

The Daily Star

FOUNDER EDITOR
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Visa for men, only if women go *Strange prerequisite*

IT is with bewilderment and disappointment that we have learnt from this paper that the Saudi Arabian embassy in Dhaka is refusing to issue visas for male migrant workers because recruiting agencies are not sending enough female migrant workers. The embassy apparently has given an unofficial precondition that at least 25 percent female workers should be applying for jobs.

Such a prerequisite is not only illogical, it is very disturbing considering the stories we have been reading in local papers of female migrant workers, who are mainly engaged as household help, being tortured and sexually abused by employers. Instead of addressing such a serious violation of human rights, it is strange that the Saudi authorities would demand more female workers. It should be mentioned that according to reports already 75,000 female workers have been sent to Saudi Arabia as per an agreement between Bangladesh and Saudi Arabia. The idea that sending women workers should be tied up with whether more male workers will be given work visa is incomprehensible.

There is no official agreement between the two countries that stipulates such a condition and therefore it should not be regarded as such. Moreover, if women workers are not keen about seeking employment in Saudi Arabia, this cannot be a reason for the Saudi Embassy to refrain from issuing visas for male workers.

Such strange stipulations are irrational; we expect our government to fend off any pressure that would put our women workers at risk. And if Saudi Arabia wants more female workers they will have to ensure that they work in safe conditions, with dignity.

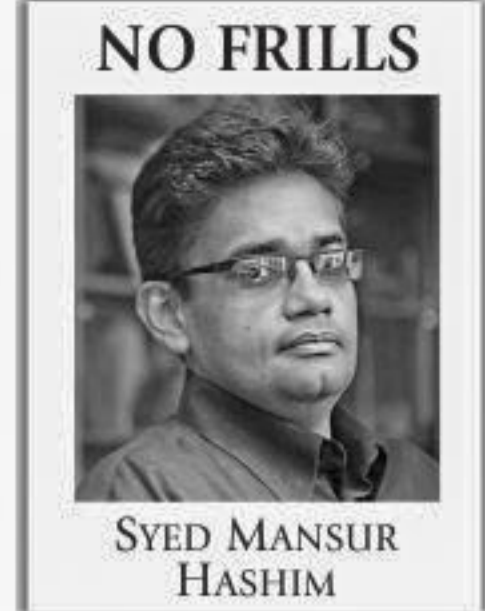
Missing for 38 days! *Probe into the disappearance*

WE are shocked at the disappearance of Dr Muhammed Iqbal Mahmud, a medical officer of the Directorate General of Health Services, who was abducted 38 days ago from the heart of the capital by a gang of people riding a microbus. What defies logic is that the law enforcers have failed to make any headway into the case despite a CCTV footage that exposed the number plate of the abductors' vehicle. The incident is disconcerting since it happened in full view of the law enforcing agencies as a police car happened to be immediately behind the said microbus during the abduction.

We believe that if the police do not get to the bottom of the case and find out the perpetrators, it will reinforce the perception among the ordinary people that it is a case of forced disappearance. Circumvention of justice and rule of law has disturbed the societal order in many countries, which we cannot afford. Such state of affairs also dents the national image abroad.

There is no need to remind that it is the government's constitutional obligation to protect its citizens, and on that account it needs to commission a probe body to investigate into such incidents. Indeed it is the government's responsibility to enforce rule of law and provide satisfactory accounts of what happens to missing persons. It is for the administration to let us know the whereabouts of Dr Mahmud and laud the High Court for directing the authorities concerned to submit a report on the steps taken to trace the missing physician.

Addressing "security concerns"



NO FRILLS
SYED MANSUR HASHIM

SECURITY concerns over its citizens apparently have got the Japanese to adopt a "go slow" approach on the large scale project at Matarbari. The closing bid for the project was extended from July to August and then to October 24. The two main Japanese firms, Marubeni Corporation and Sumitomo Corporation were asked to submit their proposals by this time but apparently there are security concerns on the Japanese side despite repeated assurances by the government that these have been addressed.

