

Steps needed

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measures need to be taken against them so that this illegal migration comes to an end."

She expressed her concern as hundreds of Rohingyas and some Bangladeshis have landed in overcrowded boats on the shores of various Southeast Asian countries. Human smugglers have abandoned the boats bound for Thailand and Malaysia because of crackdowns by the authorities.

Referring to growing illegal migration through sea routes, the prime minister said these people have no idea where they are actually heading for. "Now their bodies are being found in forests," she bemoaned.

The prime minister said the labour and employment ministry should take an initiative for publishing the negative sides of such illegal migration.

There was no need to go illegally by giving money to the middlemen and ultimately get trapped, she added.

Describing the various steps taken by her government for the welfare of migrants and expatriates, she said it was sad that some people were taking on an uncertain journey. "Why are they going? It's not right to say all are doing this because of poverty ... it seems they're chasing the golden deer, they think there is huge money abroad ... this is a sort of mental sickness."

Hasina said these people could do something to earn their livelihood in the country with the money they give to the middlemen. "They could lead a comfortable life and get better jobs here."

The prime minister said that the government has been able to regularise the status of 6.5 lakh illegal Bangladeshi workers in Malaysia and over 8 lakh in Saudi Arabia through fruitful discussions with respective governments.

Bangladeshi

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have been murdered by the Indian force this month, according to The Daily Star reports.

The BSF men of Angraill camp opened fire on a group of cattle traders around 4:45am. Some seven to eight Bangladeshis, including Sayeed, were returning home along with cattle from India through the border.

Of them, Sayeed was hit by bullets and died on the spot, said Lt Col Abdur Rahim, commanding officer of 23 Border Guard Bangladesh Battalion.

Fellow Bangladeshis brought the body of Sayeed into Bangladeshi territory.

The BGB sent a letter to its Indian counterpart, protesting the incident. It also called for a flag meeting, the BGB official said.

On information, police recovered the body and sent it to Jessore Medical College Hospital morgue for an autopsy, said Apurba Hasan, officer-in-charge of Benapole port Police Station.

Rebel Poet's

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poet of Bangla literature, composed poems and songs that still serve as a perennial source of inspiration for people fighting for justice.

The 116th birth anniversary of National Poet Kazi Nazrul Islam will be celebrated today. We, however, inadvertently referred the date as May 24 in a back page item of The Daily Star yesterday. We sincerely regret the mistake.

The theme of this year's celebration is "Nazrul in Comilla", according to a press release by the cultural affairs ministry.

Although the day will begin with paying respect at the poet's mausoleum on the Dhaka University campus, Comilla would be the main venue of this year's commemoration, said the press statement.

Comilla has been fixed as the venue since the poet had a special connection with the district during his lifetime.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina will inaugurate the programme to be held at the town hall premises in Comilla at 4:00pm.

Nazrul Institute and Bangladesh Shilpakala Academy will hold separate cultural programmes in the capital. Nazrul Institute and Bangla Academy will also bring out memorabilia and posters on the occasion.

In Mymensingh's Trishal, the Kobi Nazrul University is organising a three-day-long programme on the occasion to be inaugurated by Dr Kamal Abdul Naser Chowdhury, senior secretary of public administration ministry.

Kamal will also inaugurate Institute of Nazrul Studies today. On the third day, the university will confer awards on Prof Mustafa Nurul Islam for his research on the poet and singer Fatema-tuz-Zohra for her contribution to Nazrul Sangeet.

Media and different cultural and social organisations will also celebrate the day through special programmes.

Bangladesh, China sign six deals

BSS, Dhaka

Bangladesh and China yesterday signed six instruments to further boost bilateral ties between the two countries at public and private sectors.

The instruments include three MoUs, two cooperation agreements and one exchange of notes in the fields of education, media and trade.

The instruments were signed following a meeting between Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and Chinese Vice-Premier Lio Yandong at Gonobhaban yesterday evening.

Hasina and Yandong witnessed the signing of the deals and instruments.

The MoU on Cooperation in Education between the ministries of education of the two countries was signed by Education Secretary of Bangladesh Nazrul Islam Khan and Chinese Education Minister Yuan Guiren.

The Ministry of Information of Bangladesh and the State Administration of Press, Publication of China signed an MoU for cooperation in the fields of radio, film and television. Information Secretary Mortuza Ahmed and Vice Minister of China Tong Gang signed the MoU.

Another MoU between the University of Dhaka and Beijing

Foreign Studies University was signed for cooperation in the areas of exchange of students, faculty, scholars and administrative staff, research collaboration and sharing of academic materials and information. Dhaka University Vice Chancellor Prof AAMS Arefin Siddique and President of BFSU Peng Long signed the MoU.

