

Interviews with Refugees and Migrants



Interview#: 3

Name: Tuhin Khan

Age: 28

Country of origin: Bangladesh

Current location: Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

Names and identified characteristics are changed, but the story is real.
The interview was conducted in 2020.

Hello, I am working with the Mixed Migration Centre (MMC). This interview is to find out about the experiences of Bangladeshi migrants in Kuala Lumpur. If you are from Bangladeshi community residing in Kuala Lumpur, aged 18 or over, and have arrived in Malaysia for less than 2 years, we would like to invite you to participate! If you agree to participate, we will ask questions about your migration journey, working and living condition, security concerns and plans, among other topics. We will use the information collected to report to NGOs and other actors, so that they can develop interventions adapted to the real needs of refugee and migrant communities in Malaysia.



Participation in this project is entirely voluntary and does not provide access to assistance programs or any form of compensation. Our interview will be strictly confidential and anonymous: we will not ask you for personal data during the call.

Many thanks!

How long have you been a refugee/migrant in this city, when did you arrive and where did you come from?



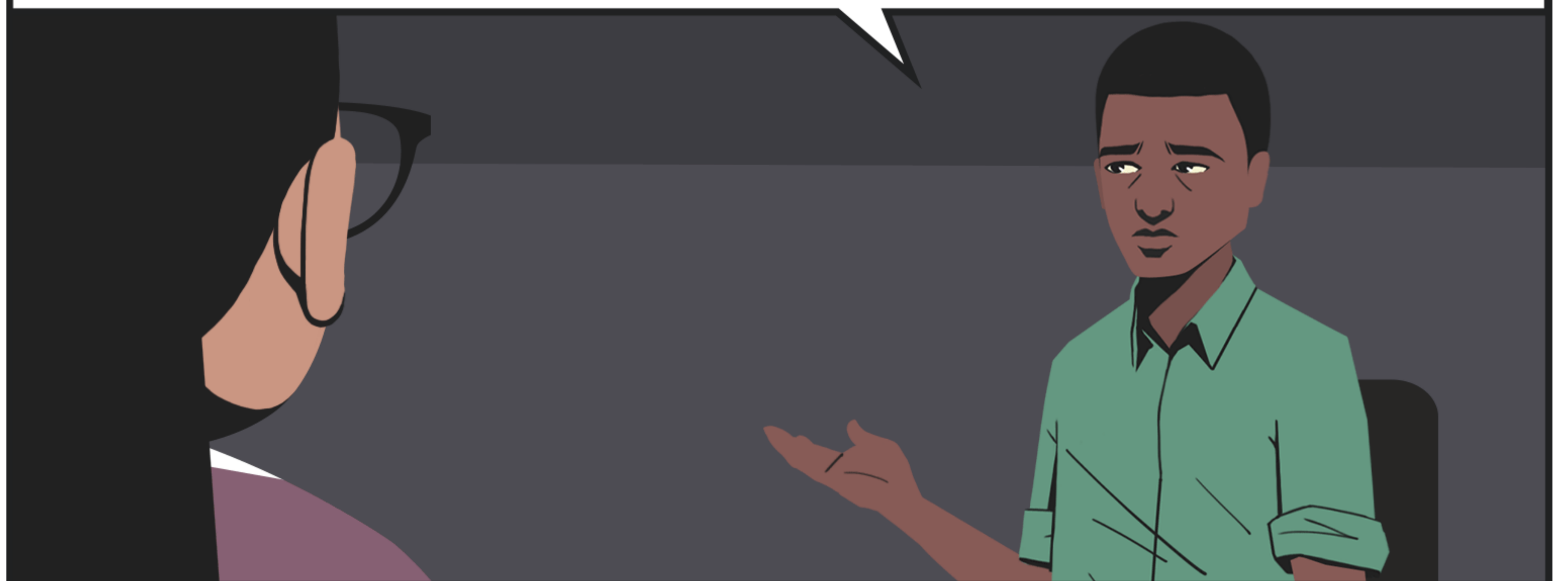
I have been living in Kuala Lumpur for one and a half years.



Why did you leave your home country?



My plan is to earn some money here, and then return home to Bangladesh to open my own business, a café in my hometown. Before coming to Malaysia, I wanted to live overseas to make money. If I could, I would go anywhere in the world, maybe London, maybe Germany.



Tell us a bit about how you got here? Was it expensive for you or your family?

