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A Weekly e-newsletter During Covid-19 Pandemic Situation

# Labour News Flash

July 7-15, 2020

## To mitigate migrant workers crisis Prime Minister proposed 3 points Plights

On 8 July 2020, worldwide Global Leaders Day observed. On this occasion, ILO (International Labour Organization) organized a virtual global summit on Covid-19 and world of work. Participating in this virtual summit prime minister of Bangladesh Sheikh Hasina addressed Covid-19 as “full-fledged global economic and social crisis”. She also mentioned about several disruptions and measures of the govt. to eradicate those uncertainty. She also addressed the devastating situation of Bangladeshi migrant workers are working in different countries in the world. The World Bank predicts that Bangladesh might loss more than 20% of its remittance earnings equivalent to \$4billion, this year alone. To reduce the vulnerability of those migrant workers who are one of the strongest pillar of our economy BD prime minister suggested her 3 points plight;

- Jobs of migrant workers at the overseas markets must be retained during this crisis
- In case of lay-off, compensation and other dismissal benefits must be paid in full along with ensuring their safety and health benefits
- After the pandemic, these workers would have to be recruited for reactivating the economy

The prime minister also mentioned that the promise of decent jobs for all seems hard to realize individually but working together it can be happen. ILO Bangladesh country director appreciated these proposals.

Regarding this news, we had a thorough discussion with *Rajequzzaman Ratan, President, Shamajtantrik Sramik Front (Socialist Labour Front)*. He said that our most of the migrant workers are working in Gulf countries and they are involve in fuel and constructions jobs. On this moment, the proposals from the Govt. is very much appreciated. However, we do not have any proper database of the migrant workers. The workers who are returning or who are potential no one knows about them. As a result, after the pandemic if any of those receiving countries want to recruit the old workers once again we do not have any database to provide them. Instead of proposing other country compensate workers, Govt. should focus on this issue and take proper actions to support them in this situation.

He also mentioned that TUs might come up with two initiatives for these migrant workers. First one is they should place a proposal or position paper to Govt explaining what to do for the potential workers who will fly after this situation. Secondly, TUs should run massive awareness campaign that they will acquire the scope to go abroad and Govt. will help them. Finally, he said instead asking help we should expose our labours strength and potentiality to the receiving countries.

In the end, we can see these proposals are directly addressing the safe migration as well as the reintegration for the returnee migrants. BILS is already working with different migration projects and the objectives of those projects are safe migration and proper reintegration. Collaborating with BMET, we are already conducting training sessions for the potential migrant workers. These initiatives of govt. would enhance the project activity as well as it would support the migrant workers.

### News Links:

- [https://tbsnews.net/coronavirus-chronicle/jobs-migrant-workers-overseas-markets-must-be-retained-during-covid-19-crisis?fbclid=IwAR2ps2tumwKVgkILgsbmVHDrIUb\\_edZ8MdaLHpXmXGSKQKP9zBkF524M0eg](https://tbsnews.net/coronavirus-chronicle/jobs-migrant-workers-overseas-markets-must-be-retained-during-covid-19-crisis?fbclid=IwAR2ps2tumwKVgkILgsbmVHDrIUb_edZ8MdaLHpXmXGSKQKP9zBkF524M0eg)
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## ‘72 percent people of the areas surveyed to be jobless due to Covid-19’

Concern Worldwide organization action a survey that report warns flood and landslides from this year’s monsoon season will impact communities more severely because of economic stagnation and Covid-19 health risks. Daily wage workers, such as rickshaw and transport drivers, masons, garments workers, small scale traders and farmers which accounted for nearly half of the surveyed population. It reveals that 72 percent of the population to be unemployed due to movement restriction and for them there is no work from home option.

In meanwhile, workers already directly affected by poverty because of Covid-19 crisis, but especially if communities are battered by intense storms and floods that destroy or damage homes, agricultural land, schools and hospitals.

Others impact on economic and society:

- Lack of income ;
- Lack of cultivate agricultural products;
- In this survey, 90 percent of people are not aware of how to prevent Covid-19 transmission, especially during flood events;

### News Link:

<https://tbsnews.net/coronavirus-chronicle/covid-19-bangladesh/72-percent-population-bangladesh-be-jobless-due-covid-19>

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## 'We are on our own': Bangladesh's pregnant garment workers face the sack

**Employers are avoiding paying maternity benefits and purging union members as orders plummet during Covid-19, say activists**

RMG manufacturers have started to terminate the pregnant women without paying their maternity benefits and retrenchment benefit which is equal to nine months full pay while they reported back to their job. In some of these cases, companies had taken workers' identification cards and forced them to resign, while others simply refused to pay women their maternity benefits.

