



Brac founder and Chairperson Sir Fazle Hasan Abed calls on Queen Máxima of the Netherlands at the UNDP office in the city's IDB Bhaban yesterday.

# Will our workers get better deal this time?

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wherever they are. It needs to be very careful before signing any labour deal with a country. Such a deal is meant for human beings, not commodities.

Malaysia's latest interference to a fresh labour deal casts shadow over a transparent recruitment system that is badly needed for Bangladesh.

The most recent twist came on November 6 when Malaysian Deputy Prime Minister Dr Ahmad Zahid Hamidi requested Bangladesh to incorporate its "selected Malaysian company's proposal" in the draft memorandum of understanding (MoU) that had been put on the agenda of the cabinet meeting on November 9.

This selected company profile is questionable at best. Yet, Bangladesh's Expatriates' Welfare Minister Nurul Islam withdrew the draft MoU, and is now waiting for the Malaysian company's proposal before finalizing the deal.

Hamidi's letter did not specify any company, but last month he told the Malaysian parliament the home ministry chose Synerflux for online recruitment of 1.5 million Bangladeshi workers in the next three years.

Earlier on September 21, Malaysia, in a letter to Bangladesh, informed of

appointing Synerflux. It said the company would be "sole and exclusive entity" to develop, maintain and manage the online recruitment system. It will also have offices in Bangladesh and Malaysia, and will supervise bio-medical process for workers' registration, verification of eligibility, medical screening, and delivery of visas.

This has given rise to a new controversy in addition to a series of previous ones.

At least two Malaysian companies – Bestinet and Real Time Networking – had earlier lobbied to get the job, but back-tracked following widespread criticism from media and civil society in Malaysia, home to some six lakh Bangladeshis.

Real Time Networking is owned by DPM Ahmad Zahid Hamidi's brother Abdul Hakim Hamidi, while Bestinet is linked to Synerflux via another firm, JR Joint Resources.

According to a November 12 report of Malaysiakini, a Malaysian online news portal, Bestinet's directors include former Malaysian home minister Azmi Khalid and former Labour Department director Tengku Omar Tengku Bot.

Tengku Omar is also a director at JR Joint Resources, the company in which Synerflux director Nor Aliza Pungot

works.

Synerflux's Bangladeshi Workers Management System has similarities to Bestinet's Foreign Workers Centralised Management System, whose services were suspended by Malaysia in January this year following complaints from Indonesia and Nepal that it was charging higher fees from their migrant workers.

Besides, there are allegations that Bestinet, which was earlier appointed by Malaysian home ministry to manage repatriation of undocumented migrants to Bangladesh, extorted the workers. While the official fee was only Malaysian Ringgit (MR) 400, they were charged over MR 1000 each.

A top Baira leader expressed his reservations about the Malaysian proposal calling it "something fishy" in reaction to Zahid Hamid's November 6 letter.

The issue is of immense importance because Bangladesh's labour relations with Malaysia has always been stained with corruption, recruiting surplus workers, joblessness, low wage, non-payment, bad living conditions etc.

In 2007-08, thousands of Bangladeshi workers in Malaysia became jobless and had to stay out on the streets. Such abuses got global media headlines and led to a ban on recruitments in early 2009. Malaysia

started recruiting again through state-level arrangement, the so called G2G, in 2013 limited to the plantation sector. However, less than 10,000 workers went there.

Industry insiders said powerful lobbies were behind G2G "failure" which prompted Malaysia to start recruitment through private sector. Trade unions and migrant rights bodies questioned why Malaysia did not open the sectors like construction, manufacturing and services under G2G that could work.

They are also critical of the government's appointing any private company to manage the complete recruitment system, saying it will create monopoly. They also question if Malaysia really needs foreign workers now when its economy has slowed down.

It appears that Bangladesh does not have much say over Malaysia's setting the conditions of worker recruitment or working conditions in Malaysia.

While Bangladesh needs to send her citizens abroad for jobs, it should also be remembered that it cannot allow anyone to treat its citizens in any way they wanted. It is a question of dignity for Bangladesh.

Globally, Bangladesh is now a brand name for ready-made garments, cricket, UN Peacekeeping Mission, micro-credit, women empowerment,

## Dutch Queen

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secretary-general's special advocate.

During her stay in Bangladesh, she is scheduled to meet President Abdul Hamid, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, Finance Minister AMA Muhiith and BB Governor Atiur Rahman.

She will also have meetings with senior officials of the Bangladesh government, development partners and civil society members.

She will visit some locations outside Dhaka to explore the experiences and needs of low-income customers such as garment workers and meet a female entrepreneur, who built her business with the help of financial services, said the UNDP release.

## Nur Hossain can be taken on remand

Says counsel for slain Nazrul's wife and Chandan's son-in-law

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Narayanganj

Lawyer of the petitioners in the sensational Narayanganj seven-murder case yesterday said Nur Hossain could be remanded in custody for further interrogation.

