

Dhaka Day by Day

Adventures of a Refugee Worker

By Aasha Mehreen Amin

She has travelled to the remotest parts of South Asia, visiting refugee camps and detention centres she has been threatened with knives and guns and has faced the challenge of being a woman professional with a stiff upper lip. All this for the sole purpose of helping people who have been uprooted from their homes — for the refugees. Where she has not been able to assist them directly, she has done so indirectly by involving herself in policy and legal issues that determine their immediate fate. An attractive woman in her mid 30s, Irene Khan is a Bangladeshi who works for UNHCR (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees). In a recent interview, she talked of her fascinating experiences working for an organisation, whose primary goal is to find a way for refugees to stop being refugees.

Her ending up in UNHCR she said, was pure coincidence. It was during her post graduate studies in law at Harvard University that she heard of UNHCR's interest in employing women lawyers. Irene decided to join and her

relief goods had reached them. Ironically in this regard her 'handicap' of being an Eastern woman actually gave her an advantage over her male colleagues. 'I could go into the tents and talk directly to the women, which they could not. Also, I was used to the culture and did not get flabbergasted for example, when men did not shake hands with me as my European female colleagues did.'

The element of risk, Irene added, was always there, since the psychological problems associated with being refugees made them very angry and frustrated leading to many incidents of violence. Irene describes an incident in London, where she was working to help Iranian refugees. A young Iranian boy who had a drug problem, had come to Irene's office and demanded to meet her, when her secretary informed him that Irene was at a meeting, he slit his head with a blade and walked right into the meeting. He was of course pacified and then put into a drug rehabilitation clinic. Irene's latest job is in Geneva, where she



Irene with daughter Suriya.

commitment to UNHCR has remained unwavering even after 12 years.

One of the most challenging jobs Irene had, was working in Islamabad with the Afghan and Iranian refugees in 1979. Challenging not only because of the work but for the fact that she was a young, single Bangladeshi woman, in a totally male dominated society. Said Irene 'I was really surprised at how different women in Pakistan were treated. One would hardly ever see a woman in a government office. It was unthinkable for a woman to have dinner at a restaurant alone or even with other women. I think the Pakistanis, especially the men found it difficult to react to a woman professional and that too a Bangladeshi, they would either think I was available and be too familiar or be totally stiff and ill at ease. The segregation of men and women at official parties was also very awkward. We were always dumped with the wives with whom we had very little in common, while the men who were from the same professional backgrounds were in another room.'

Whatever the drawbacks of her social life, professionally Irene found the work very rewarding. Her job included dealing with legislation affecting the refugees, going into the Afghan and Iranian refugee camps to find out how the women were doing and whether the

works as the executive assistant to the High Commissioner of the agency. Among other things, Irene is mainly concerned with refugee policy question. She also advises the High Commissioner, writes her speeches, briefs her before meetings and often goes on missions with her. According to Irene her new assignment was exciting, since it gave her a wider global experience rather than being confined to one particular part of the world. She mentioned the time when in 1989 she was part of a project which completely changed the UN policy on the Vietnamese boat people and changed whole systems in five different countries — Malaysia, Philippines, Hongkong, Thailand and Indonesia.

Talking about UNHCR's policy on employing women, Irene said that there were more women in lower grades than higher grades, partly because of the recruitment policy and partly because of inborn prejudice. Irene, therefore has to work harder and constantly prove her worth. While this pays off professionally, it imposes heavy tolls on her personal life. With a career as demanding as hers, Irene has very little time for her German husband and four year old daughter Suriya.

But personal sacrifices are a given in this line of work, something Irene has learnt to accept over the years.

Commission to probe Tongi incident

The Enquiry Commission, set up to probe the Monday's incident at Tongi Railway Station, has started its investigation, reports BSS.

The three-member committee, headed by Fazul Huq, Additional Secretary, Railway division of the Ministry of Communications, will hear the witnesses at Tongi Station at 10 am on January 25.

The persons, who witnessed the incident, have been requested to appear before the Enquiry Commission at the room of the Tongi Station Master on the day for the sake of impartial enquiry.

The interested persons can also send written statements on the incident.

Disunity helped resurgence of anti-liberation forces

By Staff Correspondent

Speakers at a discussion Wednesday said the disunity among the liberation forces helped the resurgence of anti-liberation and fundamentalist 'evil' forces in the country.