Needless to say, the US\$6.7 billion project is of immense importance to Bangladesh's "China plus one" policy and the financing of which would be covered by Japanese loans. The project involves the construction of two 600 megawatt coal-fired power plants in Matarbari and construction of a deep-sea port there for carrying in coal. From what has been reported in the press, our assurance of providing security with members of Ansar, police and armed police have not been enough to convince



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Japanese nationals to come back to Bangladesh with their families. This trust deficit has apparently is also threatening to derail the much-talked about Dhaka Metro-rail-6.

This is a government-to-government deal and the major hitch is security not finance. The July terrorist attack put a lot of countries on the edge about Bangladesh. But then, there has been no major terrorist attack in the last so many months and there have been significant crackdowns on militant outfits and suspected militant outfits. So why are the Japanese not convinced? The problem is ours and not theirs - in that we have to come up with measures that will put the trust back in our foreign development partners. That we have turned down requests for private security armed guards has not gone down well. Indeed, the offer for more police and Ansar was not the answer that was sought. Our laws may not allow for private security details to give protection to foreign companies, but perhaps that is something we should review given the ground realities. It is not possible for our existing law enforcement agencies that are already spread thin tackling this new threat to be providing foolproof security to the numerous

Japanese interests (about 68 private and nongovernment entities operate in Bangladesh).

When we take into consideration that the Chinese have recently pledged some \$40+ billion in foreign investments in infrastructure projects and the influx of hundreds of Chinese nationals who will be pouring in as experts, those security concerns have simply multiplied exponentially. Security protection for personnel on the ground, facilities where they operate from and actual sites will require special protection, because future terrorist attacks cannot be ruled out.

Bangladesh is not the only country on the "one road one belt" initiative. The China-Pakistan Economic Corridor being implemented is considered a flagship project of the "Belt and Road" initiative and has seen the Chinese pump in \$46 billion in investments in that country. While Pakistan's security problems are far larger than Bangladesh, policymakers in that country have not taken the concerns of the Chinese lightly. According to a report in the Dawn newspaper in August, "The Parliamentary Committee on China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) was informed on Friday that a Special Security Division (SSD) comprising 9,000

Pakistan Army soldiers and 6,000 paramilitary forces personnel has been set up for the security of the project and individuals working on it."

This is perhaps the sort of assurance the Japanese and the Chinese will be hoping to get from us. While the security concerns of foreign missions have largely been addressed as they are concentrated in the diplomatic enclave in Dhaka, the same cannot be said when it comes to foreign owned and operated commercial interests. We need to get our act together on such matters. It makes sense to raise a separate force dedicated to protecting high value installations and personnel involved. Yes, there will be costs involved, and that means separate allocation in the budget to raise a force and maintain it on a year to year basis. These are worthwhile investments on our part if we hope to assuage security concerns of foreign partners. What the size and composition of a force like this would be is a matter for security experts to ponder upon. However, given the experience with the Japanese, we should seriously mull over the issue because we need those investments to transform the economy.

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Finally moving from negotiations to action



POLITICS OF CLIMATE CHANGE
SALEEMUL HUQ

THE 22nd Conference of Parties (COP22) of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) held in Marrakech, Morocco, came to an end on November 18

Session underscored Bangladesh's determination to remain committed to taking actions to implement the Paris Agreement to tackle climate change.

Perhaps the most important action initiative was announced on the last day of the COP, when nearly fifty members of the Climate Vulnerable Forum (CVF) announced their collective intention to become 100 percent renewable by 2050, and in some cases by 2030. This was a major commitment from the most

At the same time the CVF's Expert Advisory Group, which I chair, also issued a scientific report showing that not only is keeping below 1.5 degrees possible, it also presents opportunities and even potential benefits to countries.

Thus, the Marrakech COP truly heralds a move towards actions that are in fact taking place at an accelerated speed and that has superseded the realm of endless negotiations about how to take actions that has now been resolved by the Paris

Countries (LDC) Group in different tracks did an excellent job and civil society and media representatives also played a significant role in Marrakech.