Advocate Sakhawat Hossain, a counsel for Selina Islam and Ranjita Debnath, wife and son-in-law of slain city panel mayor Nazrul Islam and Chandan Sarkar, told The Daily Star that if the investigation officer of the two cases appeals to the court seeking remand of the main accused, the court could pass an order.

Besides, there is a scope for taking Nur Hossain into remand in other cases that are now under investigation and not yet charge-sheeted, he added.

Meanwhile, Narayanganj District Bar Association president advocate Anisur Rahman Dipu yesterday at a press conference said there was no scope of taking Nur Hossain into remand again.

Dipu also said there was no bar in providing legal assistance to the accused in the seven-murder case.

Attempts were being made to divert the course of the case and influence it, he claimed.

Meanwhile, a joint team of detectives, police and Armed Police Battalion yesterday conducted an hour-long raid on the houses of Nur Hossain, some of his relatives, and associates at Shimrai.

Narayanganj Additional Superintendent of Police Mohammad Zakaria said they launched the raid on information that Nur Hossain's associates were roaming in the area.

Shahidul Islam, father-in-law of slain Nazrul, claimed that Nur Hossain's associates are now maintaining connections with district lawyers to save him.

He said the police raid was "eye-wash".

Nur Hossain is now at Kashimpur Jail in Gazipur.

In April last year, seven people, including Nazrul and senior lawyer Chandan Sarkar, were abducted from Narayanganj and their bodies were later recovered from the Shitalakkhya river.

Shahidul alleged that Rapid Action Battalion personnel abducted and killed Nazrul in exchange for Tk 6 crore from Nur Hossain.

## G20 vows more intel sharing

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condemned the Paris attacks as "heinous" and said they remained committed to tackling terrorist financing.

French warplanes pounded positions held by Islamic State, also known as Daesh, in Syria on Sunday. Foreign Minister Laurent Fabius described it as an act of self-defence following the Paris attacks.

"France has always said that given the manner in which it has been threatened, not only threatened but attacked, by Daesh, it is completely normal that it takes the initiative and as an act of legitimate defence, takes action," he told reporters.

### DIFFERENCES OVER SYRIA

Obama vowed on Sunday to step up efforts to eliminate Islamic State and prevent more attacks like those in the French capital, while urging Putin in an informal meeting to focus his military campaign in Syria on combating the jihadist group.

### U.S.-led efforts to fight Islamic

State were complicated when Russia joined the conflict a month and a half ago, targeting what the West says are mainly foreign-backed fighters battling President Bashar al-Assad, Moscow's ally, rather than focusing on Islamic State.

Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said the meeting with Obama had been constructive but not groundbreaking. The two leaders were seen briefly talking again on Monday.

Cameron, who also held a one-hour meeting with the Russian leader, said differences in opinion over Assad's future had been enormous but appeared to be narrowing.

"There are big differences, we don't hide those, we discuss them. But it is important in all these instances to have a proper dialogue with people like him," Cameron said.

U.S. officials said Washington wanted to intensify existing efforts against Islamic State, including the bombing campaign and arming Syrian rebels. Obama will meet with European

allies at the end of the summit to try to shore up their common front.

But the officials said there were no immediate plans for any dramatic shift in strategy such as the deployment of significant ground forces. The dilemma remained how to rally the coalition without drawing the U.S. deeper into Syria's war, they said.

Turkish Foreign Minister Feridun Sinirlioglu said the possibility of a military ground operation in Syria had not been raised at the summit, and made clear Turkey was not planning any such offensive alone.

### INTELLIGENCE FAILURES

Turkish President Tayyip Erdogan urged deeper intelligence sharing and said leaders in the Muslim world must do more to break the perception that terrorism is affiliated with Islam.

"Terrorism has no religion, ethnicity or nationality," he said. He warned against conflating the migration crisis facing Europe with the threat from global terrorism, saying do so would be to shirk

## Europe refugee row intensified

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fleeing Syria's civil war.

But Germany's Justice Minister Heiko Maas called for "very, very great prudence, until things are clear".

"We are aware that the IS [Islamic State] is known to leave such false tracks behind to politicise and radicalise the issue over refugees in Europe," Maas told public broadcaster ARD.

The questions over Europe's migrant influx are particularly sensitive in Germany, which has become the top destination for those fleeing war and persecution.

Europe's biggest economy expects to see around one million asylum seekers this year alone.

Bavarian Finance Minister Markus Soeder had cranked up pressure on German Chancellor Angela Merkel's to reverse her "open-door" refugee policy, saying the attacks in Paris underlined the need for tougher measures to control the influx of migrants.

The days of uncontrolled immigration and illegal entry can't continue just like that. Paris changes everything," Soeder told Welt am Sonntag

newspaper.

