

The Daily Star

FOUNDER EDITOR
LATE S. M. ALI

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Good news for recruitment agencies!

Malaysia may open up

AFTER a lull of nearly six years, there is talk about resumption of private recruiting agencies supplying expatriate labourers to the Malaysian market. While government-to-government recruitment procedures have been in place since 2012, only about 7,000 Bangladeshi workers have gone through official channels although nearly 1.5 million have registered to go and work there. The ban on private recruiting activities has hardly helped matters as it triggered a surge of illegal migration by boat and some 100,000 people travelling under the guise of tourism in the hope of finding work there.

Illegal migration has turned into a major headache for countries in the region including Malaysia. Given that demand for our workers exists and the official channel is not mature enough to handle large-scale migration of expatriate workers, it only stands to reason that the private sector be involved alongside the public sector.

Unless, however, we find a workable solution on who bears the cost of migration, the old system of unscrupulous recruiting agencies exploiting our workers will stage a comeback. Merely opening up the market for privately-owned agencies to operate will not have the desired results. The problems associated with false visas, human trafficking and other bottlenecks will have to be tackled between the governments. The database built up to verify individuals applying for jobs must be put to use in order to safeguard interests of both workers and employers abroad.

A neglected community

Prejudice against them should go

IT is disquieting to note that members of the 'Rishi' community living in Shalikhā upazila of Magura have been facing social discrimination due to their so called 'low caste' identity. Mainly cobblers by profession, providing an important, basic service, these people are subjected to humiliation and ostracism by the local upper caste Hindus and even Muslims.

Our paper has brought into sharp focus the predicament of this minority group. They are not invited to social programmes; they cannot eat or drink sitting in a restaurant or a tea stall; even local barbers do not want to serve them. Most unfortunately, their children are discouraged from enrolling into schools and are often badly treated by the teachers.

Sometimes, they are made to clean the school toilets. We wonder how teachers can indulge in such disgraceful and discriminatory behaviour. They are supposed to inculcate principles of respect and equality among students.

According to our Constitution, all citizens are entitled to equal rights irrespective of the caste, creed, and faith they may belong to. We urge the government to take necessary steps to curb such caste-biased practices and if needed provide legal protection to this minority community. Furthermore, there should be special development programmes aimed at improving their socio-economic standing.

COMMENTS

"Bangladesh need to manage Mustafizur well: Streak"

(June 23, 2015)

Kku Chowdhury

I agree. Please don't let go of this talent. Nurture him well.

Mohammad Mohid

We have to take care of him. He will make new history in cricket.

"Fog over release of BGB man"

(June 23, 2015)

Aakash Usha

BGB is doing nothing but blackmail.

Ahmed Farhad Salim

Kidnapping BGB man and applying a condition could be the tip of the iceberg. They're planning something sinister.

Fahad Al Islam

Attacking a BGB man at the border is an act of war. Doesn't our prime minister understand that?

"Intellectuals' killing not forgiven"

(June 17, 2015)

Zaman Khan

Such designed killings to erase intellectuals are probably first in world history. This day should be mourned not only by us but by the entire world. Our deepest sympathies to the unfortunate families who lost their loved ones for the noble cause of

A ransom seeking neighbour!

STRATEGICALLY SPEAKING



Brig Gen SHAHEDUL ANAM KHAN
ndc, psc (Retd)

IT seems that there was lack of coordination between the Myanmar government and its border police, as evident from the two different news items related to the fate of the BGB soldier abducted

by the Myanmar Border Guard Police (BGP) more than a week ago, emanating from the Myanmar side. Whereas one report had it that Myanmar had tagged a condition, an outrageous one, to the release of Nayek Razzak, as confirmed by the state minister for home, the BGB DG, who was abroad then, stated that Nayek Razzak would be released unconditionally. It appears that Myanmar had not decided for six days on the disposal of the issue and perhaps it wanted to play politics with the matter, as apparent from the fact that it is after six days that the BGB has accepted BGB's request for a flag meeting, for today.

