

WEEKLY MEDIA MONITOR



WORKING WITH UNDERSERVED AND VULNERABLE POPULATIONS IN RESPECTING AND BUILDING THEIR WORTH INTO A MOVEMENT THAT PARTICIPATES IN THE BELIEF AND PRACTICE OF HUMAN RIGHTS, HEALTH RIGHTS, AND DIGNITY THROUGH NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION.

MIGRANT NEWS

"All labour that uplifts humanity has dignity"
-Martin Luther King Jr

2nd August 2021- 8th August 2021

SUBCONTINENT

Sri Lanka

https://www.themorning.lk/unpaid-care-work-as-a-driver-of-domestic-violence/?fbclid=IwAR0VM2jPvCxRWT4PEk2escSnjVX_Ne_XlmHrtRJ4cl5zzE3j0ac0AtKVUwI

- Does this unrecognised and overlooked unpaid care work make women more susceptible to abuse and domestic violence?
- This article explores the possible relationship between unpaid care work and domestic violence in Sri Lanka.
- First, it explains how prevalent domestic violence is, in conservative societies such as ours.
- Second, it examines how the expectation placed on women to carry out care work creates an enabling environment for domestic violence.
- Finally, the article draws from regional studies, and evaluates the possible impact that unpaid care work has on domestic violence.

<https://ceylontoday.lk/news/remittances-up-11-6-jan-june>

- Remittances Up 11.6% Jan-June
- Sri Lanka's largest foreign exchange earner, Worker remittances, increased 11.6 per cent during the first six months of this year as migrant workers sent home US\$ 3.32 billion compared to US\$ 2.98 billion a year ago.
- Worker remittances, measured in rupee terms, increased 14.1 per cent during the first six month of this year to Rs 630 billion from Rs 552 billion a year ago.

<https://economynext.com/labour-minister-accuses-sri-lanka-foreign-employment-bureau-of-massive-waste-84663/>

- Labour Minister accuses Sri Lanka Foreign Employment Bureau of massive waste
- The Sri Lanka Foreign Employment Bureau (SLFEB) has misused and wasted large amounts of funds and a committee has been appointed by the president to look in to the misappropriations and submit a report in two weeks, labour minister Nimal Siripala De Silva told parliament Friday (06).
- Issues at the bureau tabled by the minister were political appointments to diplomatic missions and failure to ensure payments from the agents.
- A total of 912 million rupees has been spent for officials appointed in foreign missions.

<https://www.nation.lk/online/code-of-conduct-for-domestic-workers-108624.html>

- New laws for safe/fair domestic work environment Workers set to receive EPF/ETF and gratuity payments
- In addition to proposed amendments to the existing legal framework governing labour relations to cover domestic workers and the enactment of new laws to ensure the rights of domestic workers, the Labour Ministry is also scheduled to introduce a code of conduct for domestic workers in order to ensure the quality of service provided by such workers, The Sunday Morning learnt.
- The necessary legislation will be enacted immediately to ensure a safe and fair working environment for all domestic workers, Labour Minister Nimal Siripala de Silva informed The Sunday Morning.
- Speaking to The Sunday Morning, de Silva said the Labour Ministry has paid attention to the recent child labour-related incidents reported in the country, especially the incident pertaining to the death of a 16-year-old housemaid employed at MP Rishad Bathiudeen's house, and further stressed the importance of protecting the rights of all domestic workers.

<https://www.ft.lk/news/Ambassador-of-SLpays-courtesy-call-on-Deputy-Prime-Minister-of-Lebanon-Zeina-Akar/56-721403>

- Ambassador of Sri Lanka to Lebanon Shani Calyaneratne Karunaratne, paid a courtesy call on Deputy Prime Minister, Foreign and Defense Minister of the Republic of Lebanon Zeina Akar on 3 August, at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.
- During the discussion, Ambassador Karunaratne, thanked Lebanon for the prompt assistance given by the Foreign Ministry, Ministry of Labour, the General Directorate of Civil Aviation and the General Security in facilitating the repatriation of Sri Lankan migrant workers by the five charter flights to Sri Lanka. Ambassador Karunaratne also discussed the concerns of Sri Lankan migrant workers in Lebanon and regularising the visa over stayers in Lebanon.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/china/debt-hobbled-sri-lanka-risks-running-out-options-2021-08-03/>

