

INTERNATIONAL MIGRATION DAY

Streamlining the migration sector

The following steps need to be taken: setting-up of a high powered authority which will coordinate and oversee the migration sector, exploring new job markets, skill training (technical, vocational and language), preventing and penalising exploitation of migrants, raising awareness of the potential migrants and the public, and training manpower to manage the sector.

UTTAM KUMAR DAS

LET me start with referring to a recent press report: the crooked labour suppliers in Libya in connivance with their "fellow brothers" in Bangladesh have been cheating and trading on the unskilled Bangladeshi job seekers and those going there on tourist visas. This may have a negative impact on the potential labour export to Libya (The Daily Star, December 12), which has a reported demand for nearly one million migrant workers. The same thing happened in Malaysia, which brought a halt to labour export to that country.

This has been going on for a long time in the labour migration sector, and needs immediate attention of the authorities concerned. However, who will ring the bell and when? Labour migration is a major foreign exchange earning sector. However, the exploitation of the migrants and reported mismanagement may bring a halt to it. The country received remittance worth \$9.6 billion in 2008-2009 fiscal year.

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migrants and the public, and training manpower to manage the sector.

In 2007, the Ministry of Expatriates' Welfare and Overseas Employment (MOEWOE) drafted a 9-point strategy paper. During 2008, the International Organisation for Migration (IOM) undertook five studies to review the overall labour migration sector of Bangladesh. All those ready materials need to be taken into consideration for further action.

It is evident that there is lack of coordination among the related ministries and departments in managing and regulating the migration sector. It is not a concern of the MOEWOE and Ministry of Home Affairs only. As The Daily Star rightly commented in an editorial on December 12: "It is reflective of the lack of coordination between the Bangladeshi missions abroad, the government ministry concerned and the agencies looking after the recruitment of these workers. It seems the government's earlier plan of employing professionals at the foreign missions to handle problems of this nature is yet to take effect."

The migration sector also involves the Ministry of Home Affairs, Ministry of Labour, Ministry of Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs, Ministry of Youth, Ministry of Civil Aviation, Ministry of Women and Children Affairs, Attorney General's Office, National Human Rights

Commission etc., apart from international organisations and NGOs. A high-powered authority with a broad mandate and jurisdiction needs to be set up to coordinate their activities.

Exploration of overseas job markets is not a one-time or ad hoc activity. It is a continuous, labour and expertise intensive and innovative process.

Recently, a senior Mexican government official (whom I talked with) mentioned that Mexico, which is the top country of origin of migrant workers and immigrant population, was considering not sending any migrant workers to US in 10 years. This may be good news for Bangladesh if the opportunity is utilised effectively.

So, given this development, there may be a huge job opportunity for Bangladeshis in US. But who will evaluate the potential job market and set and implement the strategy?

Given the importance and contribution of the migration sector, there is a dire need of a permanent research center which will have personnel with expertise on economic, financial, geographical, historical, legal, human rights, diplomatic, security, strategic aspects of migration. Professionalism, independence, innovation, and service should be its main motto.

For meeting the challenge of climate change and rise of the sea level, Bangladesh should look into the possibility of emigration of skilled and professional individuals, rather than concentrating on labour migration. Only speeches by will not work; there has to be tangible actions. For this, we need to look into how Mexico, China or India is sending emigrants in various categories, i.e. students, professionals, and workers.

Again, there is no alternative but to enhance skills (vocational and language) of the potential immigrants. From my experience in the migration area, I have seen that for an overseas job traditional academic qualification or degree has no value (i.e. graduates or post-graduates in general lines), however, engineering, medicine, nursing and other technical professions are exceptions. The employers consider how the skilled is the individual in term of his/her related trade (and language for certain jobs). For example, if someone is going to work as a plumber, electrician or carpenter, there is no need of any degree; what is required is training and competency of a standard level.

It is found from studies that the possibility of exploitation, whether in the migration process or in the country of destination, is comparatively higher for the low-skilled or unskilled individuals.