They were addressing a meeting at the National Museum auditorium in memory of late architect Alamgir Kabir who was a leader of Awami League and died on December 6 last year.

Presided over by Begum Sufia Kamal the meeting was addressed among others by Saifuddin Ahmed Manik, Pir Habibur Rahman, S A Malek, Santosh Gupta, Architect Majharul Islam, and late Kabir's wife Rokeya Kabir. It was organised by the Bangabandhu Parishad.

'We want trial of Golam Azam and demand his expulsion but at an opportune moment we call on him for his blessings,' Saifuddin Ahmed Manik pointed out adding 'so how would the people understand that we really demand his trial.'

He said that the country now needs many Alamgir Kabirs who had fought in the liberation war.

Pir Habib said that the ruling BNP government is propped by the 'Fascist Jamaat' and so it allowed a 'war criminal' to head the party in the country.

Begum Sufia Kamal said that Alamgir Kabir was true patriot and hoped that the new generation would be inspired by his ideals.

Biswas, Khaleda condole death of Asaduzzaman

President Abdur Rahman Biswas Wednesday expressed his profound shock at the death of Asaduzzaman Khan, a former minister, veteran parliamentarian and an Awami League leader, reports BSS.

In a message of condolence the President said Khan had always remained dedicated to protect the interest of the people. He had also remarkable contributions in establishing rule of law in the country.

Khaleda

In a message Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia also expressed her deep sorrow at the death of Asaduzzaman Khan.

In a message of condolence Begum Zia prayed for the peace of the departed soul and expressed her sympathy for the members of the bereaved family.

Golam Hafiz

Law and Justice Minister Mirza Golam Hafiz also expressed his profound shock at the death of Mr Khan. A former minister and Leader of the Opposition in the Jatiya Sangsad late Mr Khan was an eminent lawyer, politician and good organiser, he said.

Hamidul Huq's qulhwani today

Qulhwani of Hamidul Huq Chowdhury will be held today after Asar prayer at his residence at Nirala, 73 Green Road, (opp Green Super Market), reports BSS.

Relatives, friends and admirers have been requested to attend the Qulhwani.

Thursday

- 5.00 Opening announcement, Al-Quran, Programme Summary
- 5.10 News in Bangla
- 5.20 Recitation from the Geeta
- 5.30 Jana Ajana
- 6.00 Cartoon: The New Three Stooges
- 6.30 Jiboner Alo: Religious programme
- 7.05 Debate
- 8.00 News in Bangla
- 8.30 Drama of the week
- 10.00 News in English
- 10.25 Parliament round-up
- 10.35 Drama Series: Twin Peaks
- 11.30 Khabar/ The News
- 11.40 Friday's Programme Summary
- 11.45 Closing

Congratulation

Born to Mr. Zakaria Ahmed and Mrs. Fahmida Ahmed their second loving child on 18th January 1992, a healthy son weighing 3½ kgs. Mother and child doing fine. All Uncles & Aunts of the child

Happy Birthday

To our good friend
SIMU
With love from:
Maliha, Samina,
Tanveer and
Murshed



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Libyan Historical Proposals to the United Nations

Memorandum from the Secretary of the People's Committee for Foreign Liaison and International Cooperation for the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya addressed to the Secretary-General.

On the basis of the historic and pioneering responsibility assumed by the 1 September Revolution for devising solutions to the many problems and issues that preoccupy mankind the green book, which constitutes a guide to the emancipation of peoples from oppression, exploitation and ignorance, being known to one and all—and in an awareness of the danger that the phenomenon of international terrorism poses to international peace and security, this of the General Assembly in order first to reach a definition of international terrorism and then to eliminate it and the underlying causes of all those forms of terrorism and acts of violence to which the world is prone, and to consider a number of other grave issues of concern to all nations.

By means of such a session, the international community will thus be able to address the causes of international terrorism in a concerted manner and to eliminate it so as to open the way for the emergence of a secure international climate in which all peoples may live in security, peace and happiness in keeping with a proper implementation of the charter of the United Nations.

Among the causes of the spread of violence in the world is the failure to resolve a number of political issues, some of which are set forth by way of example in Appendix I.