"The CSU stands behind the chancellor, but it would be good if Angela Merkel acknowledged that the opening of the border for an unlimited period of time was a mistake," Soeder said.

His comments triggered a sharp rebuke by Bavarian state premier Horst Seehofer, leader of Merkel's sister party, the Christian Social Union (CSU).

He said it was "totally inappropriate" to criticise the chancellor in times when all democrats should stand united. Seehofer added migration and terrorism were two topics that had to be separated clearly.

This echoed earlier comments from Interior Minister Thomas de Maiziere and Economy Minister Sigmar Gabriel, who both warned against making any hasty links between the assault in Paris and the refugee debate.

German officials indicated that Merkel saw no reason to revise her stance on refugees in the wake of the Paris attacks.

The head of Germany's domestic intelligence services called for "orderly procedures" regarding the handling of the daily entry of thousands of refugees and warned extremists could exploit the sometimes chaotic migration situation.

While German police are currently conducting passport checks at border crossings and in border areas, thousands of refugees are thought to be coming into the country without any checks.

### TOO EARLY TO CONCLUDE

Greek and Serbian authorities have confirmed the passport belonged to a man who registered as a refugee in October on the island of Leros and applied for asylum in Serbia a few days later.

Yet on Sunday, European Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker firmly defended the EU's hotly-contested plan to redistribute refugees across Europe despite calls by Poland to scrap the scheme after the deadly attacks in Paris.

"I would like to invite those in Europe who are trying to change the migration agenda we have adopted... to be serious about this and not to give in to these basic reactions. I don't like it," Juncker told reporters on the sidelines of the G20 leaders' meeting

in Antalya, Turkey.

More than 800,000 migrants have arrived in Europe by sea so far this year, mostly from the Middle East, with Germany alone expecting nearly a million migrants in 2015.

Titled "Why Syrian refugee passport found at Paris attack scene must be treated with caution", an article in The Guardian newspaper read that there are several reasons why it's worth waiting until all the facts are known before making too strong a link between the attacks and the refugee crisis.

The first is a general one: on at least 12 occasions, Isis has actually criticised refugees for fleeing to Europe. "For those who want to blame the attacks on Paris on refugees, you might want to get your facts straight," wrote Aaron Zelin, an analyst of jihad, in an online commentary about the 12 outbursts.

"The reality is, [Isis] loathes that individuals are fleeing Syria for Europe. It undermines [Isis's] message that its self-styled caliphate is a refuge." It's therefore unlikely that the vast majority of Syrians fleeing to Europe are Isis supporters, since their actions

## Belgian man

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He is said to be from the Molenbeek district of Brussels, which has seen multiple police raids since eight suicide bombers armed with assault rifles killed at least 129 people in Paris on Friday night.

Abaaoud allegedly oversaw the attack and funded it. He was suspected of planning a series of foiled terror attacks and his phone was traced to Greece.

Charlie Winter, a security analyst specialising in Isis, told The Independent Abaaoud's profile

would fit that of someone capable of planning the massacres in Paris.

"He's exactly the kind of person you would expect to plan something like this," he said.

"You don't go from never trying anything to masterminding an attack involving multiple attackers, multiple targets and multiple weapons."

At least one of the Paris attackers named so far had links to Abaaoud, De Standaert reports.

Brahim Abdeslam and the suspected mastermind were both named

in criminal cases in 2010 and 2011 and lived in the Brussels district of Molenbeek.

Abaaoud could also be linked to a terror cell in the town of Verviers, where police shot dead two militants in January.

They were planning to kill Belgian police officers days after the Charlie Hebdo massacre.

Abaaoud was named as the presumed "mastermind" in that case by Belgian authorities as he remained on the run.

Said to be the son of a shopkeeper from Morocco, he reportedly joined Isis in Syria in 2013 and appeared in a video driving a van carrying a pile of mutilated bodies to a mass grave.

Belgian media reported that he recruited his own 14-year-old brother, Younes Abaaoud, who is believed to be one of the youngest fighters in the so-called Islamic State.

A new police operation was underway in Molenbeek this morning, Belgian media reported.

Police raided homes of suspected Islamist militants across France overnight following the Paris attacks.

"Al Ghareeb the Algerian" also warned Europe in the video that more attacks were coming.

"I say to the European countries that we are coming, coming with booby traps and explosives, coming with explosive belts and (gun) silencers and you will be forces."

Police raided homes of suspected Islamist militants across France overnight following the Paris attacks.

## IS 'threatens

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Islamic State to post its messages, begins with news footage of the aftermath of Friday's Paris shootings in which at least 129 people were killed.

The message to countries involved in what it called the "crusader campaign" was delivered by a man dressed in fatigues and a turban, and identified in subtitles as Al Ghareeb the Algerian.

"We say to the states that take part in the crusader campaign that, by God, you will have a day, God willing like France's and by God, as we struck France in the center of its abode in Paris, then we swear that we will strike America at its center in Washington," the man said.