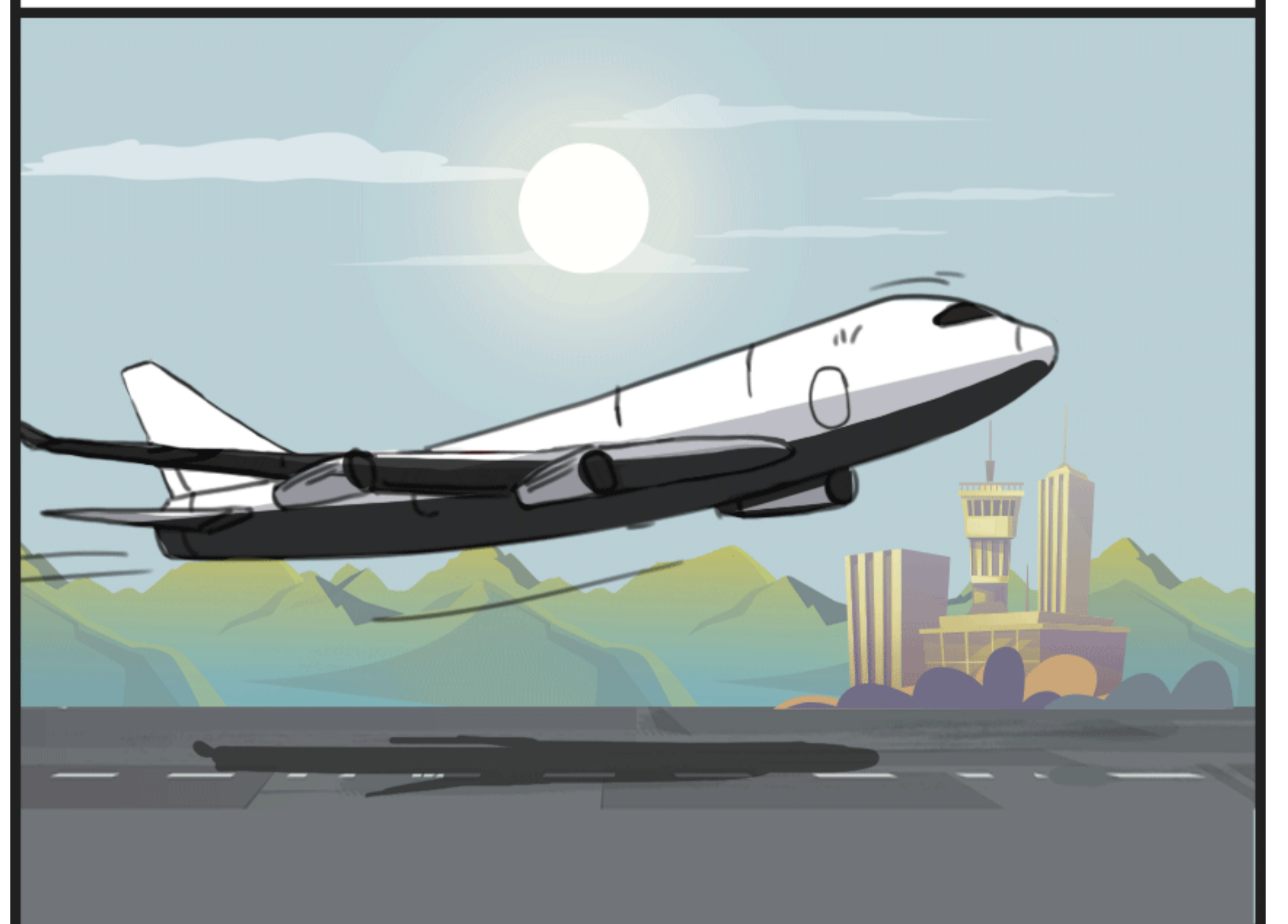


An employment agency got my visa and organised my flight. The total cost was USD 3,000, of which half was paid in advance.



I borrowed a lot of money, so my family still has debts.