Abducting a member of the border force of a neighbouring country is a hostile act, and if there were any misunderstanding, as we heard our state minister for home say there was, it should not take seven days to clear that unless of course there were ulterior motives behind the abduction. The actions on the part of Myanmar that have followed the incident show that there were. Razzak should have been returned with full honour and with his weapons immediately instead of making him suffer such humiliation.

And Myanmar's reaction following the incident is rather surprising and shoddy to say the least. Not only was the letter and spirit of the guidelines for the management of the border between the two countries violated, the government of Myanmar also acted like a ransom seeker. It had put unacceptable conditions for the return of a person belonging to the border force of a neighbouring country who was

abducted by the Myanmar BGP. The condition was that Bangladesh must take back five hundred or so victims of human trafficking, who Myanmar claimed were Bangladeshi, without verifying their nationality. They are part of the 727 rescued by the Myanmar Navy from the Andaman Sea. Trying Razzak was also one of the options that Myanmar was contemplating.

It is difficult to rationalise actions of agencies of a country governed by a military junta. Just over a year ago, a member of the BGB was killed from BGP

there now, for better border management between two neighbours.

We also wonder at the very circumstances of Razzak's abduction. The press release by the BDR Headquarters raises more questions than it answers. According to it, "The BGB soldiers were conducting routine patrol on civil boats. Suddenly, around 5:30am, soldiers of the Myanmar BGP appeared with a boat, opened fire on one of the BGB boats, injuring one soldier. The BGB team also retaliated with gunshots." Obviously, there was physical contact between them

physically upon one another. If the BGB disappeared at the sight of the second BGB patrol boat, how come they managed to abduct BGB Nayek with his weapons while beating retreat? Why did our border guard personnel have to swim ashore when there were not one but two boats on the scene? And what did Nayek Razzak's comrades do to prevent his abduction? And what was the misunderstanding that the state minister for home was referring to?

The BGB has been at the receiving end in the two recent incidents involving the BGB, which necessitates a fresh look at



PHOTO: STAR

firing in Naikhongchhari in CHT in an incident that was precipitated by the Myanmar border security forces. And instead of returning the body, the BGB personnel, who had gone to collect the body, were shot at.

One fails to understand also why the Myanmar BGP has taken six days to respond positively to BGB's request for a flag meeting. The guidelines for border control should allow for the local commanders to meet at each other's request at very short notice, at least that is what the arrangements should be, if not

when the two sides locked into a scuffle. And the BGB patrol fled when the second BGB boat approached the scene. But what raises our eyebrow is the following part of the press release which says, "The BGB men then disappeared and took BGB Naik Razzak and his SMG along with them. The rest of the members of that boat saved them by jumping into the river and swam ashore."

We take it that the BGB had intruded illegally into our territory since the BGB boats were inside our territory and a scuffle cannot take place unless the two sides are

our border security capability. Along with investing the BGB with better equipment, there is need also for better trained manpower. And while diplomacy must be the first and the second and the third line of our defence, we must back it up with a demonstratively credible capacity which will not only be fully capable of safeguarding our border but also competent in protecting those who are engaged in that duty.

The writer is Editor, Op-Ed and Defence & Strategic Affairs, The Daily Star.

Rohingya Refugee Crisis Regional Governance Matters

MD. HARUN OR RASHID

ACCORDING to an estimate by the UNHCR, about 25,000 people have been taken by boats from January to March 2015 by human traffickers. International media also covered the death of around 400 people in Indonesia, Malaysia and Thailand while the traffickers abandoned them on the sea. The discovery of mass graves in Malaysia and Thailand illustrates this saga of cruelty and exploitation of the refugees.