Southeast University of Bangladesh and Wuhan Textile University, China signed an agreement for Cooperation in joint undergraduate programme on textile engineering. Southeast University Vice Chancellor Prof Anwar Hossain and WTU Chancellor Wei Yiliang signed the agreement.

The other cooperation agreement was signed between BGMEA University of Fashion and Technology, Bangladesh and Wuhan Textile University, China for joint undergraduate programme on fashion design. Founder chairman of BGMEA University Muzaffar U Siddique and WTU Chancellor Wei Yiliang signed the instrument.

The lone exchange of notes between Bangladesh and China on container inspection equipment project was signed by ERD Senior Secretary Mohammad Mejbahuddin and Chinese Ambassador to Bangladesh Ma Mingqiang.

Rohingya issue stands

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issue of Rohingya with Myanmar."

Secretary General Anusit Kunakorn of the National Security Council in an interview with The Nation newspaper said the Rohingya issue was complicated because of this.

He touched different aspects of the crisis that have been dogging the region in the recent years.

The UN and the international community must share the burden of countries in Southeast Asia to help end the boatpeople crisis, rather than shifting blame on any particular country, he said.

Thailand is home to about 120,000 asylum-seekers from Myanmar. They have lived in camps along the border with Myanmar since the mid-80's.

Tens of thousands of asylum seekers have settled in third countries over the past decade, while Bangkok is engaging Nay Pyi Taw for a programme to repatriate those still in the border camps.

But the job is not easy, Anusit said. Thailand is only a transit country and "what we can do is provide food, water and other basic needs on a humanitarian basis for them," said Anusit.

According to a United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) estimate, over 25,000 migrants have taken boat journeys from Bangladesh and Myanmar to other Southeast Asian countries in recent times.

Malaysia and Indonesia announced last week they would give them shelter for one year before trying to repatriate them.

The UNHCR called on countries in the region to help save 3,500 migrants

believed to be still at sea. It is estimated that up to 2,000 people are still stranded on boats in the Bay of Bengal, and another 1,500 farther to the south in the Andaman Sea, the UN said on Saturday.

Thailand's military government has only said it would provide humanitarian assistance to the Rohingya and Bangladeshi migrants.

Thailand hopes to get a pathway to solve the problem when representatives of 17 countries and three international organisations gather in Bangkok on Friday.

"We will know how to handle this particular issue after the May 29 meeting, when the countries say how they will help," the security chief said.

Thailand has faced the problem of Rohingya migrants for a long time but the issue became a grave concern in early 2009 when the Navy towed their boats out to high seas. The issue flared again on May 1 after the remains of Rohingyas were found in a mass grave in Songkhla province near the southern border, an area criss-crossed with human-trafficking routes.

It is understood that the Thai government will not open any shelters for them, as it fears that the Rohingya issue will be like other cases in the past, with asylum seekers remaining in the country for years.

"Thailand is limited in its means as the country already hosts a significant number of refugees," Anusit said. "The crisis has occurred in the Bay of Bengal and requires international cooperation to address this issue."

Thai Prime Minister General Prayut Chan-o-cha has given a strict timeline of one month to deal with the issue.

CCTV footage yet

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in the past to understand movement of vehicles recorded on those cameras during the night-time.

Asked whether the cameras were functional on Thursday night, Iqbal Hossain, deputy commissioner of DMP's Uttara division, skirted a direct answer and said he would look into the matter.

Three days into the heinous gang-rape, police are yet to identify the microbus and the five rapists, let alone arrest them.

According to the victim's sister, the 21-year-old woman was dropped off in front of a footwear shop on Jasimuddin road around 11:30 Thursday night. She was forcibly bundled into the microbus from Kuril highway area around 9:30pm that night.

Police suspect that after picking the woman, the microbus used the Airport road to drive north and reach Uttara.

Locals in Uttara said a vehicle must come under the surveillance cameras, installed by the DMP, to reach Jasimuddin road from Kuril via the Airport road.

DC Lutful Kabir, however, claimed that cops were on the "right track" despite no visible development into the investigation.

"Hopefully we will be able to do something in a short while," he said.

The investigators have already collected footage from four cameras installed at the entrance of Jamuna Future Park, where the 21-year-old girl works as a sales representative. They scrutinised the footage of the last two to three days but found nothing significant, said DC Lutful.

Police are now scrutinising footage of the last two weeks recorded on those cameras that might take some time, he added.

According to police, the Jamuna Future Park footage might reveal the

identity of one of the rapists, who posing as a customer at her workplace, struck up a conversation with her two days before the incident.