There are a number of other phenomena that must also be addressed given that their elimination pertains to the elimination of terrorism and that without their elimination the world will be in a constant state of instability, fear and alarm. These phenomena are:

1. Weapons of mass destruction, offensive weapons and strategic weapons the possession of these weapons and threats made with them constitute such weapons.

Accordingly, we suggest that there is a need for agreements on a well-defined timetable for the achievement of the following:

- (A) The complete destruction of nuclear, biological and chemical weapons in consideration of the fact that they are weapons which are psychologically intimidating and materially destructive. (B) The banning and criminalisation of their manufacture, possession and use. (C) The destruction of the weapons of terror, such as Ballistic missiles, and the banning and criminalisation of their manufacture. (D) The banning and criminalisation of the positioning of naval fleets on the seas, and their confinement to the oceans until such time as they are finally eliminated. (E) The destruction and banning and the criminalisation of the manufacture and acquisition of aircraft-carriers and in-flight refuelling aircraft; (F) The restriction of acquisition to that of defensive weapons alone and only within the territorial waters and airspace of the state in question.

In order to promote the above, all military bases maintained by any state in other countries will be liquidated and removed so that outside armies are withdrawn from the territory of others.

Compensation

Compensation for those peoples which were colonized and underwent slaughter and torture at the hands of the colonisers and for those families and individual who suffered damage from past acts of aggression will put an end to the injustice, hatred and revenge that are now considered to pertain to acts of international terrorism.

- (A) Compensation for the colonial period, in that the colonising state provide just compensation for the colonial peoples for the harm done to them by the plundering of their resources and the theft of their cultural heritage. (B) Compensation for peoples, families and individuals who have been victims of terrorism and violence, as set forth by way of example, in Appendix II, (C) Improving the security of aircraft and ensuring the presence of medical team on board each flight and on each sea voyage.

Refugees, deportees and abducted persons.

These groups have contributed to the spread of the phenomenon of reciprocal violence and terrorism on numerous pretexts by their home countries and the countries that give them shelter or exploit them.

There must be:

- (A) An undertaking on the part of all states to accept the repatriation of deportees and refugees, not to interfere with them and to assist them to resettle, (B) Release of abducted persons and detainees and the handing over of all those being sought by international police authorities.

Review of the charter of the United Nations.

Meeting the responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security is a grave and important matter, and therefore the participation of the great majority of peoples in this momentous task will lead to the elimination of terrorism and the strengthening of international stability and security this can only be achieved by amending the charter so that:

- (A) The General Assembly of the United Nations, which represents all member states is given decision-making authority and it is for the Security Council to implement the decisions of the General Assembly. (B) The composition of the Security Council and the right of veto are reconsidered. (C) There is a similar review of the International Court of Justice.

Economic and Social Matters.

The achievement of a world in which stability and well-being prevail and of a stage where the happy society is attained that will doubtlessly contribute to the creation of stability and security and eradication of terrorism has become a matter for the road to happiness of mankind we propose the implementation of the following plan:

- (A) Commitment to the implementation of the international agreements on the welfare and protection of mothers and children. (B) The banning of all manifestations of violence such as boxing and wrestling of all kind and of controlling cruelty to animals, and compassion towards them. (C) A resolute approach to dangerous diseases such as cancer, Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome, Polymyositis and Malaria (Appendix III). (D) Combating and treatment of the phenomenon of narcotic addiction. (E) Commitment to international agreements in the field of environmental protection, and the conclusion of new agreements on the atmosphere. (F) The establishment of an international irrigation system to prevent the flow of rivers, rain, snow and ice into the seas and oceans, and their diversion to the land mass. (G) Low-cost desalination of sea water. (H) The elimination of agricultural pests, particularly locusts. (I) The halting of desertification. (J) The utilisation of solar power.

Establishment of a Fund

This historic proposal calls for the establishment of an international fund answerable to the General Assembly to which all states would contribute in accordance with their capacities in order to meet all the aforesaid obligations.

7. An International Central Committee answerable to the United Nations should be established and should have sub-committees to cover all parts of the world. The committees should be endowed with the necessary power and resources to undertake the task of inspection and implementation.

Ibrahim M Bishari

Secretary of the People's Committee for Foreign Liaison and International Cooperation.

Appendix I:

- (A) The question of Palestine (B) The problem of South Africa (C) The problem of Minorities in the world (D) The problem of the Kurdish people

The problem of Northern Ireland, The problem of Cyprus.