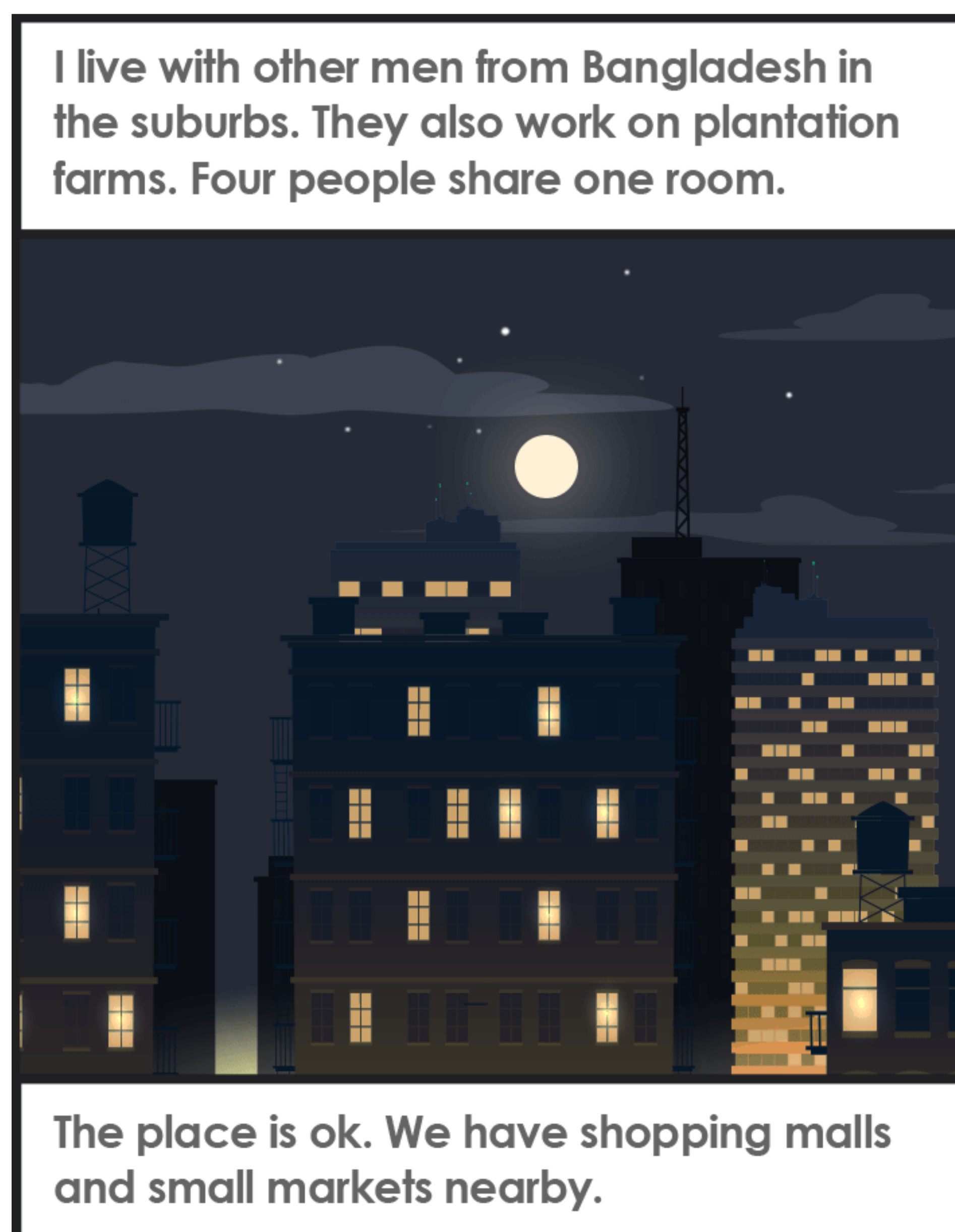
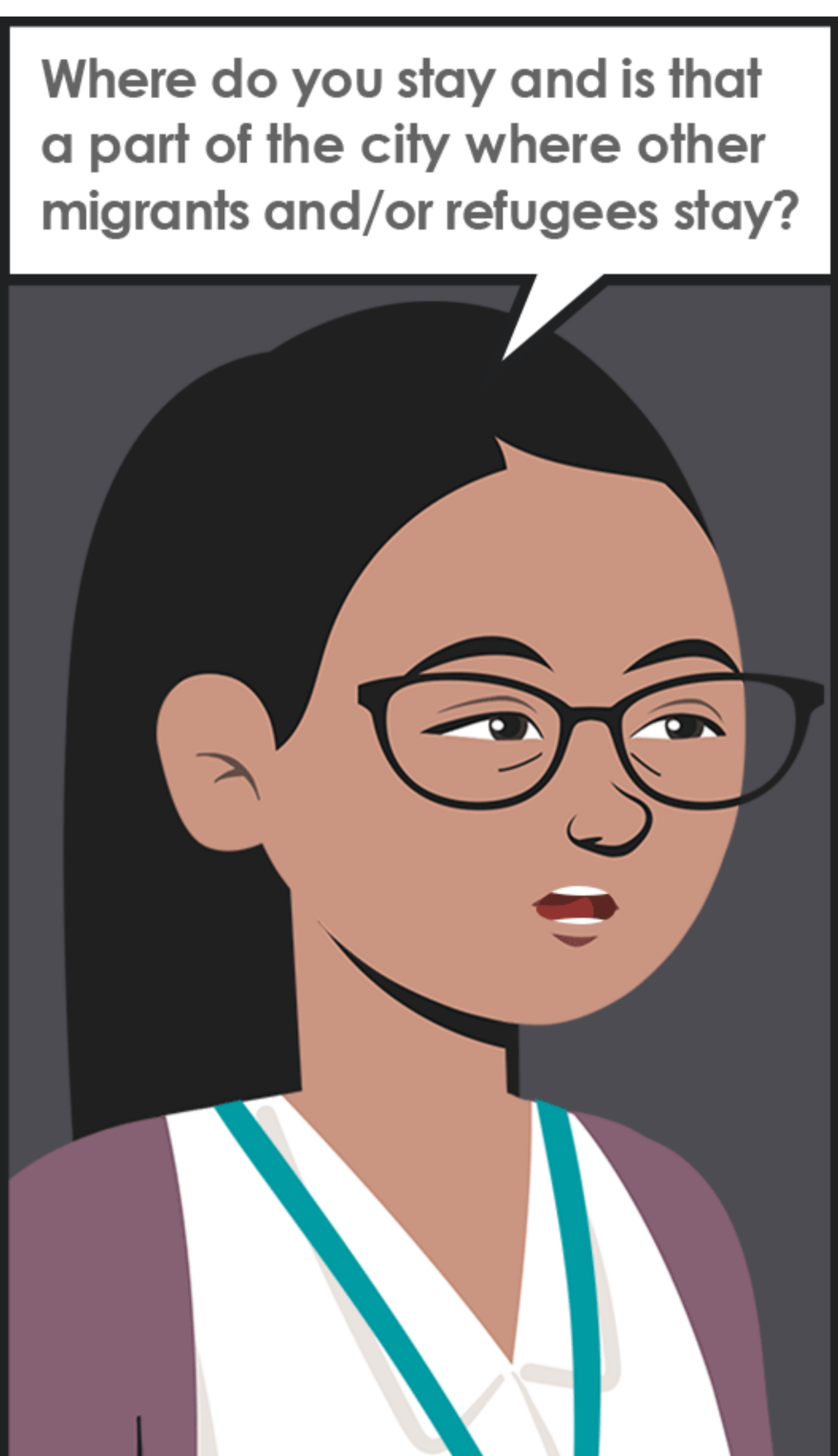
I borrowed a lot of money, so my family still has debt. To repay the remaining debt part of my salary is deducted by middlemen.



