

# Futile Rush in Desperation for Green Cards

Rachel L Swarns writes from New York

MHAMMED Uddin was sound asleep in his Queens apartment when he got the call. The government was giving out green cards at the federal immigration and Naturalisation Service offices in Manhattan, his friend told him. In a flash, Uddin was dressing and kissing his wife goodbye. By 1:30 am January 30, he was in a taxi, racing toward downtown.

Over in Brooklyn, the phone was ringing in Kazi Hossain's apartment. The story he heard: 10,000 green cards were already gone; only 2,000 were left. By 2 am, he, too, was on the road, also hoping for the chance to get the permanent resident visa that would allow him to work and live legally in the United States.

But when they arrived there were no green cards to be had, only hundreds of immigrants already in line, all with scarves and gloves and dreams in hand, all willing to endure the freezing night for the promise of legitimacy in America.

"It was like a flood-coming, all the people coming from India, Pakistan, Bangladesh," said Hossain, a 33-year-old Bangladeshi, who stood in line until dawn on Jan. 30 only to discover that the rumour was not true. "Everybody wants a green card. This rumour, it was like a dream."

The late-night pilgrimage

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of nearly 1,000 people — a mistaken response to an announcement about the annual federal immigration lottery — offered a glimpse of the desperation that many of the city's estimated 350,000 illegal immigrants feel about getting a green card.

Those standing in the lines snaking around the INS building at 26 Federal Plaza included waiters and housekeepers, chefs and Jan five years of experience in a field that requires two years of training. The lottery will be open for applications from Feb. 12 to March 12.

Excluded from the lottery are people from China, Taiwan, India, the Philippines, Vietnam, South Korea, the United Kingdom (except Northern Ireland), Canada, Mexico, Jamaica, El Salvador, Colombia and the Dominican Republic.

For many of New York's illegal immigrants, the lottery is their only opportunity to get a green card, which grants legal, permanent residency in the United States. Outside the lottery, most green cards go to the immediate relatives of US citizens and permanent legal residents, those with specialised skills, or people with \$1 million or more to invest in American industry.

"There isn't a way that people who don't have those connections can come here," said Nyda Budig, a

spokesman for the State Department. "That's why people come here illegally."

And it is also why hundreds of people turned up before dawn at the INS building. Getting a green card would mean the opportunity to work legally — usually at better wages. It would allow them to bring their spouses and children to the United States.

Hossain, for instance, a bartender with a business degree from a Bangladeshi university, was dreaming of the day he could get financial aid to study computers at a college in the United States. Uddin, a 32-year-old chef who also comes from Bangladesh, was hoping to open his own Indian restaurant.

And Julie Revero, a 42-year-old housekeeper from Trinidad, was dreaming of going home and seeing her five children for the first time in six years. She fears that without a green card she would be denied re-entry to the United States.

"It's a form of hope," said Mrs Revero's 28-year-old nephew, Larry, gesturing at the pamphlet that describes the lottery. An electrician, he dreams of repairing airplanes. "We can't give up on it."

Joe Vargas, a 36-year-old Colombian who showed up at the INS building that day, said he heard the mayor's message on Spanish-language television. But he said that a newscaster said Colombians could participate in the lottery, too.

"We're included," insisted Vargas, who has worked as a janitor in New York since 1986, even as he read the white pamphlet that clearly said in Spanish that Colombians were excluded. "I need this. To work, to bring my children here so they can study and have a future."

A group of 10 Indian men suffered the same disappointment when they waited in line for five hours only to discover that Indians could not apply. They stood in a circle, poring carefully over the English-language pamphlet, and arguing about what it meant.

When the truth became clear, they fell silent. One 26-year-old man, who would not give his name, shrugged his shoulders and said he would apply anyway. "This is my only chance," he said sadly. "What else can I do?"

Received from Internet Courtesy: The New York Times News Service

CHECKQUERED cotton fabric has become the latest craze in the fashion world. A yarn pioneered by Grameen Uddog, an enterprise set up by Grameen Bank, the cloth has suddenly brought our once-famous weavers back into the lime light.

"Creativity and Crafts Towards Poverty Eradication" is the concept that is linking up such traditional sectors to the contemporary fashion world. On the occasion of the International Year for the Eradication of Poverty, Federico Mayor, Director General of UNESCO, along with Professor Muhammad Yunus, Managing Director of the Grameen Bank of Bangladesh decided to organise an exhibition in Paris, this February 7, featuring the work of the weavers of Bangladesh. This is to be followed by an exclusive fashion show by Bibi Russell that will bear a "Made in Bangladesh" tag.

