

Bangladesh highlights migrant workers' plight in Maldives during immigration talks

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Dhaka: Bangladesh High Commissioner to the Maldives Dr. Md. Nazmul Islam has raised serious concerns over the growing vulnerabilities faced by Bangladeshi migrant workers in the Maldives, including cases where workers arrive through lawful channels but later find that the promised employment is unavailable, pushing them into precarious and exploitative situations.

The concerns were highlighted during a meeting between the High Commissioner and the Controller General of Immigration of the Maldives, CP (Retd.) Ahmed Faseeh, held at the Maldives Immigration Office, read a press release on 17 January. The meeting focused on strengthening cooperation between the two countries to better protect the rights, dignity, and welfare of Bangladeshi expatriates.

During the discussion, Dr. Nazmul Islam underscored the need for effective measures to prevent fraud and irregular recruitment practices, stressing that migrant workers should not be made victims of false promises by unscrupulous agents or employers. He emphasized the importance of strict monitoring to ensure fair wage implementation, access to affordable and quality healthcare, and firm action against companies and individuals involved in exploitation.

The High Commissioner also highlighted the difficulties faced by Bangladeshi expatriates due to the lack of an effective and secure banking system and the ongoing dollar crisis in the Maldives, noting that these challenges have added to the financial hardship of migrant workers. He shared reports and complaints received by the Bangladesh High Commission regarding fraudulent and exploitative entities operating in the Maldives.

In response, Controller General Ahmed Faseeh assured that employers and companies found to be involved in malpractices would be blacklisted following proper verification. He said affected workers would also be encouraged to lodge formal complaints with the Labour Relations Authority (LRA), in line with due process.

The Maldives Immigration chief briefed the High Commissioner on recent developments, including the introduction of the E-Visa system and an Immigration Mobile Application aimed at improving transparency and efficiency. He said while some initial technical challenges remain, these are expected to be resolved soon, with plans to issue visas within 24 hours in the near future. Existing valid visas will be automatically converted into E-Visas upon payment of applicable fees, while the requirement currently applies mainly to new arrivals.

Maldives Immigration officials further noted that in cases where changes are detected in newly issued passports, a verification letter from the Bangladesh High Commission is required for official records. They added that individuals are provided with written explanations in cases of arrest or deportation, with all relevant reports shared with the Maldivian Ministry of Foreign Affairs. On average, legal deportation procedures are completed within around three weeks.

Both sides stressed the importance of responsible and ethical recruitment practices in both Bangladesh and the Maldives and

reaffirmed their shared commitment to protecting migrant workers from abuse and exploitation. Dr. Nazmul Islam expressed appreciation for the steps taken by Maldives Immigration and reiterated Bangladesh's commitment to close and constructive cooperation to ensure the protection, dignity, and overall well-being of Bangladeshi nationals in the Maldives.

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