- Debt-hobbled Sri Lanka risks running out of options
- Sri Lanka paid a \$1 billion bond last week, but the alarming state of its finances suggests it may have been just another step towards its first sovereign default.
- All the tell-tale crisis signs are there: bonds at nearly half their face value, debt-to-GDP levels above 100%, over 80% of government revenues being spent on interest payments alone and barely enough reserves to cover a few months of spending.
- Yet last week's bond payment underscored the strong desire of the government to honour its debt and avoid the ignominy of a first sovereign default.
- It has also brought it some breathing room - the next major payment is not until January, when it must find \$500 million.
- But that is followed by a heftier \$1 billion in July and another \$1 billion before the end of 2023. On top of an eye watering fiscal deficit estimated to be around 11%, it could easily run out of rope.

India

<https://www.moneycontrol.com/news/business/economy/govt-to-take-up-issue-of-indian-migrants-being-wrongfully-terminated-without-pay-from-gulf-nations-sources-7281421.html>

- Government to take up issue of Indian migrants being wrongfully terminated without pay from Gulf nations
- Data maintained by the Centre shows that 7.16 lakh Indian migrant workers have come back after COVID-19 till now. Indian embassies abroad have received complaints that many of them have been wrongfully terminated without pay and forced to leave.
- The government will bilaterally take up the issue of lakhs of Indian migrant workers in the Gulf nations being wrongfully fired from jobs during COVID-19 and sent back without proper compensation, senior sources told Money control.

<https://www.hindustantimes.com/india-news/centre-set-to-launch-digitized-platform-to-benefit-migrant-workers-101628423590133.html>

- Centre set to launch digitized platform to benefit migrant workers
- The Union government is likely to launch by next week a digitized platform for migrant workers that will enable authorities to direct state-run benefits to them and intervene during crises. The Supreme Court had, earlier, set July 31 2021 as the deadline to so do.
- In the summer of 2020, tens of thousands of low-paid workers fled major cities, such as Mumbai and Chennai, under traumatic conditions without much food or money following a stringent national lockdown

during the first wave of coronavirus infections. These workers walked down highways to reach their native villages, exhausted.

- The migrant workers' portal is supposed to address this gap.

Bangladesh

<https://www.borgenmagazine.com/covid-19-impacts-on-the-bangladeshi-diaspora/>

- According to the Ministry of Expatriates' Welfare and Overseas Employment, there are currently around 13 million Bangladeshis working abroad, together bringing approximately \$15 billion to the country's economy.
- The impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on the Bangladeshi diaspora in the Middle East and across the globe have drastically changed the situation of both families and Bangladesh's economy. The United Nations International Organisation for Migration (IOM) provided reports that found that more than 660,000 migrant workers were sent back to Bangladesh with no income or employment opportunities ahead.
- The Bangladeshi government replied rather quickly to this financial crisis caused and announced an \$85 million budget for returnees. This financial support has been able to assist returnees with financial cash support, soft loans and skill training.

<https://thefinancialexpress.com.bd/trade/overseas-jobs-show-upward-trend-1628390909>

- Overseas jobs show upward trend
- Overseas employment showed an upward trend in July this year following a growing demand for Bangladeshi workers in Saudi Arabia.
- According to the data available with the Expatriates' Welfare Desk at Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport, Bangladesh sent 25,352 workers abroad in July while the figures were 19,289 in June and 22,582 in May.
- It sent a total of 248,533 workers in the last seven months of the current year. Of them, 201,751 were male and 46,782 were female.
- At present, only Saudi Arabia is hiring workers from Bangladesh.