This fashion show with eleven Bangladeshi models is the first of its kind for an elite crowd of 4,000 people. The fabrics, dresses and accessories worn by the models will all be from the rural crafts of Bangladesh.

"Bangladesh in the Western world has always been portrayed in her negative colours. I just want this impression to change," says fashion model and designer Bibi Russell who is the choreographer of the show.

The opportunity of textile handlooms are plenty. First of all Grameen Checks that are custom made are hand dyed and ideal spring, summer wear for men, women and children. Moreover this fashion show would attract European designers, buyers and at the same time help promote the positive culture of our country," says Khalid Shams, DMD of Grameen Bank.

The main attraction of this show is how rural weavers can help a country's economy and change the face of its textile industry. "This is one of the reasons why Queen Sophia of Spain showed keen interest in this project and agreed to see the show," says Shams.

UNESCO's executive board in its 146th session, held in May 1995, has decided unanimously to adopt the achievements of Grameen Bank that helps rural destitute by micro loans and help in-

tegrate them in the society as a whole. The member-states of UNESCO expressed keen enthusiasm on Grameen Uddog's reviving of the weavers handloom industry and thus this show explains Shams. This 40 minute fashion show, of 15 display numbers is promoting Bangladesh silks, jamdanis, khadi, jute along with Grameen Checks in the potential European market.

"I have designed 30 new checks in colour, combination suitable to European taste for this show only, these yarns are not yet available in the local market," says Bibi.

Comfortable, cotton, summer wear that are more suitable for European consumers have been made from this check while exclusive evening gowns and dresses have been made with silks in vegetable dyes, screen prints and jamdanis.

A clothes show or fashion display be it grand or ordinary cannot bear an exclusive Bangladeshi placard unless everything that goes with it is. This means the textile, the design, the necessary accessories such as shoes, slippers, belts, trinkets, hats, bags and of course the music — the total presentation should

reflect our culture while at the same time have a cosmopolitan appeal. Bibi with her passion for Bangladesh products goes into the rural depths to find her accessories to match her innovative, creative ideas. For instance the hats that she uses are 'mathats' (sortofhat) worn by farmer to protect themselves from the sun during field work. "I use the Rajshahi, I taal pata ones and cover them with dry jack fruit leaves, these are lighter than the ones found in Sylhet and other areas," she explains.

To be even more innovative, Bibi uses the food covers or Jaalis of Jessore as a head dress. Sometimes she paints them in different shades, sometimes simply covers them with dry leaves. Another favourite in her hat collection is the Mollah Topi, that are available on the sidewalks of any street. Those white crocheted ones or the one braided with bamboo leaves or even the black, off-white or multi-coloured one made out of clothes and embroidered with golden jar.

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# Taking Bangladeshi Crafts to Paris

by Raffat Binte Rashid



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To be even more innovative, Bibi uses the food covers or Jaalis of Jessore as a head dress. Sometimes she paints them in different shades, sometimes simply covers them with dry leaves. Another favourite in her hat collection is the Mollah Topi, that are available on the sidewalks of any street. Those white crocheted ones or the one braided with bamboo leaves or even the black, off-white or multi-coloured one made out of clothes and embroidered with golden jar.

"Since I am to show products that are only of Bangladesh, I made my own belts, necklaces from jute,"

she says. Jute ropes in braids with bell or chandelier-like ends are serving as belts. She is also using the shika, found in any rural home, as one on her belts. "I will fold the shika and use its ornamental flowery part on top of a dress to serve as a belt and as well as accessories," she explains.

The costume jewellery to be used will be made of clay, shell and jute as well. Her slippers are those jute slippers you see in any handicrafts shop. She has only added a jute rope to give it the Roman look. Bibi will also use bata sneakers, to which she adds Grameen Check cloth to match her outfits.

"We did all this by ourselves, staying overnight in our officers. As we do not have enough manpower or help from other sectors, this was all I could do," she says, adding that for such an exclusive show on Bangladesh to help promote its image and bring foreign exchange, she did not get any aid except for the mentioned ones. This lack of enthusiasm, however, has in no way dampened her spirits. Bibi, who has been depicted by the French press as a liberated woman, acting as a missionary of development and defending good causes of Bangladesh, says that the French press and fashion journalists have helped her to organise her show better.

who did not find electronic medium quite stimulating and returned to print felt that there was hardly anything for a journalist to do much for television news reports because journalist's role in the whole news compilation process is just incidental. For without any visual, news presentation on television can never become credible and if there are powerful visuals to support the story-line they are just enough to communicate the authenticity of the reports. So where is the role of a journalist.

