

## Capital flight triples in a year

Develop systems to curb this trend

THE Global Financial Integrity (GFI) in its latest study has found that capital flight from Bangladesh has tripled in the last year from US\$1.78 billion up from \$593 million a year ago. The country ranked 4th in South Asia and shows a disturbing trend which indicates that there is little confidence in the political stability of the country. The flight of such large sums of monies is also an indicator of how little control policymakers have over the transfer of such huge amounts over illegal means. Hundi remains the choice for transferring ill gotten gains, either through corruption or proceeds for criminal activities. Recent reports in the press have attributed Bangladeshis as one of the biggest groups who have settled for "2nd homes" in Malaysia.

The under-invoicing of both imports and exports has become a near-permanent facet in our trade. The aim of such malpractice is to keep foreign exchange abroad. This happens primarily because there is a general lack of confidence on how safe it is to keep money in the country given the fluidity of our political scenario. What has become abundantly clear is that there is a correlation between political stability and the illegal outflow of money. This unaccounted for transfer of money is a big blow for the economy as it means lost investments and revenue income for the government. According to GFI, developing countries like Bangladesh would have to invest \$300 million to curtail "mis-invoicing". Given the outflow of billions, this would be money worth spent.

## Carnage in Peshawar school

World must unite to defeat the evil force

WE have no words to express our shock and horror at the carnage perpetrated by jihadist militants against schoolchildren at a military-run public school in Peshawar of Pakistan on Tuesday. We condemn in the strongest possible terms the dastardly attack on a school causing death of some 132 children and nine staff members including teacher. Our heartfelt sympathies to the bereaved families.

By claiming responsibility for the monstrosity enacted, the Pakistani Taliban have once again exposed their evil face. Those who can indiscriminately shoot at children from pointblank range are the worst scum of the earth and cannot claim to have faith in any religion whatsoever, let alone Islam.

The entire humanity shudders at the enormity of the savagery of the Pakistani insurgents perpetrated at the school. Even Afghan Taliban, who are no less brutal in their methods of exterminating military as well as civilian targets, could not support their Pakistani counterpart's action and have condemned the school carnage as un-Islamic.

But why have the Pakistani Taliban descended so low as to shoot and kill school kids? And what do they want to achieve through such vile methods? Killing children cannot be a way to seek retribution, as they have claimed, for Pakistani military's action in their home turf in the Northwestern frontier region of the country. Such abominable acts can only be characterised as cowardice of the despicable kind.

The world community, especially the Muslims, must

## DMCH missed a golden chance

A.B.M. NURUL ISLAM

TDS (Dec. 6, 2014) reported the case of an unknown woman, who literally came back from the dead three hours after being declared "dead" by a DMCH doctor on December 4. The patient, with no one to care for her, then struggled to survive and died a second (?) and final time 26 hours later. The fact that the attending doctor had not done an ECG test but relied on "no heartbeat, physical movement and blood pressure" is of little significance to me. It is an apparent attempt to find a scapegoat. To me, it is more important to know what DMCH did or failed to do after the so-called dead patient showed signs of life.

I asked an associate professor of BSMMU whether it is a standard procedure at public hospitals of Bangladesh to carry out ECG test to confirm the death of a patient. Her answer was in the negative. She stated that pupils become dilated and fixed after death and is a more practical and simple method to confirm death.

"She did not receive any lab test because of her not having an attendant who usually arranges a test." What a pitiable statement to make on behalf of DMCH. It lays bare the pathetic condition at DMCH for collection of samples and dispatching these to the lab.

"We suggested some tests on her on that night," said the doctors of the ward. Brilliant. End of their duty. Is there something called Hippocratic oath to serve the sick ("I will apply, for the benefit of the sick, all measures [that] are required, .....")?

As expected, DMCH authorities formed a 4-member committee to investigate the incident and report within three working days. I was waiting with bated breath to know their findings. But as is common in Bangladesh, the next accident (Sundarban oil spill) is now hogging the headlines and the DMCH incident has fallen off the media radar.

To my understanding, what was missing in the DMCH case was a lack of scientific inquisitiveness, a lack of compassion, a lack of urgency to see that things do not go from bad to worse. What a wonderful story it would have been for the DMCH if the patient had survived.