<https://www.thedailystar.net/nrb/migration/news/bangladeshis-ksa-3437-died-two-years-2142506>

- At least 3,437 Bangladeshis died in different parts of Saudi Arabia, where the Bangladesh consulate general in Jeddah has its jurisdiction between July 2019 and June 2021.
- Of the dead, 2,448 were buried locally after taking due permission from their families back home. The other 989 bodies were sent back home, said a recent report of the consulate general.
- According to the Bangladesh Embassy in Riyadh, about 22.8 lakhs Bangladeshis are currently employed in Saudi Arabia.
- Aminul Islam, labour welfare counsellor at the Bangladesh Consulate General in Jeddah, said the expatriates died from different causes, including Covid-19.

Nepal

<https://kathmandupost.com/national/2021/07/29/workers-going-to-qatar-and-kuwait-paying-hefty-amounts-as-zero-cost-policy-falters-report-says>

- Workers going to Qatar and Kuwait paying hefty amounts as zero cost policy falters, report says
- On Tuesday, when Nepal government announced applications for caregiver jobs in Israel that makes Nepali workers' pay for their flight tickets and other related recruitment costs, a human rights organisation's report the same day urged the Nepali authorities to make all worker fee payments illegal and significantly increase their enforcement capacity for ensuring fair recruitment.

- FairSquare Projects, a London-based non-profit human rights organisation with a focus on migrant workers' rights, in its latest report on recruitment practices in Nepal, Kuwait and Qatar said that Nepal should eliminate recruitment fees being paid by its migrant workers to prevent their exploitation.
- The 164-page report, Nepal to Kuwait and Qatar: Fair Recruitment in Review, which examines how workers from Nepal are recruited for work in Kuwait and Qatar, has found that Nepali workers continue to pay hefty amounts for securing jobs in these countries.

<https://kathmandupost.com/columns/2021/08/07/exiles-at-home>

- Migrant workers are heroes of the nation, but the government treats them as lesser humans
- There are many contenders for that unsavoury distinction, but among the lowest points in our fight against Covid-19 was the sight of Nepali migrant workers in the Gulf banding together to buy oxygen cylinders to meet the huge shortfall our government had failed to foresee.
- Instead of building up savings towards a mobile phone or a flat screen TV for their near and dear ones waiting expectantly through long years of separation, hard-working Nepalese were chipping in to help a nation they call home.
- A recent headline in Kantipur was brutal: 'You give us oxygen, we'll ensure you torture.' The article detailed how migrant hopefuls, always in a pincer between an uncaring government and unscrupulous agents, are now confronted with the urgent need to get vaccinated and thereafter get their vaccination cards 'certified'.

GULF REGION

Qatar

<https://www.newsofbahrain.com/bahrain/74431.html>

- The Labour Market Regulatory Authority (LMRA), in cooperation with the Central Bank of Bahrain (CBB) and the Bahrain Insurance Association (BIA), has announced the Optional Insurance System for Domestic Expatriate Employees to protect employers and domestic expatriate employees following any incident that covers for insurance.
- The Optional Insurance System for Domestic Expatriate Employees, which will commence on August 4, will protect employers and domestic expatriate employees in the event of leaving work in violation of the conditions of the work permit, unfair dismissal, as well as compensation in cases of injury, disability, or death.
- In the event of death, insured employees' legal heirs will receive compensation, and repatriation costs would be covered.
- LMRA CEO H.E Mr Jamal Abdulaziz Al Alawi indicated that the LMRA has coordinated with the CBB, the BIA, and insurance companies to develop an integrated plan that guarantees the rights of all parties. He noted that the employer has the option to insure expatriate employees upon their recruitment.

https://www.zawya.com/mena/en/economy/story/Pension_urged_for_expatriates_in_Bahrain-SNG_230670583?utm_source=whatsapp&utm_medium=whatsapp&utm_campaign=site_share&fbclid=IwAR0IsvJJOIPhOk11EOzkQSVgLG2ctx5QLw0L-hE0TzXMj97zPVZ03MBN-BA

- Pension urged for expatriates in Bahrain
- The end-of-service gratuity paid to expatriates working in Bahrain should be scrapped and they should be paid a pension instead, said an expert.

