Secretary, MoEWOE,
5. Md. Musharraf Hossain Additional Secretary, MoEWOE,
6. Mr. Giogri Giaguri, Chief of Mission, IOM Bangladesh.
7. Ms Laetitia Weibel, Chief Technical Advisor, ILO, Bangladesh.
8. Ms. Nasreen Jahan, Joint Secretary, MoEWOE,
9. Md. Munim Hasan, Joint Secretary, SSD, MOHA.
10. Ms. Pravina Gurung, Country Director, IOM Bangladesh
11. Ms. Aneeka Rahman, World Bank, Bangladesh.
12. Ms. Nazia Haider, Programme Manager, Safer Migration, Embassy of Switzerland in Bangladesh, SDC
13. Ms Suraiya Banu, ILO
14. Ms Ishita Shruti, IOM

The Chair Dr. Ahmed Munirus Saleheen, Secretary, Ministry of Expatriates' Welfare and Overseas Employment greeted everyone and welcomed them to the video conference. At the very onset of the meeting the Chair expressed his concern about multifarious vulnerabilities that the migrant workers of Bangladesh have become exposed to due to the pandemic outbreak of COVID 19. He appraised the participants of the measures and initiatives so far taken by the

Ministry of Expatriates' Welfare and Overseas Employment for ensuring the wellbeing of expatriate workers and their left-behind families. Measures include providing support in kind such as food and health-protection gear to the expatriate workers through the Labour Wings in different destination countries, cash allowance for returnees on their arrival at airports, institutional quarantine facility and soft loan for the Corona-affected workers or appropriate members of their families.

The Chair opined that it is widely apprehended that a significant number of Bangladeshi expatriate workers would return home due to various consequences of the Coronavirus during and post Corona crisis. The likely influx of returnees will call for comprehensive socio-economic reintegration plan for them. While the Government of Bangladesh under the able leadership of Hon'ble Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina in general and the Ministry of Expatriates' Welfare and Overseas Employment under the leadership of Hon'ble Minister Mr Imran Ahmad, MP in particular are relentlessly working for ensuring the overall wellbeing of the expatriate workers and their families, there needs to be more collaborative efforts for tackling the crisis. In this respect, the Chair requested the UN agencies and development partners to express their opinion on devising a comprehensive reintegration plan and how it could be financed. To chalk out a comprehensive plan to reintegrate eventual influx of the migrant workers, the chair requested development partners to highlight their initiatives and future plan.

Chief of Mission, IOM Bangladesh emphasized on assistance during pre-departure, post arrival information and re-integration programme for sustainable reintegration of returnee Bangladeshi migrants.

Chief Technical Advisor of ILO said that there should be specific short, medium and long term strategy for effective reintegration of these returnees. We have to ensure the skill development and self-employment of these workers simultaneously.

Additional Foreign Secretary, MOFA, informed that at least 35000 migrant workers are expected to return by the end of this month and the number will be higher in the coming months. So, more resources, funds and structured programs will be needed to ensure safe return, successful reintegration and skilled re-migration in future. Joint Secretary, SSD, MoHA express his concern about the identification of these returnee migrant workers and about the convicted criminals and other issues related with the security aspect. He emphasized to ensure return of only Bangladeshi citizens as there are Rohingyas' or other nationalities who may try to enter Bangladesh illegally.

At this stage, the chair mentioned that the Ministry has formed a fund of 200 crore BDT as soft loan (4% interest) to distribute among the returnee workers. Yet, he expressed his concern that this amount would not be sufficient to meet the growing need of the future influx. To mitigate this issue he requested UN agencies and development partners to come up with programs, plans and funds.

Representative of World Bank informed that her organization has already provided budgetary support to Finance Ministry for different programs on education, skill development, and entrepreneurship etc. She suggested that to co-ordination with Finance Ministry for special allocation on re-integration be made.

Programme Manager, Safer Migration, Embassy of Switzerland in Bangladesh, SDC told that her organization is working with BRAC for immediate support to vulnerable returnees, psycho-social counselling, and entrepreneurship development etc as midterm support. She asked the Ministry to inform sector specific needs so that they can address the issue in their upcoming action plan.

Director General, BMET ensured that BMET is ready to provide skill development training to returnee migrant through 70 TTCs and IMTs.

Director General, WEWB informed that they have taken some special initiatives for the safe return and reintegration of returnee migrants due to corona pandemic. WEWB is giving 5000/- taka each to all returnees in Corona situation and 3,00,000 BDT taka to the family of the deceased migrant workers.

The Chair said we need a database of the returnee migrants immediately for effective and sustainable reintegration of the returnee migrants due to Covi-19 pandemic. He added although the Ministry already has taken initiatives for a comprehensive data base of migrant workers, but it is a must to have a specific database of migrants returned due to Corona pandemic. He asked IOM to assist in this matter.

#### Action points

- Chief of Mission, IOM Bangladesh ensured that IOM is ready to assist in this issue and they are willing to deploy a team to airport to collect returnee migrants' information as well as provide software to the Missions abroad to prepare database of aspirant returnees.
- He urged UN agencies and development partners to develop a concept paper for the successful reintegration of returnee migrants. He hoped that together we will be able to face present challenge and explore the window of opportunities in future.

The Chair conveyed his thanks and gratitude to all participants for their active participation, thoughtful ideas and commitments towards effective and sustainable re-integration of migrant workers in corona situation.

Sd/-

Dr. Ahmed Munirus Saleheen

Secretary

Ministry of Expatriates' Welfare and Overseas Employment.