I doubt whether DMCH has an emergency fund or emergency insurance to cover the costs of looking after the poor.

I hope that a thorough investigation will be made and actions taken so that DMCH and similar public health care providers do not in future miss an opportunity to show that they do care for their patients, particularly the poor.

The writer is a former BAEC and IAEEA official.

# Extremism, Pakistan and the missing counter narrative

STRATEGICALLY SPEAKING



Brig Gen SHAHEDUL ANAM KHAN ndc, psc (Retd)

Taliban Pakistan (TTP) has claimed responsibility for the attack as a response to the Pakistani military's offensive in northeastern Pakistan's tribal areas.

The situation admits of no equivocation in the condemnation of the Peshawar killings, and all those Muslims who stand against the pollution of Islam by the Islamic radicals must not only join voices but also join ranks to defeat the evil phenomenon.

And even those who empathise with these groups, if only because of their anti-West stance, must reconsider their position. Silence would be an acquiescence of the TTP killings. We must also remember that distance does not lend protection from such a phenomenon, and the purveyors of radicalism and extremism have their tentacles outside their borders that are ready to replicate their cohorts on the most flimsy of excuses. We as a country, where such a phenomenon is more than incipient, and the other countries of the region, must be on guard.

To ask why of the radicals is futile like reading the Scripture to the Devil. This was a retributive action and, for the TTP or for that matter any other radical or terrorist group, soft targets are the best option to drive home their message. The TTP has carried out their threats they had made in response to the ground offensives against them by the Pakistan army. The TTP, motivated by a convoluted understanding of the religion, feel no qualms in perpetrating the most horrid acts of violence. But this attack may have nothing to do with religion per se, being a so-called revenge attack. But which religion sanctions such brutality? That the students were indirectly linked with the military establishment was reason enough to be made targets of the radicals.

It is perhaps the most severe jolt that the TTP has delivered to Pakistan, and if this does not galvanise the nation

DECEMBER 16, 2014 is a sad day for Pakistan. But it is also a day of infamy for those who use Islam to justify evil actions, and a day of disgrace for those Muslims who choose to remain silent in the face of such barbarity.

The killing of 146 students in a school in Peshawar run by the Pakistan Army is one of the most brutal and senseless massacres of innocent people in the hands of Muslim radicals. The Tehrik-e-

**Pakistan must also come to grips with a very hard reality. Its policies over the three decades, starting from the Russian occupation of Afghanistan, have spawned religious extremism. Its use of these elements as proxy against India had given the extremists legitimacy within the country.**

to a concerted action against all the radical forces that have been eating at the very core of Pakistan as a nation, then nothing will. But before Pakistan as a state reacts, it would be necessary for its society to become alive and conscious of the forces within that have nurtured these radicals.

However, it would be misplaced to think that the phenomenon that is riding on the shoulders of Pakistan is Pakistan's problem alone. But that notwithstanding, it is in Pakistan where the countering of the problem must commence. And that must be pinned on a counter narrative of the Taliban propaganda and its philosophy that feeds on a distorted version of Islam. However, talking to Pakistani experts and scholars on the issue one gets the impression that Pakistan is yet to formulate an appropriate narrative against the religious radicals. This is quite surprising since it is Pakistan that has been the worst sufferer of extremism and radicalism in the region. Pakistan's policy in combating extremism has been more tactical rather than longer term. The reliance has been more on hard options, where counting dead bodies of extremists was given priority rather than countering their propaganda.

Pakistan must also come to grips with a very hard reality. Its policies over the three decades, starting from the Russian occupation of Afghanistan, have spawned religious extremism. Its use of these elements as proxy against India had given the extremists legitimacy within the country. Some of them are now are biting the hands that fed them.

It must also decide how to tackle the radical sympathisers within the Pak establishment, particularly within the Army, the putative guardian of the state. The following sums up the dichotomy. "A Pakistani Army under the burden of its own Islamism and contradictions always had a confused approach to dealing with the radical Islamists. It wanted to put them down for their disruptive capabilities yet, it also had a nagging acceptance of their jihadist agenda due to Deobandi / Salafi orientation of a very large segment of its own rank and file, its jihadist approach to warfare and self-created perceptions of perpetual hostility with India" (IDSA Issue Brief June 2013)

If pro-radical psyche cannot be purged from the establishment it will be difficult for Pakistan to formulate a long-term strategy to counter extremism, let alone implement it successfully. The consequence of that is only too clear.