As Bangladesh is a founding member, as well as past Chair, of the CVF and as this forum, along with its group of Finance Ministers (called the V20 Group) is now moving towards South-South collaborative actions on the ground, Bangladesh needs to step up sharing its knowledge, especially on adaptation, with

with the adoption of the Marrakech Call for Action to implement the Paris Agreement which was adopted at COP21 a year ago and came into force in Marrakech. This marks a very significant turning point in the history of the UNFCCC negotiations, as we are now finally moving from talking about taking actions to actually taking actions.

This is crucial for the most vulnerable developing countries, such as Bangladesh, as climate change impacts are already occurring in this country, so adaptation action is urgent for us.

At the same time, if the Paris Agreement's goal of keeping global temperatures below 1.5 degrees is to be achieved then actions on mitigation is also equally urgent for all countries, but especially for the major emitting countries

While the result of the US presidential elections in the first week of COP22 hit all the negotiators hard (and perhaps the US negotiators the hardest) as an unexpected bolt from the blue, nevertheless by the second week of the COP, the momentum for action had been restored and all the countries, including the US (where President Obama remains in charge until January), agreed to accelerate actions to implement the Paris Agreement.

By the second week in Marrakech, after the initial shock waned, the US negotiators adopted the position that the US as a country had ratified the Paris Agreement and would continue to fulfil its obligations to take actions. At the High Level Session, Secretary of State John Kerry, who had personally negotiated the Paris Agreement last year, gave an emotional speech in which he reiterated the US' commitment to abiding by their obligations solemnly undertaken under international law.

The presence of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina from Bangladesh at the High Level



Members of International delegations play with a giant air globe ball outside the COP22 climate conference in Marrakesh.

vulnerable countries and was a clear challenge to all the other countries to follow their lead.

Thus the CVF has now turned from a group of mostly poor and vulnerable developing countries advocating for action to keep temperature below 1.5 to a group of leaders in tackling climate change on the ground. Thus, even though their collective emissions of greenhouse gases are small relative to others, they are nevertheless willing to step up to take action because it is the right thing to do.

Agreement coming into force, thereby becoming international law in record speed.

Finally, a few words about the role of Bangladesh both in the negotiations at the COP as well as at home. The Prime Minister in her speech quite rightly pointed out the many actions that the country is taking at home while also appealing to the international community to do more on migration and loss and damage. The Bangladeshi Negotiators who often lead for the Least Developed

other member countries of the CVF. Thus Costa Rica has already set up a South-South Centre on Renewable Energy and Philippines one on Climate Services so Bangladesh could think about setting up a South-South Centre on Adaptation Technology as a public-private partnership between the Government, the Universities, NGOs and private sector.

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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

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Construction of a drainage system

Dhaka North City Corporation is constructing a massive drainage system in Banani area. While we laud the measures taken up by the authorities we would like to point out certain difficulties.

In every house three utility pipes namely water pipe, sewerage pipe, gas pipe and electric cable have entered inside the house from main lines. With the digging for covered drains all these utility connections have become exposed. Sewerage pipes are the most vulnerable. In one instance, the private contractor's workers hit the sewerage pipe callously with sharp digging material with malicious intentions. The pipe was broken and the place became flooded with sewer waste. Then, the land owners were subjected to extortion or 'Chanda baji', forced to pay the 'accused persons' money for repair. I even saw some of the employees shouting at an elderly woman, claiming that they were untouchable.

Moreover, the grill laid down in place of RCC slab will cover the drains, but the gates will be left uncovered. People will throw trash through the grills and the drains will become clogged. Bad odour will also emanate from the open grill area.

We request the relevant authorities to solve the above problems immediately.
Dr. SN Mamoon, Dhaka

Mymensingh city needs improvement

Mymensingh is one of the largest cities in Bangladesh, but its environmental conditions are far from satisfactory. The narrow roads cause frequent traffic jam. The drainage system is horrible. Despite being declared as the new divisional city, there is no basic planning or proper implementation.

We want to see the city improved for the betterment of its citizens.
Ratan Kumar Karmakar, Mymensingh