

Rohingya criminals a threat to both locals and refugees

Restore law and order in the camps

WE are deeply concerned at the tensions prevailing in Teknaf's Hnila union, between locals and Rohingyas, following the murder of a Jubo League leader at a refugee camp in the area on Thursday, August 22. According to reports, the victim was shot dead by members of a Rohingya criminal gang. The incident led to hundreds of angry locals vandalising make-shift houses and offices in the camp before blocking the Cox's Bazar-Teknaf highway on Friday in protest. It reflects the volatile situation in these areas where locals are already getting weary of the continued presence of refugees. The criminal activities by Rohingya gang members, who have links with local criminal gangs, have exacerbated an already tense situation. News reports have cited allegations of a politician hiring the Rohingya gang members (who died in "gunfight" with law enforcers) to eliminate his political rival. Thus these criminal elements among the Rohingyas are now becoming involved in the politics of the area as well.

From what we have gathered, both locals and Rohingya refugees are feeling insecure after this incident which could easily conflagrate into an untenable situation. Rohingya gangs are a threat also to the ordinary Rohingya refugees and they have little protection against these criminals. In the last two years, 43 Rohingyas have been murdered in the camps and 32 have died in gunfights.

The latest incident happened right at the time when a second attempt by the government to repatriate the first batch of Rohingya refugees was made and which ultimately was in vain. The murder acted as fuel to the fire.

At this point, the most immediate step the authorities must take is to ensure law and order in the Rohingya camps and surrounding areas. This should be done with the help of Rohingya leaders which will, no doubt, make such efforts more effective. The authorities must appeal to the locals to stay calm and not take law into their own hands. Tolerance and patience must be promoted. We must make sure that these criminal elements do not get the upper hand and make the situation even worse.

More deaths that could've been avoided

Wake up to the reality of our roads and highways

EIGHT people were killed and 18 others injured when a bus plunged into a roadside ditch after smashing through a railing of a bridge in Faridpur Sadar Upazila on Saturday. Among those killed were six passengers, the bus supervisor, and the rider of a motorcycle which the bus collided with before swerving off the road.

Reportedly, the driver of the bus was speeding heavily and was attempting to overtake a slow-moving three-wheeler—which, on paper, is banned from plying highways, but not in reality, it seems. It was at this point that the bus ended up hitting the motorbike coming from the opposite side, to then break through the railing of the bridge and fall into the 15-foot-deep ditch along with the motorcycle.

The bridge itself is in poor condition with parts of its railing having been fitted with bamboos. Although the portion of the bridge where the bus veered off had steel railing, the fact that parts of the bridge's railing were "temporarily fixed" with bamboos and left like that for at least six months, is appalling.

The causes that led to the accident and eight needless deaths in this particular instance—reckless driving, failure to enforce the ban on three-wheelers from running on highways and poor condition of the bridge—are things we have become all too familiar with. But the overall cost of failing to address them is way higher if we look at it from a broader perspective—for example, at least 180 people were killed and 344 injured in 130 road accidents that happened in a span of about eight days during the Eid rush.

That the authorities continue to turn a blind-eye to the high number of tragedies that occur on our roads and highways every day, despite concerns expressed by citizens of all age and walks of life, is unacceptable. We call on the authorities to wake up and immediately make a course correction.

Engaging expatriates in our growth journey



SABBIR RAHMAN KHAN

THE significance of expatriate engagement in emerging economies has led to substantial attention as evidenced by the growing number of studies, seminars, symposiums and conferences, pilot projects and initiatives funded by various governments and development partners. According to a *Forbes* article, domestic companies are now thriving and pose a real competition for multinational companies. Naturally, focusing on local markets and local consumers, these domestic companies now seek cooperation from expatriate entrepreneurs to expand their businesses.

Expatriates' expertise, professional reputation, savings and investments can act as catalysts for local businesses. Moreover, they can attract investment from other sources to the home country. To achieve the next level of growth, it is imperative to engage expatriates in the country's development blueprint through using the knowledge remittance provided by them. Slightly different from monetary remittance, knowledge remittance is the flow of knowledge, mentorship, guidance, and expertise to the home countries. It is evident that contributions from the expatriates take multiple forms that include philanthropy, business and academic networks, institutional twinning initiatives, technical advisories, etc.