The writer is Editor, Oped and Defence & Strategic Affairs, The Daily Star.

## Plight of our migrant workers

BELAL HOSSAIN BIPOB

WHAT does this year's International Migrants Day signify for around one crore Bangladeshi migrant community abroad? In many ways 2014 has not been a blessing for them.

We have witnessed some horrible and callous migrants' rights violations in recent times -- rise in unnatural deaths of migrants, and cheating and beating of migrants in the destination countries. But the most grisly incidents are those involving trafficking and smuggling of thousands of Bangladeshi migrant jobseekers through the Bay of Bengal under false promises of providing jobs either in Malaysia or Thailand.

An estimated 53,000 people from Bangladesh and Myanmar have voyaged to Malaysia and Thailand through the sea this year, says a new report by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). About 21,000 Rohingyas and Bangladeshis have made these voyages since October this year, a 37% increase over the same period last year. About 10% of them are believed to be women.

In all, some 120,000 people are believed to have embarked on these voyages through the Bay of Bengal since the beginning of 2012. While the majority of people paid smugglers for the journey, there were those who said they were forced into making the voyages, sometimes at gunpoint, in Myanmar and Bangladesh.

An estimated 540 people have reportedly died at sea this year from beatings, starvation or dehydration, and their bodies were thrown overboard, the report mentions.

People who asked for more food or tried to use the toilet out of turn were beaten by the armed crew on the deck above. So, this is the grim reality behind the contributions of our migrants to our economy -- around \$ 14 billion a year.

They toil hard in foreign lands and remit their hard-earned money to the country. Do they really enjoy the expected services from their own government or their host governments in exchange of their hard labour?

The answer is that neither their own government nor the receiving government cares about their rights.

The migrants are 'profitable' for everybody -- recruiting agents/brokers, government at home and the employers abroad. It is well established that recruiting agents cheat and exploit the migrants in the name of sending them abroad, charging huge, irrational amounts as fees. Migrants who leave their families and country to change their fortunes face exploitation, discrimination and hatred from the beginning to the end of their migration period.

Every month, the incidents of the violation of rights of the Bangladeshi migrants are published in media. In many cases, it has been seen that the concerned Bangladeshi mission officials remain in darkness about their nationals' miseries.

It is true that the incumbent government has been trying to take some measures to protect the migrants at home and abroad. For instance, it is putting emphasis on reducing the migration costs and exploitation by private agencies and trying to include its participation in the direct migration process.

But there are controversies also over the government's initiatives. For example, the governments of Bangladesh and Malaysia signed a memorandum of understanding in 2012 to ensure smooth migration of workers to the Southeast Asian countries by curbing the involvement of private recruiters. It was expected that the migrant jobseekers would benefit from the system. Yes, the migration costs have come down from Tk. 2-2.5 lakh charged by the private agencies on average to less than Tk. 50,000. But the process can benefit only a handful of Bangladeshi jobseekers. Only some 8,000 migrants found jobs in Malaysia since April 2013 to November this year, according to the Bangladesh High Commission in Kuala Lumpur. On the contrary, we can see the rush of thousands of jobseekers through the Bay illegally in recent years.

Our expatriates' welfare and overseas employment minis-

try alleges that some private recruiters and their agents in Malaysia are trying to wreck the government's good initiative. Migration experts say the government needs to include the private recruiters in its process to send workers under effective and underpinning terms and conditions.

More than 90% Bangladeshis work in Middle Eastern countries. So, the incidents of cheating, exploitation and discrimination of our workers are higher there. Almost every day, some Bangladeshi male or female migrant are subjected to harassments in their workplaces by their employers, their employers' agents or the law enforcers.

Refugee and Migratory Movements Research Unit, (RMMRU), a reputed organisation working for the Bangladeshi migrants, states it has found that Bangladeshi labour attachés are not very efficient and sincere in dealing with the problems of the Bangladeshi migrants.

This year, migration of Bangladeshi women has exceeded all past records in numbers. But the rising number of unexpected abuses against our sisters working abroad definitely worries us. They become victims of abuse -- sexual and physical -- by their agents or employers.