In six months, my visa will expire and then my employer will renew it, and also take this from my salary.



My visa states that I must work in Kuala Lumpur for this company only and the Malaysian government does not allow us to change employer.



The place is ok. We have shopping malls and small markets nearby.



It's only occasionally that I get a full salary when there are no deductions.

Do you feel the city makes it easy for you to be 'part of the city' or do you feel a bit on the outside of the city's life?



A woman with glasses and a purple cardigan, wearing a 'Mixed Migration Centre' lanyard, asks the question.

Here, there are many illegal migrants and refugees, and people sometimes mistake me for being one of them.



A man in a green shirt looks downcast.

Without documents, I would be sent to detention and get punishment.

Do you feel the city authorities and services have made any efforts or offered facilities to make migrants feel part of the whole city or do you feel excluded?



The interviewer asks about city authorities and services.

I don't have much experience with local authorities or organisations here. I went to an immigration office once and they were not very friendly.



The migrant shares his experience with local authorities.

With the recent police raids, some Bangladeshis were arrested because either didn't have the document. They are still in detention centres. It all worries me, but if anything happens, my employer will help me.

Do you observe any change in the attitude of local people here towards migrants since the COVID-19 crisis began? How was it like before?



The interviewer asks about changes in local attitudes since the COVID-19 crisis.

