

## Continuing attacks on Hindus

Bring the criminals to justice

THERE is clearly no sign that attacks on the Hindu community have come to a stop or that adequate measures have been taken to provide it with security. As our front-page report yesterday has shown, seven homes belonging to Hindus were torched in Satkania on Thursday. On the same day, in Netrokona, four idols in a Hindu temple were subjected to desecration. Our question, which we believe is also that of the nation as a whole, is simple: how much longer must our Hindu citizens be victimized before we as a society call a halt to such criminal acts?

We have said earlier and we say it again that it is the solemn duty of the government to come to the aid of the minority community and ensure that its members feel safe enough to go about their normal business. Alongside this assertion of conviction, we believe that unless measures are taken speedily to bring the perpetrators of these crimes to justice, our reputation for communal harmony will be tainted. Such criminality does not go with our socio-cultural ethos.

It is time for platitudes to be cast aside and for real action to take over. While citizens on the whole must rise and resist this menace of communalism perpetrated by a few, it remains, now and always, the business of the powers that be to govern to the satisfaction of all classes of citizens. That governance must begin through ensuring the safety of the minority community.

## Expatriates' fate hangs in balance?

Get a move on the MRP issue

WE are perplexed as to why on earth the authorities are taking their sweet time in issuing machine readable passports (MRPs) for estimated 5million expatriate workers in waiting. These workers could face the axe without MRPs since host countries could very well reject them after November 24. The snail's pace involved in the induction of MRPs speaks volumes about the efficiency of relevant authorities. Having taken nearly four years to issue 6million passports, we think if 5million passports are to be issued in less than two years, they have to work on a double quick basis.

The issue of MRPs is a long drawn one. Traditional labour receiving markets in the Middle East have repeatedly asked Bangladesh to provide its workers with proper passports. But these requests have not been taken with the seriousness these deserved. With all the confusion running rampant about making MRPs fool-proof and foot dragging on which body needs clearance from whom, precious time has been lost. There is hardly any need to reemphasise the importance of remittances in the national economy. The billions of dollars earned are directly injected into the rural economy and it is a lifeline for tens of millions of people in Bangladesh – money that is essential for survival and expanding the economy; a fact that seems to have eluded policymakers, unfortunately.

## A glance at remittances

FAARIA TASIN

REMITTANCE has been one of the key contributors to foreign exchange reserve in the country. Remittances have depicted a familiar trend where the numbers continued to climb year after year. According to Bangladesh Bank data, total remittance was US\$1.88 in FY01; it increased approximately 8 times to US\$14.46 billion in FY13 - implying that remittances have leapt at an average annual growth rate of 18.5 percent in 12 years. Will FY14 be able to maintain the glory or is this all about to change? Let us take a quick look.

In the first half of FY14 (July to December 2013), total remittance was US\$ 6.78 billion. This was 8.4 percent lower than remittances in the same period in FY13. This is an unpleasant change as growths in remittances in the first half of fiscal years have always been positive in recent history.

The most common explanation for a decline in remittance remains that the total number of migrants going abroad is not growing like preceding years. For instance, in 2013 the total number of migrants going for overseas jobs was 441,301. This was a 36 percent decline compared to the numbers in 2012, which were 691,402. The government has been unable to resolve the problems related to the legal status of Bangladeshi migrant workers Saudi Arabia, UAE and Kuwait. As a result of which less migrants are now going abroad and more are coming back to the country, leading to a decline in remittances.

Another reason due to a fall in remittance could be the appreciation of taka against the US dollar in 2013. When taka appreciates, this means that less taka is now obtained against dollar conversions. Conversely, when taka is devalued, remittances can increase as more taka is attained against converting a dollar. Appreciation can actually increase the taka prices of assets in the country, to a migrant worker. Higher taka prices of assets can discourage each worker to send in more remittances, as a result of which remittances fall. Recede in remittance can also be due to a fall in wages of workers who are residing illegally in GCC countries.

Since remittance is an important contributor to Gross National Income (GNI), it is necessary to try to find ways to overcome the barriers and increase it. One way is through higher education and training of workers. Though the benefits of higher education and training can entail a time lag, the advantage in the long-run is substantial.

SUNDAY  
POUCHASHFAQUR  
RAHMAN