

Migrant workers

interview with Arin Rungjang

Shohel Rana

Shohel's family moved from Pakistan due to war, and is presently living in Dhaka. He has a sister who is married and lives with her husband. His parents were poor Pakistanis when they fled to Bangladesh. He wishes to earn enough money in Singapore to buy a big plot of land back home, around 30 000 - 40 000 SGD. He also hopes to get married and settle down in Bangladesh. He is a Muslim, and prays in his dormitory using cardboard or tarp as carpet, as the mosque is too far.

Muthu Selvakumar

Muthu used to work as a welder in India, he came to work in Singapore seven years ago. He is 38 years old now with wife and two children. Missing them very much, he calls them on WhatsApp frequently and goes back to India once every two years. Before coming to Singapore, he was in the construction business as well. He wishes to start his own business in India someday, or perhaps be a family man. He will stay here and work for as long as it takes for him to reach the goal.

Uzzal (nickname)

Uzzal has been working in Singapore since he was 18 years old for 14 years. He came from Bangladesh and had been a farmer. His family used to run a business which failed and put them in debt. His salary went into paying off the debt and into supporting his little family; his wife whom he married one year ago, and a son. He goes back four times a year, but still misses them a lot and cries when he thinks of them too much. He is a devout Muslim and prays every day in his dormitory room



since the mosque is far. He is aware of the Indo-Pakistani war but was not affected. When the Myanmar exodus took place he was already working in Singapore.

Jahangir

Jahangir is from Bangladesh. He first came to work in Singapore in the construction industry seven years ago and is 29 years old this year. Two years into his job in Singapore he went back to Bangladesh to marry and start his shop. His parents took over his business and now he is back in Singapore to earn money. Despite having a sister and two brothers, he is the only one who works. He has no children, but misses his wife and parents before he sleeps. He tries not to think of them when he is working so he won't distract himself. He is a Muslim and prays every day in a designated corner in his room.

Mohasin

Mohasin is from Bangladesh, in a town 24km away from Dhaka. He has been in Singapore for more than 10 years and is 43 years old this year. Not being able to find a job home, he came here to do construction jobs to support his wife, daughter, and son. He plans to stay for another two or three years, only flying back to visit his family once every one or two years. He is Muslim and still prays every day whenever he has the chance.

Karisim Marimutu

Marimutu is from Tamil Nadu, south India, having worked in Singapore for 10 years, he is 48 years old now. He worked as a plaster man in India and came here to do construction. Having married for 18 years, he has two children whose school fees he is providing for. He goes back every one to two years and plans to stay for another 15 years.



C. Arumugam

Arumugam is from Tamil Nadu, south India. He is 46 years old and has been in Singapore for 15 years. He married in 2003 and has two children, a boy, 13, and a girl, 10. He was a kopi (coffee) and makan (food) man and opened a shop with his brother, which he had sublet before he came here. He has been working in Singapore's construction industry for 15 years for better pay. He misses his family very much and but could only go back once every three years. He plans to work here for two more years.

M. Manokaran

Manokaran is from Tamil Nadu, south India. He has been in Singapore for 22 years in total. He is now 43 years old and married with two children who are 15 and 12. He misses them very much and calls them a lot, he goes back every year after having gathered enough leave days. He finds Singapore very pleasant, but still prefers to live in India with his family.

Kong Wan Qian

Kong Wan Qian is from China, Shandong, and has been in Singapore for four years. He is 33 years old and is married with one son. He misses them and will video call them once every two days. Before he came to Singapore he worked in solar panel construction and installation, but it pays less compared to what he gets here. He wishes to earn enough so he can buy a bigger house for his family back home.

Zhou Jiang Bo

Zhou Jiang Bo is 38 years old and has been in Singapore for eight years. He has a big family; his wife, three children, his elder sister, and his

parents. He uses much of his pay to support his parents. Before he came to Singapore he was working in the crystal crafts industry in China. He misses his family very much and video calls his wife every day, going back to visit them once a year. He is prepared to work here for 10 more years if there aren't better opportunities in China.

Liang Hong Tao

Liang Hong Tao is from Puyang, China, and has been in Singapore for more than 10 years. He is 47 years old and is married with two sons. He plans to work here for another four to five years to pay for his younger son's college fees, while his older son has married and started his own business. He misses his family and video calls them at least twice a week, going back to visit once a year.

Li Qing Jun

Li Qing Jun moved to Singapore with his wife 12 years ago from Henan, China. He is 46 years old this year and has raised two children here, both sons, 12 and 7 years old. He bought an HDB flat in Singapore and is a permanent resident here. His wife works between Shanghai and Singapore, spending half a year at each side. Before he came to here he had served in the Chinese people's liberation army for 11 years, working as an anti-aircraft radar operator.

-Interviewed on 29 July 2019-