There has been a lot of talk about amendment of the 1982 Emigration Ordinance, which is considered to be out of date with regard to the complexities in the labour migration sector. Though it was supplemented by four Rules in 2002, there is a need to modify it.

Also, the reported trafficking of women and sexual exploitation (and smuggling and trafficking of adult males) in the name of labour migration need serious attention. Though Section (5) of the existing Nari O Shishu Nirjatan Daman Ain is applicable in the case of trafficking of women and girls, the Emigration Ordinance needs to make a reference in this regard to have full effect.

The government should also positively consider ratification of the 1990 UN Convention on the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families. There is a misconception that the Convention will impose additional obligation for the state. As a researcher, I have seriously reviewed that aspect and found that there is nothing more than what an migrant worker entitled to have as fundamental rights (as a citizen of Bangladesh) as guaranteed by the Constitution.

Bangladesh also needs to consider



Heading towards uncertain future.

extradition treaties to bring back and punish alleged smugglers and traffickers of migrants, and those who are involved in illegal activities overseas.

There is a need for raising awareness on migration issues. Alongside the ongoing information dissemination in public and private sectors, related issues should be included in the curriculum at school level.

There is need of a trained and skilled pool of manpower to manage the migration sector. It should include government officials, members of law enforcement officials, lawyers, judges, academics, and rights activists with proper knowledge and expertise on migration issues.

Migration topics could be taught at the courses of the Bangladesh Public Service Training Center, Bangladesh Civil Service Academy, Bangladesh Institute of Administration and Management, Bangladesh Bar Council, Judicial

Administration and Training Institute, and other related training centres.

Some policy makers and senior government officials are apparently comfortable with the increased number of migrants and remittance flows. They hardly bother about improving the skill and quality of the individuals who are going overseas, or taking measures so that those individuals are not forced to risk their lives.

It is a constitutional obligation for the state and its organs to ensure safety and security of the citizens even if they are overseas. Any omission in this regard amounts to violation of a citizen's fundamental rights.

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Investing in share market as a corporate financial strategy

Implementation of this strategy by the corporate world would create jobs, increasing financial activities in the system and contributing directly to the national economy, i.e., Gross Domestic Product (GDP).

SAYED JAVED AHMAD

I would not recommend it if I were still in the United States. But in Bangladesh, the scenario is different. The stock market here is usually bullish. However, it is a bear market now, which is a healthy sign.

The market is called a bull market when the share prices are going upward, and it is called a bear market when the opposite happens. A bull market is a buyer's market and the bear market is a seller's market. After all, the stock market is all about buying and selling of shares or securities!

Our stock market is relatively small and purely domestic in nature. Although we have two stock exchanges, the number of listed companies is small and the number of investors is still quite low. Probably that is why our market has not been affected by the global economic turmoil.

In industrialised nations, the stock market is seen as a viable financial mechanism where serious investments are

made. Many business enterprises invest part of their capital in the stock market to realise a handsome profit that contributes to their financial decisions and planning.

Before coming to CDBL I worked at some private companies where I often recommended the managing directors to consider the matter and invest some of the business capital in the stock market for long-term gain. Unfortunately, most of them did not take the matter seriously, partly of lack of "extra" capital to invest. Most companies hanker after money on a daily basis to meet their overheads and operating expenses. Some CEOs and MDs of these companies do have their personal stock portfolio, but not for their company.

Working in a private company is not like working in a government organisation where the salary gets deposited at the end of the month. Jobs in a private company entail working round the clock six days a week, and the management and employees earn their salaries through



Mutual investing.

running after clients to collect unpaid bills. Very few private companies enjoy a regular flow of income without going through a collection hassle every month.

A company that wants to take advantage of the stock market as an investment strategy should establish a department to explore the share market investment strategies. Since it is a full time commitment and requires considerable investi-

gation and research on the financial market and companies in question, a dedicated team for the job would be required. There are some companies that are taking advantage of this investment strategy, but they are few in number.

A company could enter the market with any amount. Part of the team could focus on the long-term investment strategies and the other part could focus on

short-term gains. Hedge funds and mutual funds could be used to develop an investment portfolio for the company as part of investment risk management.