An UNCTAD study conducted in 2012 estimated that up to 80 percent of FDI into China was from its expatriate networks. In India, the entrepreneurs developed a USD-100-billion IT export industry in collaboration with their expatriates. In Africa, they have witnessed over USD 10 billion in investment and USD 30 billion in philanthropy from its expatriates. And in Lebanon, around six thousand projects have been successfully implemented through the "Live Lebanon" initiative with expatriate-donated money to support local communities.

From the government level, in

some countries, expatriate strategies are coordinated through a dedicated government agency, for example Lithuania's Department of National Minorities and Lithuanians Living Abroad, India's Ministry of Overseas Indian Affairs, Armenia's Ministry of Diaspora and Jamaica's Diaspora and Consular Affairs Department in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade. In this system, a minister is bestowed with the responsibility to

making dents in numerous sectors of the countries where they are living, ranging from technology to culinary. Other remarkable examples include: creation of a bank spearheaded by NRBs, NRB IT entrepreneurs' involvement with the local IT industry, etc. In addition, an NRB biotechnologist, Dr Maqsoodul Alam, did jute genome sequencing in Bangladesh; an NRB engineer is one of the contributors of the Padma Bridge plans; an NRB mathematician is the head coach for Math

second and third generation expatriates. Furthermore, it is important to nurture the bond in a way that is mutually beneficial. However, it must be kept in mind that reaching out to the expatriates and engaging them in productive and meaningful ways will require political will, policy support, designated focal points from the government for follow-up, and service-oriented support from the government's investment promotion agencies like BIDA, BEZA, Bangladesh High-Tech Park Authority, and PPP, along with other government agencies that are responsible for issuing license, permits, utility services and required support for investment. Once this is achieved, Bangladesh will continue to receive benefits from the expats in the days to come.

It is encouraging to know that our government is planning to dedicate a Special Economic Zone for NRBs. Another good move by the government is the plan to provide a two-percent incentive on money remitted by expatriates Bangladeshis from the FY2019-20 onwards. In addition, the government has unveiled a plan to provide life insurance facilities for expatriates as they, and their families, often find themselves in a complex situation after workplace accidents. Another positive move planned by the government is to observe an NRB Day or *Probashi Dibosh* on December 30 every year.

However, the government should shift its policy focus towards engaging the expatriate communities in the overall development efforts of the country from the existing focus on migrant labourers. Moreover, Bangladesh is yet to successfully promote the success stories of its expatriates. For instance, very few people know that NRBs are playing an active role in the parliaments of countries like the UK, Sweden and Canada, as elected representatives. This is just one instance. There are other areas which we need to properly revisit. We need to identify our expats and focus on how we can collaborate with them for the greater good of our country.

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oversee expatriate affairs covering areas such as legal status and voting rights of the expatriates, welfare and rights of the expatriates in their new locations, cultural and social links with the expatriates, remittances and philanthropy, and the development of business relationships with the expats.

About 10 million Bangladeshis live abroad, of whom about 2.4 million have moved abroad permanently (UNDP, 2017). Moreover, the number of Bangladeshis living overseas for employment purpose has doubled in the past few years. Encouragingly, NRBs are

Olympiad helping Bangladesh win gold, among many achievements of pioneering NRBs. In addition, currently 35 NRBs are enjoying the CIP status.

In view of the NRBs' engagement with our entrepreneurs, we need to create a pyramid model where knowledge is carried downstream from the top. In this connection, a supply-side study on the Bangladeshi expatriates should be commissioned to understand their aspirations every two or three years. In this regard, it is also important that a special attempt is made to find out the interests and aspirations of the

'Demonising' Modi and the Indian opposition



PALLAB BHATTACHARYA

AS if the top leadership crisis in the Congress was not enough, the party is now witnessing a new storm as its second-rung senior leaders came out with contrasting views on how to deal with Prime Minister Narendra Modi and his government's altering of the status of Jammu and Kashmir.

Last month, the Congress was hit by several of its leaders cutting across ages backing the Modi government's move on Kashmir, and now some second-rung leaders of the party have gone public with their criticism of the top leadership's sustained strident attack on the prime minister and his policies.

The second-tier leaders who favour a balanced view of Modi and his government's actions, blending appreciation and criticism where they are warranted, are: Jairam Ramesh, Abhishek Singhvi and Shashi Tharoor. Here too, the divide in the Congress was all too evident with three other senior leaders—Anand Sharma, Adhir Ranjan Chowdhury and Kumari Selja—publicly opposing what Ramesh, Singhvi and Tharoor argued and insisting that criticism should not be "confused" with demonising and that the opposition should not be expected to parrot the government's views.