Our labour attachés or mission officials respond in cases of emergency assistance sought by our migrants, but the response (or lack thereof) in most cases is still not satisfactory. The expatriates' welfare ministry is trying to appoint sufficient officials to the labour wings abroad, which, one hopes, can reduce the extent of pressure of serving around one crore migrants.

Besides, we are gradually losing potential labour markets for many reasons, for which the private recruiters, our existing migrants and our government are also responsible. This year, the total number of migrants may be 4,00,000 at the end of this month.

There are some imminent challenges for our government to protect migrants from exploitation and cheating as well as to ensure sufficient jobs for thousands of unemployed jobseekers. Finally, it is of utmost importance that we raise our collective voices to protect our people from all types of exploitation. If we can do that soon, we believe our migrants can enjoy their expected rights and we can finally "celebrate" International Migrant's Day.

The writer is a reporter, The Daily Star.

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

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### Save disaster-stricken Sundarbans

A tanker carrying 3.58 lakh litres of furnace oil sank in a Sundarbans river on December 9, 2014 spilling the oil over a vast area. It caused unimaginable damage to the world's largest mangrove forest. The hearts of sixteen crore people of Bangladesh also sank with it because Sundarbans is their priceless heritage. Now the mangrove forest is in grave danger. Creatures living in the water and on the shore have started to die; trees are withering away; people living in that area are in great hardship as their earnings have suffered a great blow.



PHOTO: STAR

If that route had not been used for vessel movement, this sort of incident would not have happened and Sundarbans would have remained safe. Vessel movement must be stopped immediately through the Sundarbans' rivers. We are appalled by the fact that shipping minister Shajahan Khan has rejected the environment ministry's repeated pleas for imposing a permanent ban on plying of commercial vessels through Shela river in Sundarbans.

Whatever is needed to save the heritage site must be done without any delay.

Nur Jahan Chittagong

### "Human Rights or Human 'Farce' Day"

Thanks to Mahfuz Anam for his article on human rights published on 12.12.2014. He is always special with his insightful writing which penetrates deep into the core issue. The writing under review chimes in with the reality of the time. The sorry state of our human rights situation is due largely to the impunity of members of some law-enforcement agencies are enjoying despite their dubious role in the cases of enforced disappearance and numerous instances of extra-judicial killing.

The main pillar of our democracy represented by 'caretaker system' and 'referendum' has been knocked down under a false pretence of purest form of the Westminster democracy. The judiciary, the last line of people's defense against tyranny has also been conspiratorially taken control of. Days of free media are feared to be numbered! Who to get justice from and what to fall back upon? There is nothing more to know what type of elections will continue to be held under the total control of the ruling party. The election will follow election, but the days of our disenfranchisement and enslavement will never end. The PM will go all out to defend her position indefinitely. Does it make any sense, expecting human rights and justice in a situation where the government itself adopts terror tactic to scare off and stop people clamoring for democracy and human rights?

Yusuf Azad Chief Evaluation Officer (Retd.) Education Board, Rajshahi

### Is this judicial independence?

This refers to the report, "Sisi sees new future for Egypt after Mubarak verdict" (Dec.2). One may or may not welcome the court's decision. But what is surprising is that some people protested against the verdict on the streets. The Arab revolution is all but dead. In the US, protests erupted as people thought justice was not done as the police officers involved in the killing of Michael Brown and Eric Garner were not indicted by the grand jury. One chief justice of the US has said that judicial independence is public property. However, such protests need to be peaceful. Time will say whether Egypt can regain its past glory.

Deendayal M. Lulla On e-mail

### Comments on news report, "Labour leader, not minister," published on December 14, 2014

Anonymous

Wondering if PM Sheikh Hasina even reads the newspapers. She must be really desperate to keep a politician like Shajahan in her cabinet. How can he be a labour leader and shipping minister at the same time? He should be facing multiple life sentences for killing thousands of citizens with his corrupt appointments and decisions.

S. M. Iftekhar Ahmed

Another example of the fact that in politics only money matters.

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### "Cold, killing design" (Dec. 14, 2014)

Mortuza Huq

We need to put the real culprits on trial if we really want to show respect to our martyrs.