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Role of informal facilitators in labour migration highlighted

Speakers at a consultation underscored the need for better appreciation of the role of informal facilitators in the labour recruitment process of Bangladesh. They also called on the authorities to bring the informal facilitators under a legal cover. These observations were made at a consultation organised by Refugee and Migratory Movements Research Unit (RMMRU) at its premises with a select group of informal facilitators from Dhaka, Tangail and Comilla with the officials of BMET and RMMRU present.

At the meeting informal facilitators demanded social and legal recognition for their positive contribution to the national economy. They also felt that they are often made scapegoats when migration process does not meet its desired goal. They also claimed that recruiting agencies often demand high fees in excess of government stipulated amounts which make the cost of migration high.

Mr. Selim Reza, Director, Immigration of BMET observed that the issue of registration sub-agents merits serious consideration because of their inevitable role in the migration process.

Dr. Nurul Islam, another Director of BMET agreed with the idea but observed that with its current resource it may be difficult for BMET to regulate the activities of innumerable Sub-agents. He stated that efficiently monitoring 800 recruiting agents itself has become a daunting task for the agency.

The Chair of the Session Dr. C R Abrar stated that empirical studies have shown that informal facilitators play very important roles as conduit of information and transaction of money between the formal recruiting agency and the migrant. He observed that onus should rest on respective recruiting agencies to issue work permits and a photo identity cards to its subagents and be liable for all actions of the latter. He also suggested that the recruiting agencies should send the list of its sub-agents to BMET which in turn will circulate the same to all upazillas for the aspirant migrants to see. The seminar was organised as a part of RMMRU's ongoing research on informal facilitators which involved a survey 200 returnee and aspirant migrants and detailed case studies of informal facilitators in four districts.

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