- Former Labour Market Regulatory Authority (LMRA) chief executive Ausamah Al Absi said it was high time employers started paying monthly gratuity contributions for expats to the Social Insurance Organisation (SIO) which can be used to pay pensions after they resign or their services are terminated.
- Under the 1976 Social Insurance Law, both Bahrainis and expatriates were entitled to pensions but the system was later changed with only citizens receiving pensions while public and private sector organisations were asked to pay end-of-service gratuity to their foreign employees.
- The one-time expats' pay-out is calculated on the worker's last basic salary in addition to social allowances, if any.
- Companies monthly contribute 19 per cent of a Bahraini worker's salary to the SIO, while also paying 4pc for each expat staff member – 3pc as insurance against occupational injuries and 1pc towards the unemployment insurance fund.

Kuwait

<https://www.gulf-insider.com/kuwait-expats-allowed-back-after-months-long-travel-ban/>

- Expats allowed back after months long travel ban
- After seven months of not being allowed into Kuwait, expats are now free to travel to the country as long as they have two doses of an approved vaccine and a valid residency permit.
- The Ministry of Health has approved the Pfizer-BioNTech, Moderna, Oxford-AstraZeneca and Johnson & Johnson vaccines.
- While vaccinated residents are allowed into the country, direct travel between India, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Pakistan and Nepal is still banned. Passengers travelling from those countries need to be quarantined in a non-banned country for 14-days before they arrive in Kuwait.

Saudi Arabia

<https://saudigazette.com.sa/article/609469?fbclid=IwAR3w9pXU7zWq7KitYctmKsDdsIIIEmgFyWCiVsoZxSzDt1U9zyEx21ovjls>

- 100% Saudization of malls comes into force
- The decision to implement total Saudization in closed commercial complexes (malls) came into force on Wednesday, Aug. 4, in all regions of the Kingdom.
- This follows the announcement of the ministerial decision to Saudiaize 100 percent of jobs to Saudis in all activities and professions in malls as well as at mall management offices, excluding a limited number of activities and professions, aiming to create 51,000 jobs for locals.
- The professions that are excluded from 100 percent Saudization are cleaning work, loading and unloading, maintenance of recreational facilities, and barbershops.
- However, the percentage of employees should not exceed 20 percent of the entire workforce at the mall. There should also be identical uniforms for the workers.

UAE

https://www.khaleejtimes.com/business/jobs-surge-as-uae-records-strongest-2-year-economic-upswing?utm_source=insider

- Jobs surge as UAE records strongest 2-year economic upswing
- Employment rose at the fastest rate since January 2019 while a sharp rise in new orders drove increasing pressure on business capacity and a marked expansion in output, IHS Markit UAE Purchasing Managers' Index report said.

- Meanwhile, delays to shipments from Asia led to the worst lengthening of suppliers' delivery times since April 2020 and contributed to a quicker rise in input costs. The PMI rose from 52.2 in June to 54.0 in July, pointing to a strong improvement in business conditions that was the most marked in exactly two years.
- "The non-oil sector enjoyed a busy start to the third quarter of the year as firms saw the sharpest rise in new orders for two years amid soaring domestic sales and strengthening market confidence," said David Owen, economist at IHS Markit.

<https://www.livemint.com/market/cryptocurrency/cryptocurrency-promise-for-uae-s-migrant-workers-11627968506110.html>

- Dubai and the rest of the United Arab Emirates (UAE) is moving closer to opening licensed crypto currency exchanges, a step that could boost financial inclusion for the millions of expatriates who make up most of the region's workforce.
- Using online wallets, migrants could one day be able to send remittances home with smaller fees - or none at all - and within minutes, skipping the long waits in the Gulf's heat and humidity.
- Government data show that out of the UAE's population of more than 9 million, nearly 80% are expats.
- The UAE's path towards digitising the industry began last year, when its Securities and Commodities Authority stipulated that anyone offering crypto assets in the Emirates must be formally licensed and comply with a range of anti-money laundering, cyber security and data protection laws.