To a large extent I subscribe to this argument but not wholly. In my opinion the role of a journalist in television is not only to report but also in a manner that looks credible. However, in the

print because the work schedule in television is definitely more demanding. But here the greatest satisfaction one can draw out of the visibility and getting recognition for the authenticity. At the same time I feel my background with print medium is certainly holding me in good stead as far as understanding the visuals are concerned. Undoubtedly, to be a successful television journalist it is necessary that one must have the exposure of television production and journalistic grooming in the print medium. Because with this combination of exposure the television journalist will find himself more effective in dealing with his storyline both visually and contentwise. Since not too many people

were available with this background therefore many of the print journalists who entered the electronic medium had to struggle hard to understand the nitty gritty of television mechanics as in the print it was never a precondition to know the technical details of the job.

Obviously in this background chartering a new career does become, besides hazardous, also painful especially after having a successful stint in print. Establishing once again as a journalist in a new medium is not something which can be likened to everyone unless one is committed. Today all those journalists who are successful in the television are the ones who opted for the career in electronic medium as a beginner and then learnt the facets of job. It is indeed a difficult process but it is the only way to achieve success.

— Mandira  
The writer is an Editor with Zee News.

# TV versus Press

by Alok Verma

line visually, most of print journalists neither have perception nor attach any importance to visuals as they believe in the power of words. So I realised very quickly that if I were to make a success, refining my visual sense is a fundamental necessity. But refinement is possible if I had it. Frankly, till I joined the television news I had also not ever fathomed my imaginative abilities.

Initially, I endeavoured to understand the significance and finer points of visuals needed to make any news capsule credible. Like in print, a TV journalist doesn't get another chance. If the event is missed it cannot be recaptured unlike in print where it can be pieced together by collating information. Similarly, for covering any event in print besides a pen and a piece of paper you need to have a little understanding but in television more than the journalistic acumen the inherent conditions like camera, sound and lights are needed to capture right visuals and record right comments.

It is true that news report in the television is just complimentary because it is the visual depiction of event which makes the news capsule credible. This is exactly what television is all about. But many of my fraternity

ferings. So implies 19 informative articles of the Handbook on Election Reporting.

The three-section Reporter's Guide was published in the backdrop of the coming parliamentary polls on which depends Bangladesh's economic fate very much. And for that matter, the editors said in the Preface that they believe the information media can and should play a positive and a well-defined role to institutionalise electoral process and democracy at large.

In the first section of the Handbook, there are some practical guidelines for election reporting in general, and for covering the Sixth Parliamentary Election in particular. It consists of tips from some senior journalists of the country and journalism-trainers, which would really be useful to others — meaning the reporters — and whoever consults this book when it's needed.

For example, one of the guidelines sounds like: "At times, complexities in laws, their limitations and inadequacies may jeopardise the conduct of free and fair elections and put election institution into a great controversy. The reporters are, then, placed in a difficult situation

while writing reports." In this situation, they — the reporters — may have to talk to constitutional and legal experts for a correct interpretation. The suggestions made by the journalists in this book aren't bookish and lengthy; instead, they are 'handy'.

The second section is a compilation of some essential background information on "elections" in this country beginning from 1937. Here in this section, the book is made enriched as much as possible with thumbnail sketches of the law and opinion polls concerning election. Moreover, election-monitor-

ing and media-monitoring have been discussed to the point. Specially, the article Essential Election Laws and Their Loopholes by Mohiuddin Faruque and Rizwana Hasan is supposed to make a reporter really confident during his or her assignment in the field.

The last section of the handbook annexes a list of the constituencies with the winners and runners-up in the 1991 election, the code of conduct for the Sixth Parliamentary Election, names and contacts of the major political parties, and a list of election malades that generally occur in polls in South Asian region which may be comparable to Bangladesh situation.

At the end of the articles, there are some relevant contacts and their telephone numbers which will definitely enable the reporters to locate various sources — those, too, are given in the handbook — of information quickly. This handbook is expected to be of great help for the journalists, election monitors, researchers and others interested in the country's future.

Like they say — "Once a reporter is assigned to report on election, it's important that he or she is well-informed of the characteristics and qualifications of the candidates, some of whom will become members of the Cabinet and run the country and 300 of whom — including the would-be Cabinet members — will make laws intended to advance the country of teeming 120 million people."

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## TOM and JERRY

