macro-strategy managing director, Iftekharul Islam, thinks that Bangladesh should develop its knowledge in information technology to adjust with the pace in the age of globalization.

Renowned software company Mathworks managing director, Sham Ahmed, said that he was now ready to help Bangladesh in expertise development. "I want to contribute to the welfare of Bangladesh as successful diplomat Anwar Choudhury is doing for Bangladesh," he said.

Asif Ahmed, director, Asia International Group of UK Trade and Investment, said that the number of Bangladeshis in government services is increasing, and that there were some areas where the number of Bangladeshis was higher than other ethnic minority communities in UK. There is good representation of Bangladeshis in local government level.

A Bangladesh-born Baroness, Pola Manzila Uddin, is one of the prominent individuals who has made it to the top. Member of the House of Lords of Britain, Pola Manzila Uddin severely criticizes dragging politics of Bangladesh to Britain. "Involving in BNP-Awami League politics in a foreign land is dangerous," she said, and suggested that more British-Bangladeshis should join the mainstream political parties in Britain.

Pola Manzila said that the Labour Party, which is now in power, should nominate British-Bangladeshis in the constituencies of the Bangladeshi-dominated East London. "Bangladeshis also should forget all divisions and vote for the British-Bangladeshis for their victory."

Lutfur Ali, one of the top executives of a management company in the UK, however regretted that some of the third and fourth generation British-Bangladeshis are getting involved in crime as a consequence of drug addiction. "The number of addicts is not that high, but there are many reasons for us to be anxious about them," he said. Lutfur Ali, whose father migrated to the UK in 1935 from Balaganj of Sylhet, said he is now trying to get nomination from the Labour Party.

The British-Bangladeshis said that the children of the third generation are now more educated and getting into better and mainstream jobs and engaging themselves in the policy-making institutions. The economic base of the British-Bangladeshis, however, is still restaurant business. Most of the 5 lakh British-Bangladeshis are involved in it, and are earning Tk 52,000 crore every year.

Bangladesh High Commission counselor in London, Saida Muna Tasneem, said the high commission keeps on hunting for them: "We have developed some network of young enterprising British-Bangladeshi third generation because they are probably



our best asset to invest in and attract them to visit Bangladesh and engage them to promote Bangladesh's image."

Learning English

There has been an influx of Bangladeshi children and youths in school and colleges. Besides, the British-Bangladeshi community people have started learning English as the British government has recently announced that job-seekers who cannot speak English and refuse to take up classes could face sanctions such as having their unemployment benefits cut.

New guidance about signing on from April could force those with poor language skills -- a problem which affects about 40,000 claimants, according to the government -- to take lessons. The move is part of a range of measures aimed at tackling unemployment and poverty levels among ethnic minorities. Jim Murphy, the welfare minister, said it was unacceptable that unemployment rates and earning rates among British ethnic minorities were worse than those for white claimants, while half of children from Pakistani and Bangladeshi families in the UK live in poverty.

According to the UK Foreign Ministry officials, the government wants greater take up among the unemployed of a £14m training scheme for those on the dole to help with language skills. The £4.5m currently spent on in-house translators within job centres could be better spent on educating individuals to speak better English.



Rezaul Karim *is Chief Reporter and Diplomatic Correspondent of The Daily Star.*