Fund disbursement and transactions could be monitored by the accounts department of the company for financial control.

If the funds are managed properly, then the income should bring in the money to cover the costs of running such a department. Moreover, the department could contribute to the company's overall financial planning and goals as well.

We need to keep in mind that it is not "all profits" in the share market. There are always ups and downs in the market, influenced by regulators, corporate and political decisions, which at times might result in a stagnant situation and it may take a long time to recover an investment. For instance, when I first entered the market, I almost doubled my money in just a month buying just one share. But in my next transaction, I had to wait a long time just to recover my investments, never mind profits.

These situations should always be taken into consideration before entering the market for financial strategies. It might so happen that the company is in dire need of funds and some funds that could have been used are stuck in the share market, and immediate recovery by selling off the held stock would result in

loss of capital. Implementation of this strategy by the corporate world would create jobs, increasing financial activities in the system and contributing directly to the national economy, i.e., Gross Domestic Product (GDP).

It is a constitutional mandate for the government to create jobs for the citizens, and this strategy would contribute to that need for development as a part of the national agenda.

There are some tax advantages in investing in the stock market. Interested companies should consult their respective tax lawyers on this matter to develop a tax shelter strategy for the company.

The corporate world could look into negotiating with the government to increase such advantages for economic and corporate growth. Mutually beneficial incentives between the private and public sectors must co-exist for national economic growth. Some common grounds need to be determined in mutual cooperation through advocacy of Dhaka Chamber of Commerce & Industry (DCCI), Metropolitan Chamber of Commerce and Industry (MCCI), Federation of Bangladesh Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FBCCI) and other similar organisations and interest groups.

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Combat in the court room



of this to do with them?

The parents, who believe only in arranged marriages, sent the happy couple threats of violence. The scared young couple asked judges at the Punjab and Haryana High Court Complex for legal protection and a hearing was scheduled for this purpose.

But on the day itself, new husband Kunal Mahajan was horrified to see his mother-in-law turn up at the courthouse and demand to speak to her daughter Monica. Lawyer Sanjeev Sharma bravely placed himself between the couple and the woman. Courtroom disputes were solved through talk, not fighting, he explained.

The infuriated mother-in-law whipped off her sandals and used them to beat up the lawyer. Family members piled in, giving the attorney and the couple a good thrashing. Other lawyers saw what was happening, and intervened. They were also beaten up.

The battle escalated. Soon, a posse of angry members of the legal profession was calling for blood. Court

guards herded the family members into a security room for their safety. But the mob of frothing lawyers tried to smash the wall down. (I'm not sure what happened to the notion that courtroom disputes were solved through talk.) Then the media arrived and started filming. Fists flew, cameras were damaged, and they also joined the fight.

Eventually, a group of international border guards, the Indo-Tibet border battalion, were summoned. If they could keep a billion people in China and a billion people in India separate, they might just have a chance of keeping these fighters apart, judges hoped.