The Rohingyas are a Muslim minority in Myanmar's eastern Rakhine state, who are culturally discriminated, economically exploited, and politically sidelined by a government that is influenced by the Buddhist majority. Thus, extreme intolerance for the Rohingyas has been mainstreamed in Myanmar, with even the so-called civil society activists considering them as intruders who must be deported to Bangladesh. Bangladesh is now home to 32,000 registered Rohingya refugees, sheltered in two camps in the south-eastern district of Cox's Bazar, whereas thousands are living outside the camps, mixed up with the localities, living in temporary houses, locally known as *Taal*. According to UNHCR, more than 800,000 individuals in Rakhine State lack citizenship, in addition to other groups potentially at risk in other parts of Myanmar.

Against this backdrop, the question arises as to how this humanitarian crisis can be solved. The crisis cannot be allowed to continue for decades. International agencies including the UN requested neighbouring countries to host the floating people on a humanitarian ground. Some countries responded to the request but the crisis continues. Receiving more and more floating refugees cannot be a permanent solution. These people must have their right to a secure life and

to live peacefully in their homeland.

For a sustainable solution, international agencies including the UN must take serious actions. Alongside the UN, regional associations like ASEAN and SAARC should be held responsible as they have been directly affected by the crisis. Therefore, the member states of these associations should have the political will and interest to resolve the crisis. There requires a combined political will and

it was the first time that the participating states exchanged their views in a comprehensive manner. Moreover, the USA, Australia and Japan vowed financial assistance for basic needs of the refugees as well as humanitarian aid for the Rohingyas in Myanmar and Bangladesh. But a matter of concern is that the Bangkok conference failed to think of any significant long term strategy to deal with the crisis.

conventions, majority of Asian states including Myanmar and Bangladesh are signatories to the Bangkok Principles on the Status and Treatment of Refugees adopted in 1966 by the Asian-African Legal Consultative Committee (AALCC). But there are some limitations of the Bangkok Principles, including limiting the rights of refugees, in the name of the security of the states, which puts the onus upon the state to decide whether or not



PHOTO: AFP

An ethnic Rohingya family from Myanmar inside a house in Ampang in the suburbs of Kuala Lumpur.

coordination between SAARC and ASEAN for a comprehensive settlement that is in the mutual interest of both sub-regions of Asia. UNHCR can initiate and mediate in the process, because despite the existence of these two inter-governmental institutions, no joint solution has been worked out. The recent Bangkok conference was a crucial step in the right direction that initiated a dialogue between the South and Southeast Asian states and

Besides, there must be a comprehensive regional policy to tackle the crisis. The majority of the Asian states rejected the International Law on Refugees, established under the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and the 1967 Protocol, claiming it to be irrelevant to the Asian refugee experiences. But it is high time for the Asian countries to ratify the convention. Moreover, whilst Asian countries have rejected the international

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the principles are applied. In addition, the Bangkok Principles are not regularly monitored, thus there is no mechanism to enforce or convince the states to follow the provisions. A joint regional intervention by SAARC and ASEAN for a comprehensive settlement of the crisis is, thus, a crucial need at the moment.

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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

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Vulgar television advertisements

Television is viewed by people of all ages and has become an inseparable part of our daily lives. Advertisements of different products are shown in each and every channel. Some advertisements are so vulgar in nature that it is embarrassing to watch TV programmes with the family members. It is my strong belief that there is no active censor board to regulate advertisements in Bangladesh; otherwise such obscene, lewd and vulgar advertisements couldn't be displayed. These kinds of advertisements have a negative impact on our children as well as the youth of the nation.

Under the above circumstances, I urge the relevant authority to take immediate actions to stop such vulgar advertisements.
Syed Towhid Hossain
On e-mail

UN's "List of Shame" is shameful

The United Nations recently released a "List of Shame" of children's rights violators but did not include Israel, despite an outcry over the death of more than 500 children in the Gaza war. We have learnt from media reports that Human Rights Watch has urged the UN chief to add Israel to this list.

At least 4,249 Palestinians and 22 Israelis were injured and 557 Palestinians and 4 Israeli children were killed in that war. We hope the UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon includes the Israeli military in this annual list soon, resisting all sorts of political pressures from Israel and the US for the sake of strengthening



PHOTO: AFP

children's protection.
Mobarak Ali
Gopibagh, Dhaka