

PRESS RELEASE

Research Organisations and Civil Society Groups Respond to Worsening Persecution of Bengali-Speaking Migrant Workers

Organised by Calcutta Research Group (CRG) & Know Your Neighbour (KYN)

Calcutta Press Club | 12th August 2025

Kolkata, 12 August 2025: At a press meeting held today at the Calcutta Press Club, the Calcutta Research Group (CRG) and Know Your Neighbour (KYN) drew attention to the continuing harassment, detention, and persecution of Bengali-speaking migrant workers across India.

Speakers including Ranabir Samaddar (Professor Emeritus, CRG), Ahamad Hassan Imran (Chairperson, West Bengal Minorities' Commission), Sabir Ahamed (Convenor, KYN & Member, CRG), Sabyasachi Basu Ray Chaudhury (Professor, Rabindra Bharati University & President, CRG) and Samata Biswas (Assistant Professor, The Sanskrit College and University & Member, CRG) presented testimonies, field reports, and analyses on the crisis. Ahamad Hasan Imran commented on the targeting of Bengali speaking Muslims particularly, Sabir Ahamed commented on the link between the crisis of education and the increase in migrant workers travelling to other states.

The meeting highlighted that since May 2025, numerous incidents have been reported in states such as Chhattisgarh, Odisha, Rajasthan, Maharashtra, Delhi, Haryana, Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, and Gujarat where migrant workers from West Bengal, most of whom had valid Aadhaar, voter IDs, and other identification, have been detained on suspicion of being undocumented "Bangladeshis".

Even the Bengali language has been described as "Bangladeshi" by some of those tasked to identify undocumented immigrants, creating a piquant situation where speaking a language recognised by our constitution could cause suspicion.

Speakers underscored that in many cases, detainees could inform their families only after prolonged confinement, with authorities failing to verify identities through legal and established channels or in consultation with the West Bengal government.

Disturbing accounts of forced deportations into Bangladesh, violence leading to serious injuries, abductions, extortion, and demolition of workers' homes, particularly in Gujarat, Delhi, and Gurgaon, were presented. This has also led to migrants' return to their home, reminiscent of the lockdown and the migrant workers' march back home.

Several speakers condemned the rampant profiling of Bengali-speaking migrants as "Bangladeshis" or "Rohingyas," calling it discriminatory, unconstitutional, and deeply damaging to social harmony.

CRG and KYN released a compilation of recent newspaper reports about the persecution of migrant workers, and an information booklet about the background to these incidents, the crisis of democracy flagged by migrant workers across India and a set of recommendations.

The meeting concluded with a call for:

1. Immediate halt to arbitrary detentions and deportations
2. Strict adherence to legal identification procedures
3. Cooperation between state governments to verify migrant workers' identities
4. Policy safeguards to prevent racial and linguistic profiling
5. A call to central trade unions to recognise the migrant workers as part of the labour force in the country and to safeguard their interests
6. An all-party fact finding visit to the affected areas.

Organisers urged the media, civil society, and policymakers to treat this as a pressing human and labour rights issue.