

US deports 36 more Bangladeshis amid anti-immigrant moves

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Dhaka: The United States has deported another 36 Bangladeshi nationals as part of its ongoing crackdown on illegal immigration. The deportees, including one woman, arrived at Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport in Dhaka at around 12:00 pm on Tuesday, January 20, aboard a special US military flight, according to a press release issued by the BRAC Migration Programme.

The returnees had travelled to the United States in pursuit of better lives, spending vast sums of money—often by selling family land and jewelry or taking loans. Each person reportedly spent between BDT 40 lakh and BDT 45 lakh, while some spent as much as BDT 60-80 lakh. However, their dreams ended in disappointment as they returned home empty-handed.

Shariful Hasan, Associate Director of BRAC's Migration and Youth

Platform, said BRAC provided emergency assistance, including transportation, to the returnees at the airport with support from the Expatriates' Welfare Desk and Aviation Security (AVSEC).

Among the 36 deportees, 21 are from Noakhali district, two from Lakshmipur, and one each from Munshiganj, Dhaka, Lalmonirhat, Shariatpur, Barguna, Feni, Sirajganj, Gazipur, Kishoreganj, Tangail, Cumilla, Chattogram, and Netrokona. With this latest group, the total number of Bangladeshis deported from the US since the beginning of 2025 has risen to 293.

BRAC officials said that most of the deportees had initially travelled legally to Brazil with clearance from the Bureau of Manpower, Employment and Training (BMET). From there, they attempted to enter the United States illegally via Mexico. Although they applied for asylum, their applications were ultimately rejected after lengthy legal proceedings, prompting the US authorities to deport them to Bangladesh.

One deportee, Zahidul Islam from Noakhali, said he had paid nearly BDT 80 lakh to brokers in hopes of reaching the US through South America. Another returnee, Sultana Akter from Gazipur, said she paid BDT 30 lakh to brokers to cross the Mexico border after travelling via Brazil, but all her money was wasted.

Other deportees from Noakhali—including Mir Hasan (BDT 55 lakh), Riyadul Islam (BDT 50 lakh), and Rakib (BDT 60 lakh)—also reported losing large sums before being forced to return home in failure.

Shariful Hasan questioned the accountability of agencies involved in such migration. "When the government allows workers to go to Brazil legally, it must be examined whether they are actually going there for employment or using it as a transit route to the US," he said. "Who will take responsibility when people spend BDT 40-55 lakh and return with nothing? The agencies that sent them and those involved in the approval process must be brought under accountability."

He added that in 2025 alone, 1,320 Bangladeshis travelled to Brazil with BMET clearance, including 951 from Noakhali district. It is suspected that a significant number of them attempted to enter the US through Mexico. He urged the government to exercise greater caution before approving further migration to Brazil.

Following Donald Trump's return to office for a second term as US president, enforcement actions against undocumented immigrants have intensified. As part of this drive, citizens from Bangladesh and other countries have been deported in multiple phases.

Under US law, immigrants residing without valid documentation can be deported following court rulings or administrative orders. When asylum applications are rejected, the US Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) arranges repatriation. In recent months, this process has accelerated, leading to increased use of chartered and military flights. There have also been allegations that some deportees were returned in shackles.

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