Appendix II:

- (A) The Libyan civil aircraft shot down by the Israelis over Sinai on 21 February 1973; with 111 passengers on board. (B) The Italian civil aircraft that crashed on 27 June 1980 over Ustica with 81 passengers on board. (C) The Korean civil aircraft shot down in the airspace of the former Soviet Union on 31 August 1983 with 269 passengers on board. (D) The United States and British attack on cities of great Jamahiriya on 15 April 1986 in which there were some 400 civilian victims including 104 children, 85 women, 33 disabled persons and 41 elderly persons. (E) The Iranian civil aircraft shot down by the United States Navy on 3 July 1988 with 290 passengers on board. (F) The United States Pan Am civil aircraft that crashed on 21 December 1988 with 270 passengers on board. (G) The French civil aircraft that crashed on 19 September 1981 with 170 passengers on board.

Czechs, Slovaks to maintain close cooperation with Dhaka

The Ambassador designate to Bangladesh of Czech and Slovak Federal Republic, Dr Jan Lisuch Wednesday presented his credentials to President Abdur Rahman Biswas at Bangladesh, reports BSS.

Accepting the credentials, President Abdur Rahman Biswas hoped that the two

countries would work together in the spirit of cooperation and understanding in various international fora.

He said that Bangladesh was keen to strengthen further basis of cooperation which had considerable scopes.

President said that the sustained support of Czech and Slovak to our liberation war

and recognition to Bangladesh was remembered with deep satisfaction.

He said, ever since the relations between the two countries had developed excellently.

Referring the development activities of Bangladesh undertaken by the present government, he said that the country was striving to create a better life for the people.

Presenting his credentials, the Czech and Slovak Ambassador said that his country would always maintain close cooperation with Bangladesh for strengthening bilateral ties.

He said that the two countries would work for peace, international confidence, stability and security of the world.

The Ambassador hoped that during his tenure of office here, the friendship and cooperation between two countries would be developed further.

Earlier, on arrival at Bangladesh, the Ambassador was given a guard of honour by the President's guard regiment and he inspected the guard.

Minister tells girl students to devote in study

Education Minister Jamiruddin Sirar Wednesday laid stress on spread of female education for over-all national development, reports BSS.

He said late president Ziaur Rahman had first given priority to female education to ensure participation of the women in nation-building activities.

The Education Minister was speaking as chief guest at the prize distribution and cultural function of Vikarunnessa Noon School and College in Dhaka.

Presided over by the chairman of the governing body of the school and college and Food Secretary Ataul Huq, the function was addressed by State Minister for Social Welfare and Women's Affairs Sarwar Rahman and Principal of the College Hamida Ali and representative of Lady Firoz Khan Noon and Principal of Vikarunnessa School at Rawalpindi Miss Omar Banu.

The Education Minister said women are playing vital role in every sphere of the national life throughout the world. He said the women must be imparted with proper education for flourishing of their talents. He called upon the girl students to devote themselves in study for making them worthy citizens of the country.

77,850 women underwent MR last year

A total of 77,850 women underwent MR (menstrual regulation) during the last fiscal year, the Jatiya Sangsad was told Wednesday, reports BSS.

Replying to a question from Jamaat-e-Islami Bangladesh member Begum Hafeja Khatoun (women seat-23), the Health Minister Chowdhury Kamal Ibne-Yusuf said all the women who were performed MR were married. No unmarried woman had M R, the minister added.

Weather

Light rain likely

By Staff Correspondent

Meteorological office forecast that light rain or drizzle is likely at places over Khulna, Dhaka and Rajshahi divisions and the region of Noakhali, Comilla and Sylhet, during the next 36 hours commencing 6 pm Wednesday.

Night temperature is likely to remain nearly unchanged over the country during the period.

Temperature and humidity recorded at important cities and towns on Wednesday were:

Cities/Towns	Temperature in degree Celsius	Humidity in percentage
	Max	Min
Dhaka	24.0	14.4
Chittagong	25.2	13.8
Khulna	24.3	13.0
Rajshahi	24.5	12.5
Dinajpur	23.7	11.0
Srimangal	21.6	10.5
Cox's Bazar	26.0	14.0
Barisal	25.7	12.6

The lowest temperature was at Srimangal.