Malaysians see migrants and refugees as uneducated, and think our work is dirty. Our skin colour makes them think that we don't know how to clean ourselves.



The migrant describes the stigma and discrimination he faces from Malaysians.

COVID-19 makes people think that it is unsafe to get close to us. They just don't like us and look at us in weird ways. They don't see us as equal humans here in Kuala Lumpur.



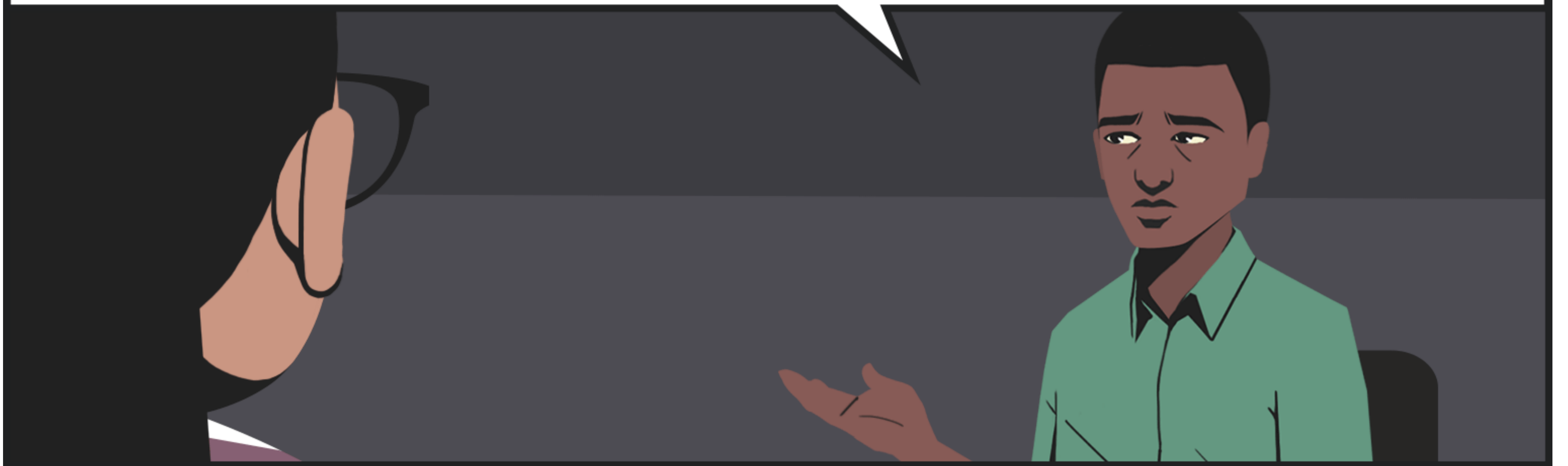
A scene in a city street showing a woman in a hijab, a man in a grey suit pointing, the migrant in the center, and another man in a blue shirt covering his face. Silhouettes of other people are in the background.

I have Malaysian friends, but not many. It's hard to make friends elsewhere than at my workplace. Our skin colours and languages are different. I speak a bit of Malay, but even then, they still know I'm a migrant. Not everyone is bad to us, some people still have humanity. But since the pandemic, there are people who believe that the virus came with migrants.

What are the good things about this city that make you want to stay?



Kuala Lumpur is beautiful and with nature that reminds me of my hometown. There's a lot of traffic and many shopping malls. Transportation and hospitals are good, but the food is expensive.



I heard about a place in Malaysia called Langkawi and dream to go there.

I come from a village without many buildings, shopping malls, and just a few markets. Nothing like this city life. But I feel safer in my hometown and have friends and family there. Here, I'm alone. I have not met anyone to start a family with here and miss relatives back home a lot.



I would not suggest my friends or family come to Kuala Lumpur if they could make a better life than me in our hometown.

Can you tell us of any event(s) that occurred during your time in this city that were positive and impressed you, and also any that were negative?



One day, I came back to my room from work, and an immigration officer was there. He asked me where I came from, where I work, then he took me to the police station for interrogation about my visa and my employer. They asked me to call him and he eventually came to pick me up.



Do you still have an intention to go on somewhere else or perhaps return home?



If I earn enough money here in Kuala Lumpur, I will go back to Bangladesh and open my business. But now I'm not sure anymore. COVID-19 makes me consider possibilities and for now I will wait and see how it goes.



 Please move your mouse on the frames to interact!



End of the interview

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