SOUTHEAST ASIA

Singapore

https://www.straitstimes.com/singapore/medical-examinations-for-maids-in-spore-to-also-check-bmi-suspicious-injuries-in-move-to?utm_source=emarsys&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=ST_Newsletter_AM&utm_term=Medical+examinations+for+maids+in+S%27pore+to+also+check+BMI%2C+suspicious+injuries+in+move+to+better+detect+abuse&utm_content=06%2F08%2F2021

- Medical examinations for maids in S'pore to also check BMI, suspicious injuries in move to better detect abuse
- Foreign domestic workers will soon go through more checks during their six-monthly medical examinations - like measuring the body mass index (BMI) - to better detect cases of abuse.
- From Aug 29, doctors will also have to check for signs of unexplained injuries, instead of screening only for pregnancy and infectious diseases.
- The check-ups will also take place at clinics without the employers being present to give foreign domestic workers a safe environment to ask for help, said the Ministry of Manpower (MOM) on Thursday (Aug 5).

<https://www.straitstimes.com/singapore/community/migrant-workers-foreign-domestic-workers-treated-to-national-day-virtual-show>

- Migrant workers and foreign domestic workers were treated to a virtual National Day cultural show on Sunday night (Aug 8) to top off their weekend.
- The hour-long show featured bands, singers and various dance troupes.
- It was organised by non-governmental organisation Alliance of Guest Workers Outreach (AGWO), in partnership with the Ministry of Manpower (MOM) and other organisations.

- The show was streamed live on the AGWO's Facebook page and YouTube channel.
- Reverend Ezekiel Tan, president of Hope Initiative Alliance, which the AGWO falls under, said: "The pandemic has affected many workers. They feel homesick and miss gathering with their friends in Singapore, owing to health and safety protocols."

Philippines

<https://news.abs-cbn.com/business/08/06/21/dfa-brings-home-another-batch-of-distressed-filipinos-from-uae>

- DFA brings home another batch of distressed Filipinos from UAE
- A DFA-chartered Cebu Pacific flight flew the repatriates home, which included 7 pregnant women, the DFA said in a statement.
- "The DFA and partner agencies continue to work closely together to ensure that our distressed kababayans are repatriated and brought home safely, taking into consideration the interest of public health." DFA Undersecretary for Migrant Workers' Affairs Sarah Lou Y. Arriola
- This flight is the 8th repatriation flight from the UAE since June 2021, the agency added.

<https://www.pna.gov.ph/articles/1149776>

- The Hong Kong government will lift the travel ban on the Philippines on Monday, allowing more than 3,000 stranded Filipino workers to fly back to their employers.
- In a news release by the Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE) on Sunday, Labor Attaché Melchor Dizon said the number of overseas Filipino workers (OFWs) who will be allowed to travel to Hong Kong could exceed those stranded during the travel ban as the Philippine Overseas Labor Office (POLO) continued to process job orders.
- HK authorities require a 14-day quarantine even for fully vaccinated workers upon arrival, according to DOLE, including the opportunity of choosing their brand of vaccination.

<https://www.scmp.com/news/hong-kong/health-environment/article/3143695/coronavirus-philippines-proposes-using-who>

- The Philippines has proposed using a Covid-19 vaccination certificate recognised by the World Health Organization for the Hong Kong government to allow foreign domestic helpers to work in the city, according to an employment agencies group.
- Thomas Chan Tung-fung, chairman of the Hong Kong Union of Employment Agencies, said the Philippine consulate raised the proposal in a meeting last week.
- The local government announced on Monday that domestic helpers from Indonesia and the Philippines, previously barred from entering the city because both countries were listed in the highest-risk category, would be able to return if they had been vaccinated in Hong Kong.
- But all of them must be quarantined for 21 days upon entry in one or two specified hotels.

<https://timesofoman.com/article/104984-chartered-flights-organised-for-stranded-filipinos-in-oman>

- Stranded Filipinos in Oman who are unable to return home due to their current circumstances can do so on one of the two chartered flights to Manila organised for this month.
 - "There are two DFA (Department of Foreign Affairs) chartered repatriation flights for stranded OFWs (Overseas Filipino Workers) in Oman," said Sarah Lou Ysmael Arriola, the Undersecretary of Migrant Workers' Affairs at the DFW.
 - "Stranded OFWs are requested to contact the Philippine Embassy in Muscat," she added in her statement.
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