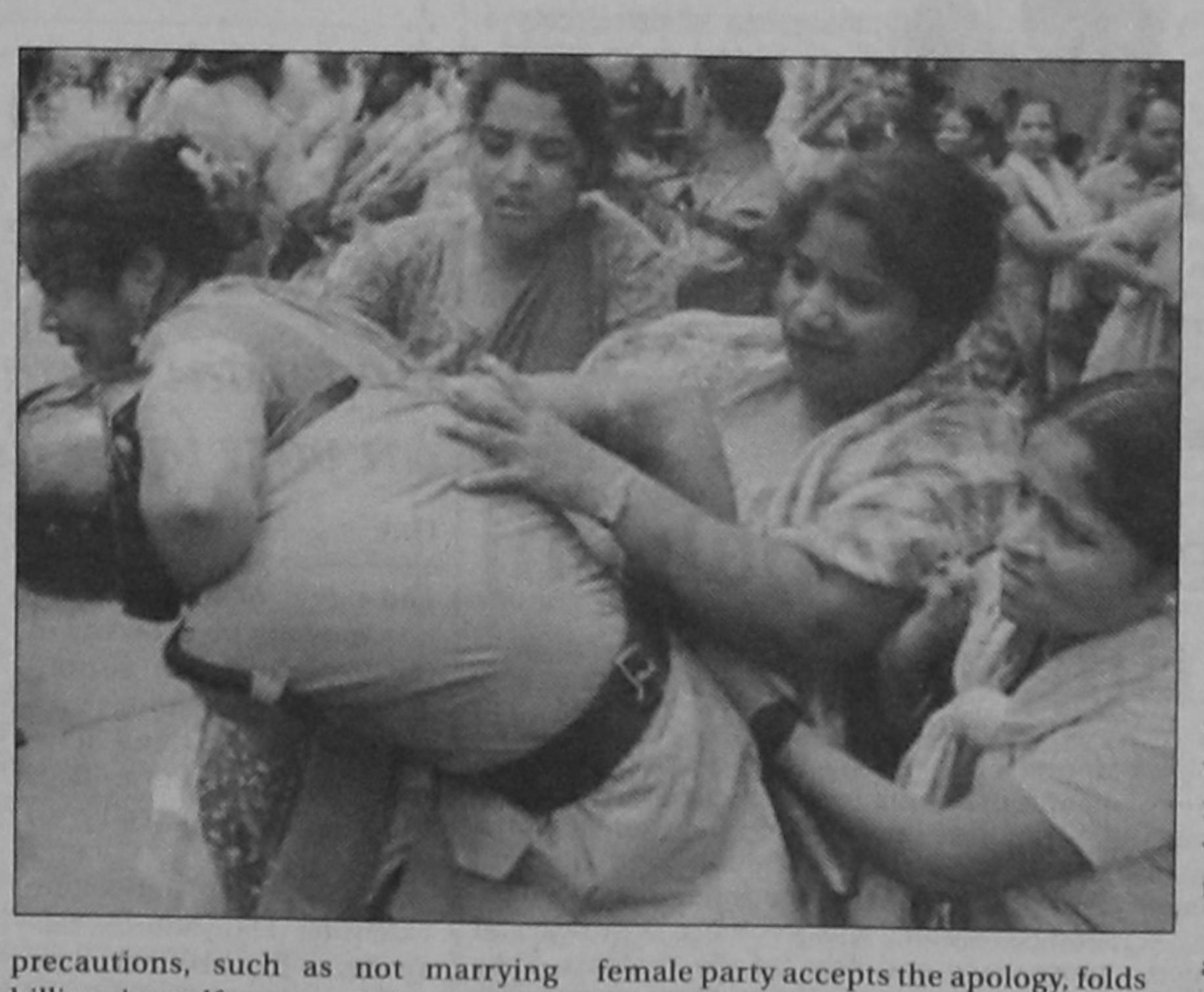
If the fight continues to grow at its current rate, it will involve every person on earth by the end of December and every sentient being in the universe by January 5.

I could see why Priti had been put off the idea of marriage.

"Do all marriages involve so much fighting?" she asked.

I replied: "Certainly not. Some have more."

But I told her that if she took certain



precautions, such as not marrying billionaire golfers, married life wasn't that bad.

Marital disputes can be easily solved by making compromises, I explained.

The male party apologises and the

female party accepts the apology, folds her arms and looks smug. (This works for me every time.)

success rate of arranged marriages is probably conditioned by the culture in which they take place. If bride, groom, family and the rest of the society accept an arranged marriage as the norm, then everyone will work towards the success of the marriage. When people with such a culture move to a "free choice" country and let their children grow up there, but insist on marrying away their children at their discretion, it doesn't really work. The children have seen everyone around them finding their own partners and want the same."

Priti decided that her best bet was to marry a Western guy, since they were relatively independent of their families. The conversation ended when she announced she was thinking of moving to the UK.

Shortly afterwards, she called back and told me she had discovered a statistic about British men that horrified her. More on this topic later.

To uncover more on Priti's horrific discovery for some of you hopefuls, visit our columnist at www.vittachi.com