The Trade Union activists claimed that, during this pandemic situation, factory owners have retrenched up to 25 thousand workers and more than 50 thousand workers have become unemployed. It is a big threat not only for the national economy but also for the other sectors. As these low paid workers do not have any savings, so they are involving themselves in any kind of job such as daily payment based job like rickshaw puller, hawkers day labourer, domestic help etc. But, taking these challenges is not easy for the workers and only a small number of workers are doing this and the others are taking loan to survive.

But this reason of termination of the women workers is not new during this situation. According to the survey report titled, "Analysis the Situation of Decent Work in RMG Sector 2019" by Bangladesh Institute of Labour Studies-BILS it was found that factories authority like to appoint those young women workers who are less likely to become sick and do not have possibility of taking maternity leave.

Kalpona Akter, founder and executive director of the Bangladesh Center for Workers' Solidarity said that, they have received reports of the termination of dozens of pregnant workers from more than 30 factories – a number she expects to "increase dramatically in the coming weeks, as workers continue to be fired every day".

Mentioning that, firing pregnant workers is illegal, Nazma Akter, the president of the union Sommilito Garments Sramik Federation (SGSF), said that, Since May, she has filed 50 lawsuits on behalf of sacked pregnant workers. Because of the move to remote working, many brands have also stopped carrying out social audits and factory inspections, which has led to an increase in workplace violations, and without the monitoring; the factories can do what they want, according to Nazma Akter.

Mark Sebastian Anner, a professor of labour and employment relations at Penn State University and an expert on the Bangladeshi garment industry, warns that the combination of massive job losses and the purging of union activists could lead to worsening conditions for employees, including forced labour. "This is a profound international crisis that has disproportionately affected the people at the bottom of the supply chain, to the extent that their very survival is at stake," he added.

News Link: <https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2020/jul/09/we-are-on-our-own-bangladeshs-pregnant-garment-workers-face-the-sack>

## About 20 lakh construction workers are half-starved due to lack of work

Bangladesh's construction sector is set to face challenging times because of the coronavirus pandemic as it's already slow down the economy, disrupt development activities and put workers out of jobs. As the construction workers are floating, so they are not properly covered by any relief programme of the government. As building construction work is yet begun in full swing, so the length of the indefinite period is also increasing.

Private television DBC says, days are uncertain for the construction workers. They wait and pass time every day but yet to get any work. The fear is growing up with time and to return home without income becomes common for them.

Md. Abdur Razzak, General Secretary, Imarat Nirman Sramik Union Bangladesh, said, "Construction workers are starving for half a day". He said in an online discussion program organised by 'The Daily Star' in association with BSRM on May 19, 2020, "Around 35 lakh construction workers have become jobless due to the Coronavirus outbreak. Besides, there are more workers connected to the manufacture of construction materials as well. All these workers and their families are suffering, consequently. We have asked the government to provide rations for these families. To fight the pandemic, all of us need to come together and work accordingly to help these workers overcome their desolation."

News Link:

<https://www.amadershomoy.com/bn/2020/07/12/1182209.html#.Xw3j8dYZDMk.gmail>

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## Human Chain Formed for Health Sector Workers as Voice Raise

Bangladesh Institute of Labour Studies-BILS, under the DGB-BW project organised a Human Chain as part of voice raise that has been held under the “Sromik Shanghoti Forum” (A BILS-LRSC network) on July 9, 2020 at the Gol Pahar Mor, Chattogram.

Apart from the senior leadership associated with the coordinating activities of BILS, some networking organisation representatives as well as Chattogram Health and Diagnostic Centre Workers Union members, staffs of BILS-LRSC took part in the human chain formation program.

A meeting during the human chain was addressed by BILS-LRSC Coordination Committee Chairman labour leader A M Nazimuddin, BILS-LRSC Coordination Committee Member-Secretary labour leader Md. Safar Ali, Member Tapan Dutta, BILS-LRSC officials namely Rizwanur Rahman Khan, Fazlul Kabir Mintu, Yachin Arafat, Sromik Shanghoti Forum members Jainab Begum Mitu of SANFSOPTOK, Md. Alauddin of Awaz Foundation, Tapan Kanti Dey of BNPS, local TU leaders A K M Mominul Islam of JSJ, Md. Nurul Abser Bhuiyan of BLF, basic health sector union workers Md. Abdur Rahim, Mili Akter addressed the program.

Speakers in the human chain said that, “Most of the health sector workers are working hard day and night to provide health services to the Covid and other patients amid the ongoing pandemic situation. But they are being deprived from standard living wages, leisure, Risk-job and duty benefit and other law-covered facilities. Moreover, most health workers are being treated inhumanly by the employers. They are being less paid, being verbally hired and fired every now and then, at the sweet will of the employers.”

The human chain demanded standard living wages, adequate occupational health and safety measures, Risk-job benefit, overtime and other law-covered benefit for the private-owned health and diagnostic workers.

The human chain expressed deep concern over the unemployment of informal sector workers, ongoing illegal lay-off and forced termination of workers in some sectors amid Covid-19 pandemic.



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