The man had enquired about when she usually left work.

Meanwhile, the victim girl who was at the One-stop Crisis Centre of Dhaka Medical College Hospital has been taken to Tejgaon's victim support centre yesterday, said Inspector Sazzad Hossain, investigating officer of the case.

The DMP yesterday formed a three-member body to supervise police investigation into the gang-rape case, according to a DMP press statement.

PROTEST CONTINUES
Meanwhile, protests have been pouring in from all tiers of society demanding arrest of the perpetrators and their exemplary punishment.

Several organisations yesterday held demonstration programmes in the capital.

The law enforcement agencies must be accountable to people if they fail to provide security to the country's women, said eminent rights activist Sultana Kamal.

She was addressing a programme arranged jointly by 30 organisations in front of the National Museum.

Sanjib Drong, general secretary of Adivasi Forum, said, "It is the accused who should be thoroughly questioned and remanded. But the victim should not be harassed with too many questions."

He also demanded the government ensure the victim's full security.

Several left-leaning organisations including Communist Party of Bangladesh, Bangladesh Chhatra Union and Udichi Shilpi Goshthi, held a separate protest rally in front of the Jatiya Press Club yesterday.



Tajbir walking out of Jatrabari Police Station with a policeman yesterday. He was rescued from Bagerhat district Saturday night after being kidnapped from Jatrabari Friday afternoon.

PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

Issue MRP

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repeat of the mistakes, mismanagements, and irregularities that delayed MRP issuance to expatriates, a committee member said after the meeting.

"We told the meeting that the officials of the home ministry remain vigilant and alert so that the MRP issuance process is done within the deadline," Shamsul Hoque Tuku, ruling party lawmaker and member of the committee, told The Daily Star.

At the start of the meeting held at the Jatiya Sangsad Bhaban, Senior Secretary of the Home Ministry Md Mozammel Haq Khan informed the meeting about the status of the MRP issuance to expatriates.

He said MRPs were being issued from 58 missions of Bangladesh in full swing while the work started recently in seven missions.

His briefing left out the MRP crisis in Malaysia, the UAE and Saudi Arabia where nearly 45 lakh expatriates live.

Of them, about 35 lakh were carrying old passports which would be phased out by the November 24 deadline set by the International Civil Aviation Organisation.

Tipu Munshi, chairman of the parliamentary watchdog, told the meeting that the expatriates who would not get MRPs within the deadline might have no alternative but to return home.

"They may face difficulties while staying in their respective countries or while travelling to other countries," a member said, quoting Tipu Munshi.

The meeting asked the home and the foreign ministries to launch campaigns in different countries to make the expatriates aware of the importance of MRPs.

Govt to meet

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Khulna division. Meanwhile, another indefinite strike, which was to be observed in eight districts of Rajshahi division from this morning, was postponed yesterday.

State Minister for Home Affairs Asaduzzaman Khan Kamal would hold the meeting with the leaders at his office in the afternoon to discuss ways to end the strike which caused immense sufferings to the people of Khulna division, said a source.

Meanwhile, the Rajshahi division unit of Bangladesh Sarak Paribahan Sramik Federation yesterday suspended the previously announced strike on the grounds of holding talks with the government, said Abdul Latif, president of the workers' platform.

Transport owners and workers have been enforcing the strike in Khulna division since Tuesday, demanding release of the driver and the helper of a Sohag Paribahan bus, who were arrested for robbery by Madhukhali police in Faridpur the same day.

On the other hand, the Rajshahi strike was called to protest an assault on a bus staff in the capital on May 13 by the students of Titumir College and the arrest of the bus driver and the helper.

Road Transport and Bridges Minister Obaidul Quader yesterday told The Daily Star that he had talked to the ministers concerned and transport leaders and owners for putting an end to the ongoing strike in Khulna division.

"I have requested the state minister for home to sit with the concerned stakeholders tomorrow [today] for resolving the issue as it is involved with law enforcement agencies," he said.

HANIF CRITICAL OF STRIKE
Ruling Awami League Joint General Secretary Mahbubul Alam Hanif yesterday criticised bus owners and transport workers for "holding common people hostage in the name of a transport strike."

Speaking at a function in Kushtia, he said, "Such programmes will not be tolerated."

The "Idiot" and an MP

Except in a 'master-slave' context "whipping" is not usually used as an intended form of punishment in our country. In spite of the highly charged and denigrating political rhetoric we are used to seeing in our country, none of our political leaders have declared their wish to "whip" their opponents.

