

Bangladesh, Malaysia agree to reopen labor market

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Dhaka: The Malaysian labor market is set to reopen for Bangladeshi workers, with both countries agreeing to accelerate the process while ensuring a transparent and cost-effective recruitment system.

The decision came during a bilateral meeting on labor migration held in Putrajaya on Thursday, April 9, between the governments of Bangladesh and Malaysia in a cordial and constructive atmosphere, according to a press release issued by the Ministry of Expatriates' Welfare and Overseas Employment.

Both sides agreed to expedite the reopening of the labor market for Bangladeshi workers based on Malaysia's sectoral demand while committing to a fair, ethical, and transparent recruitment process.

Minister for Expatriates' Welfare and Overseas Employment Ariful

Haque Choudhury and Prime Minister's Adviser Mahdi Amin visited Malaysia on Wednesday to discuss the labor market. The visit marks the first such trip since the new government took office in Bangladesh.

On Thursday, the Bangladesh delegation met Malaysian Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim at his office. During the meeting, Anwar Ibrahim congratulated Bangladesh Prime Minister Tarique Rahman on his election victory and invited him to visit Malaysia at a mutually convenient time.

According to the press release, both sides held detailed discussions on labor relations and reaffirmed their shared commitment to ensuring a transparent, clean, and efficient recruitment system to prevent worker exploitation.

The talks also covered ways to enhance bilateral trade and investment, with both countries expressing interest in expanding economic engagement for mutual benefit. Opportunities for cooperation in the education sector, including teacher exchange and institutional collaboration, were also discussed to strengthen people-to-people ties.

Earlier, the bilateral meeting on labor migration was led by Malaysia's Human Resources Minister Datuk Seri Ramanan Ramakrishnan and Bangladesh's Minister Ariful Haque Choudhury, with participation from Adviser Mahdi Amin.

In a joint statement issued after the meeting, both governments reaffirmed their longstanding and mutually beneficial partnership in labor migration and expressed commitment to strengthening cooperation through a transparent, inclusive, and pragmatic framework.

The statement said the process of reopening the labor market would include addressing structural challenges to reduce intermediaries and migration costs, using credible and qualified recruitment agencies, and taking measures to facilitate the recruitment of remaining stranded workers.

Malaysia also informed Bangladesh about its initiative to introduce a technology-driven, AI-based recruitment system applicable to all source countries. The system aims to minimize intermediaries, reduce migration costs, and ensure that employers bear the full recruitment fees.

This approach aligns with the International Labour Organization's "Employer Pays Principle," effectively ensuring zero cost for workers. Bangladesh expressed full support for the initiative and readiness to collaborate on implementing the digital platform.

Both sides also discussed concerns regarding ongoing legal cases related to human trafficking in worker recruitment. Malaysia emphasized addressing any unfounded or malicious actions that could affect its international reputation, while Bangladesh reaffirmed its commitment to the rule of law, due process, accountability, and timely justice.

They further exchanged views on addressing challenges faced by irregular workers and enhancing cooperation in skills development, training, certification, and information sharing to better align labor supply with market demand and improve productivity.

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