

**Bangladesh Deputy High Commission
Kolkata**

Press Release

20 September 2021

Repatriation of 37 women & children stuck at different Safe Homes in West Bengal



Bangladesh Deputy High Commission in Kolkata repatriated 37 Women and Children to Bangladesh who are victims of trafficking through Petrapole-Benapole Border on 20th September, 2021.

In continuation of the efforts undertaken jointly by the Bangladesh Deputy High Commission, Kolkata and the West Bengal Task Force & RRRI of Women & Children under the auspices of the Department of Women & Children Development and Social Welfare, 37 (thirty-seven) victims of trafficking, all women and children, were repatriated to Bangladesh today through the Petrapole – Benapole border.

More than 150 Bangladeshi women and children, victims of trafficking and unlawful border-crossings, have been stranded in various Safe Homes in West Bengal, India. The West Bengal Directorate of Child Rights and Trafficking intimated the Bangladesh Deputy High Commission in Kolkata about the victims following the established norms and procedure. Bangladesh Deputy High Commission inspected the Safe Homes and informed the Bangladesh Ministry of Foreign Affairs about the information of the victims collected from these Safe Homes. Later, with the help of the Ministry of Home Affairs of Bangladesh, their Bangladeshi nationality have been verified and accordingly, the Deputy High Commission in Kolkata issued travel permits and initiated necessary processes for repatriation of the women and children after completing the time consuming procedure of information validation and authentication in the shortest possible time. With this continuous effort undertaken by the Bangladesh Deputy High Commission, Kolkata and the Special Task Force of West Bengal Government for the Prevention of Trafficking in Women and Children, the number of stranded women and children held in different Safe Homes is fast reducing. Mentionable, this is the second such repatriation initiative after the first group of 38 women and children had been repatriated on 25 January 2021.

The First Secretary (Political) & Head of Chancery Ms. Shamima Yeasmin Smrite led the Bangladesh Deputy High Commission team comprising of First Secretary (Political) Mr. Md. Saniul Kader and other staff members. These 37 repatriated individuals included 4 adult women, 12 girls and 21 boys aged below 18 years, who had been languishing in various Indian Safe Homes for the last 2 to 5 years. Representative from the Bangladesh Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Upazila Nirbahi Officer, Sharsha, Jashore, representatives from Jashore District Police, BGB and few NGOs were present at the border during the handing over ceremonies from Bangladesh side. The Indian side was also well represented by the representatives from different agencies of West Bengal and central agencies from Delhi and BSF personnel. This repatriation process will continue in the days ahead.