How come a PhD in physics from Caltech University of the US, a former Bell Lab scientist, a key figure in developing science faculty and IT facilities in SUST and a highly respected, popular professor of physics, should suddenly become such a "fool" that a public representative felt compelled to 'expose' the venerable professor to be the "idiot" that he was? What was his 'conspiracy' and what made him deserve no less a punishment than to be "whipped" are some of the questions that have been agitating the public mind ever since that statement was made.

The man the MP had the temerity to call "one hundred thousand percent idiot" is the one who returned from a lucrative job in the US with his equally qualified wife, both joining, in 1994, the SUST, established only three years earlier in 1991, one as head of computer science and engineering department and the other, Dr Yasmeen Huq, as a faculty member. Being privileged to know them both intimately over a long period of time, I am fully aware of their devotion to teaching, commitment to our country and unwavering attachment to the spirit and values of our liberation war.

Zafar Iqbal and his illustrious brother Humayun Ahmed lost most of their male family members, including their father who was in the police service, to the genocidal Pakistani army in 1971. They were raised by their iron-willed mother under very trying circumstances and with tremendous financial difficulties. Both these brothers grew up to be extraordinary writers and have heightened the country's prestige.

Zafar Iqbal's other specialty has been his inspirational role in inculcating the spirit of our Liberation War and especially raising interest in the history of our independence struggle among the youth. Both through his simple yet extraordinary writing and his tireless engagement with school, college and university students, he has done wonders in rekindling a thirst among our youth to know about our struggles and rearm themselves with a pride and sense of

achievement. We all owe him a great debt of gratitude for doing something that we freedom fighters have not been successful in doing. His voice, along with that of the nation, was one of the loudest in support of the war crimes trial.

So naturally my heart is filled with a deep sense of anger, indignation and resentment at this humiliation of a patriot. I am aghast at the audacity of this MP to want to "whip" a man like Zafar Iqbal and denigrate him in such a manner. I am also outraged by the silence of the ruling party, the community of other public representatives and the government itself on this matter. We deliberately waited before writing in the hope that there would be some show, if not of remorse, but at least of courtesy to the man who has worked tirelessly to uphold the values that the ruling party proclaims to do.

In addition to protecting the reputation of such an iconic figure what prompted us to write is to protect the personal prestige of honourable citizens of this country. Does an MP or for that matter anybody, have the right to insult another citizen, leave alone a man of Zafar Iqbal's stature?

I am not aware of the personal qualification of the said MP or how he has earned the 'right' to insult another citizen but I can say with little risk of being contradicted that what he has done is something that deserves to be condemned by every decent and educated person. We strongly protest his demeaning Zafar Iqbal and expect, if he has any sense of decency and shame, to apologise to him unequivocally. We also expect that the party he belongs to should do the same because, after all, every action of a party MP reflects on the party itself.

Regrettably, we sense a rising tendency to insult intellectuals and subjecting them to denigration and ridicule. We would like to warn that if a society, a polity and a country cannot ensure honour and dignity to decent and law abiding citizens, then such a nation will end up morally bankrupt. More so if we cannot show due respect to people who dedicate their lives for the betterment of the nation and who work selflessly to raise legitimate pride in our culture and history among the youth, then truly we are unworthy of having such noble personalities amongst us. And we can all visualise our future without such iconic figures.

Google toys to run

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devices that would turn their heads towards users and listen to what they were saying, before sending commands to remote computer servers.

The three-year old patent was spotted recently by the legal technology firm SmartUp. It described the proposal as "one of Google's creepiest patents yet".

Privacy campaigners have also raised concerns.

A spokeswoman for Google was unable to say whether this was a product the firm might develop and sell. "We file patent applications on a variety of ideas that our employees come up with."

"Some of those ideas later mature into real products or services, some don't. Prospective product announcements should not necessarily be inferred from our patent applications," she said.

CURIOUS FACE
The patent was originally filed back in February 2012, but has only just been published.

The patent describes how the toys would include microphones, speakers, cameras and motors as well as a

wireless connection to the internet.

It states that a trigger word would cause them to wake up and turn their gaze towards the person addressing them, and would be able to check if the person talking was making eye contact.

The document suggests the device could respond both by speaking back and by expressing "human-like" expressions of interest, curiosity, boredom and/or surprise.

"To express interest, an anthropomorphic device may open its eyes, lift its head and/or focus its gaze on the user," Richard Wayne DeVaul, inventor of the patent, wrote.

"To express curiosity, [it] may tilt its head, furrow its brow, and/or scratch its head with an arm."

The document suggests the toys could be used to control a wide range of devices, from televisions and DVD players to home thermostats, motorised window curtains and lights.

It adds that they might prove so popular that families would wish to buy several, placing them around the house including inside their bedrooms.