

International Migrants Day

Address by

Sheikh Hasina

Prime Minister
Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh

Dhaka, Sunday, 04 Poush 1418, 18 December 2011

Bismillahir Rahmanir Rahim

The chair,
Dear Colleagues,
Parliament Members
Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen.

Assalamu Alaikum.

This is my great privilege to be present at the inaugural ceremony of the International Migrants Day programme. I extend my greetings to you all.

December is our month of victory. I pay my homage to the greatest Bangalee of all time, Father of Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. I recall with deep gratitude the four national leaders, martyrs of the war of liberation and all freedom fighters.

Nearly our 8 million citizens have been working around the world leaving their near and dear ones at home. They have been earning foreign currencies for the country. Their hard-earned foreign exchange is boosting our economy. I extend my best wishes to our expatriate citizens on this auspicious day.

Ladies and gentlemen,

The foreign employment sector has been playing an important role in the socio-economic development of Bangladesh. When the economically giants are facing numerous problems owing to economic recession, Bangladesh's economy is doing well due to the contribution of our expatriate citizens. They remitted 11.65 billion US dollars home in last fiscal year.

Without having enough data, some people make sweeping comments that Bangladesh's manpower export hit a snag.

In fact, the manpower export marked a 10.47 percent rise during the last 5 months with 2 lakh 62 thousand employment abroad.

Since our assumption of office in January 2009, some 13 lakh 79 thousand and 492 people were employed in 35 months against 7 lakh 15 thousand 74 during the same period of BNP-Jamaat regime.

During its 5-year tenure, BNP-Jamaat government sent 13 lakh 7 thousand 88 people abroad for jobs.

In terms of remittance, the country earned 31.83 billion US dollar during our 35-month tenure against 18.36 billion dollar of BNP-Jamaat's 5-year rule.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The demand of skilled manpower is increasing day by day abroad. They can work with dignity and earn more. That is why, we put emphasis on making skilled manpower. There are

technical institutes in 38 districts, including a marine technology institute at Narayanganj. Some 50 thousand people get training from these institutes per year.

We are going to set up technical institutes, including 4 marine technology institutes, with a capacity of providing training to 50 thousand people a year in rest of the districts during our tenure.

We have also decided to build skilled manpower suiting to the demand of manpower abroad. The Labour Wing of our missions were asked to determine the demands of the respective countries.

We have constitute an Endowment Fund of 140 crore taka for skill development.

Efforts are underway to search new labour markets. Alongside, we have taken steps to regularise the irregular workers in a number of countries.

Some 16 thousand 100 workers in the Maldives have already been legalised. Process is on to legalise 2 lakh 67 thousand 803 expatriate Bangladeshis in Malaysia.

In Kuwait, the problem associated with AKAMA has been resolved creating scope to change companies by the Bangladeshi workers. Some 30 thousand workers have already changed their companies.

We must maintain quality, not only quantity, while exporting manpower. Sometimes, it was seen that going abroad spending huge sum of money, the workers can not realise their migration cost in the stipulated time. This is very tragic for a worker.

We have ratified the International Convention of the UN regarding the security of the migrant workers and the rights of their families.

During our previous tenure we signed the charter in 1998. It was not ratified during the previous BNP-Jamaat or caretaker governments.

Ladies and Gentlemen.

You are aware that during the Libya crisis at the beginning of this year, we made arrangements of safe repatriation of some 37 thousand Bangladeshis from Libya. We also arranged a lump sum grant for them.

We have established Expatriate Welfare Bank this year to help intending migrant workers to get soft loan to meet their migration cost. It was seen that to meet the migration cost many have to sell their land or homesteads or collect money with high interest rate from money lenders.

The Expatriate Welfare Bank will also provide soft-term loan to help self-employment of the returnee workers. In the future, the expatriate Bangladeshis will be able to send their remittances through the bank.

So far, the bank provided loan facilities to 175 workers. Booths of the bank will be opened at three international airports and divisional cities by January next.

We have pledged to build a hunger-, poverty- and illiteracy-free Bangladesh as dreamt by the Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. I hope, the expatriate Bangladeshis will be a major contributor to achieve the goal.

I also hope that our concerted efforts will bring success in ensuring welfare and rights of the migrant workers in international labour markets.

I once again extend my best wishes to the expatriate workers.

Khoda Hafez.

Joi Bangla, Joi Bangabandhu
May Bangladesh Live Forever.

.....