It was Ramesh, a lawmaker of the Rajya Sabha, who set off the trend against "demonising" Modi. At a book launch function in Delhi on Thursday night, he said Modi's model of governance was not totally devoid of merit and disfavoured demonising the PM.

Modi "talks in a language that connects him with the people. Unless we recognise that he is doing things that people recognise and which have not been done in the past, we are not going to be able to confront (him) ... Also, if you are going to demonise him all the time, you are not going to be able to confront him."

Further, Ramesh added, "let me tell you it is not a completely negative story when it comes to economics of governance; the politics of governance is completely different."

Ramesh found support a day later when Singhvi, another Rajya Sabha lawmaker, took to his Twitter handle saying, "demonising Modi wrong. Not only is he Prime Minister of the nation, a

one-way opposition actually helps him. Acts are always good, bad and indifferent. They must be judged issue-wise and not person-wise."

Both Ramesh and Singhvi praised the subsidised cooking gas supply scheme brought by the Modi government in its first five-year tenure (2014 to 2019) that is considered one of the major factors behind the Bharatiya Janata Party's commanding victory in this year's national elections, as it succeeded in winning over women voters.

this section believes that it was a wrong strategy by the party's former President Rahul Gandhi to go for relentless and all-out denouncement of Modi on the Rafael fighter jets purchase issue in the run-up to parliamentary elections earlier this year, which led to the party's oft-used slogan "chowkidar chor hai" (watchman is thief) when it sought to bring the prime minister directly into the line of fire over alleged graft.

What is more uncomfortable for the Congress is that Ramesh, Singhvi and

opposition parties are also witnessing support for Modi over withdrawal of Article 370 of the Constitution that had given special status to Jammu and Kashmir. A classic example of the churn in the opposition has been most tellingly brought out by the contrast between Trinamool Congress chief Mamata Banerjee's daily doses of diatribe against Modi in the last five years and almost complete silence on him ever since the recent parliamentary elections saw her party suffering major reverses and the



Supporters of BJP celebrate the party's victory in recent Lok Sabha elections.

PHOTO: REUTERS

Agreeing with Ramesh and Singhvi, Shashi Tharoor, a Congress lawmaker in the Lok Sabha, said he had been articulating for the last six years that Modi should be commended whenever he says or does the right thing, "which would add credibility to our criticism whenever he errs."

The comments by Ramesh, Tharoor and Singhvi reflect the view of a section in the Congress that believes that repeated, no-holds-barred attacks on Modi have had the opposite of the intended effect and went against the public mood. In fact,

Tharoor articulated their opinions at a time when the party leadership has launched a bitter attack on the Modi government over the arrest of its senior leader P Chidambaram, former finance minister of India, in a case of alleged money laundering.

The BJP's victory has not only left the opposition parties in tatters with defections and disintegration of alliances, it has also triggered disagreement among them regarding how to deal with the saffron party and Modi. It is not just the Congress; other

BJP making major gains in West Bengal. It was felt within her party that such a consistently long-running negative Modi-centric campaign actually backfired much like it did in the case of the Congress.

The BJP's poll win has set off a social engineering across India. The opposition parties need to reconcile with this and rethink and reorient their strategies accordingly. This is their biggest challenge. For them, it cannot be politics as usual.

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Stumbling blocks in Rohingya repatriation

A second attempt to repatriate the Rohingya refugees has failed as none of them agreed to go back to their homeland in Rakhine state of Myanmar.

If Myanmar grants citizenship to the Rohingyas, they will have less to fear regarding their safety and would automatically go back to Myanmar. The repatriation process will not be effective until citizenship guarantee has been ensured from the Myanmar government. The Rohingyas leaders have now demanded dialogue with Myanmar before the matter of repatriation is settled.

The Rohingyas have been living in dismal conditions and while frustration grows among them, having to survive only on the bare minimum—they are not willing to go back unless these demands are met: guarantee of citizenship, assurance of safety and freedom of movement. Amnesty International and other human rights bodies have also strongly recommended the United Nations to ensure citizenship and security for Rohingyas refugees before they are sent back to Myanmar.

The Myanmar government has so far remained quiet about their demands and unless enough pressure is put on the Myanmar government by international bodies for meeting those, the future looks bleak for these refugees.

Md Zillur Rahaman, by email.