

Reducing the cost of migration should be prioritised

Switzerland has been working in the area of migration in Bangladesh for some 10 years, knowing it is very important for the country's economy and people. It also played an important role in the run up to the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration (GCM) endorsed by the UN General Assembly last year. Switzerland's Ambassador to Bangladesh, Dr René Holenstein, recently shared his views on migration and the Rohingya crisis with Porimol Palma of The Daily Star.

What's your understanding of labour migration from Bangladesh? I have great appreciation for Bangladesh's efforts to address labour migration emphatically at national, regional and global levels. Bangladesh's leadership at the global level has helped to place migration prominently in the 2030 agenda. It has been our privilege to have worked with Bangladesh in these endeavours.

What are the challenges Bangladesh face? One is skilling of migrants—both soft and technical skills—that's extremely important. More than 60 percent of Bangladeshi migrants are low-skilled. Second is implementation of regulatory framework at all levels. Third, to lower the cost of migration—studies have shown migration cost for Bangladeshis is relatively high. It has to come down. Then comes the importance of best use of the remittances sent by migrant workers. Remittances should be invested in families but also in productive sectors.

What's the impact of high migration cost? It affects poor migrants and can expose them to exploitative practices. The whole governance of migration should be administered in a way to reduce migration cost so that migrant workers don't have to pay high rates. It is important to ensure accountability throughout the recruiting process. We now have the Global Compact for Migration (GCM). However, we see that manpower brokers and agencies involved in malpractices are not being held fully accountable. How can GCM help here?



René Holenstein, Ambassador, Embassy of Switzerland in Bangladesh

The GCM is relatively new and is not legally binding, but it is internationally important. It will help all stakeholders to work at local, national, regional and global levels to protect the rights of the migrants. The governments and NGOs are committed to work for the protection of migrant workers' rights. Bangladesh is also committed to follow regulatory framework and international good practices. However, it cannot happen overnight. One important aspect is to respect ethical standards.

Labour trafficking has become a matter of concern. How can this be addressed? Trafficking in persons is a crime. A strong framework is required to combat and prevent trafficking. I would like to commend the decision of Bangladesh to ratify the Palermo Protocol. Governments at national and local levels have to play their roles to make the framework effective. International standards have to be implemented to combat trafficking. The biggest problem is that people are being caught in the desperate peril of life when they are trafficked. Jobs and employment opportunities have to be created for two million young Bangladeshis who enter the labour market every year.

How can remittances be used in more productive sectors? I have the impression that a big chunk of the remittances is being used in productive sectors. It is important to ensure that migrant workers are able to make informed choices as to how to use their remittances.

We see a lot of migrants returning home, but there is no reintegration programme for them. What is your opinion on this? It is a relatively new area in Bangladesh—but has become a priority area to reintegrate people economically and socially. A tailor-made approach is needed to address this topic, which will take into account individual needs of the returning migrants. The Swiss government is committed to support Bangladesh towards this end. It is sometimes very challenging to reintegrate the trafficking victims because they face mental distress and social stigma.

Is there any new approach from Switzerland as you support the reintegration programme?

Together with Denmark and other partners, Switzerland is looking at best ways to reintegrate returning migrants. Very often their conditions depend on their localities. The new approach would be to work with the whole community in order to better reintegrate the returnees in society. Many of them have acquired skills that can be extremely helpful for the communities in society.

The Rohingya crisis appears to be a protracted one. How do you look at it?

It is really incredible to see what Bangladesh has done and the hospitality that has been extended to the Rohingyas until now. The UN agencies, international community, NGOs and INGOs are also doing good jobs not only for the refugees but also for the host community. My government stands by Bangladesh firmly during this difficult period. It's a matter of concern that the conditions in Myanmar for voluntary, safe and dignified return have not been met yet.

Is there enough international pressure on Myanmar?

It is encouraging that regional actors are increasingly being involved in finding a solution to this crisis. It's a political crisis, not a humanitarian one. The problem is not rooted in Bangladesh, but in Myanmar. So, strong collaboration with Myanmar and the international community through UN is crucial. More efforts are needed for voluntary and sustainable return of the Rohingyas.

What political support are you providing to Bangladesh?

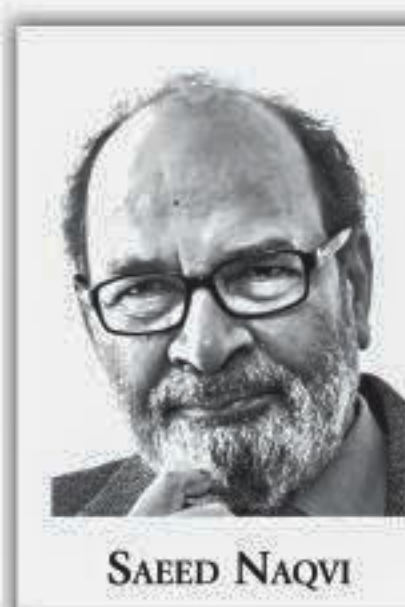
In the multilateral fora Switzerland has supported Bangladesh and its positions in the context of the Rohingya refugee crisis. Switzerland continues to call for the implementation of the recommendations of the Advisory Commission on Rakhine State. One of the main objectives of the visit of then President of the Swiss Confederation Alain Berset to Bangladesh in February 2018 was to express solidarity with Bangladesh. The special envoy on Myanmar of the UN Secretary General is a Swiss diplomat. She's actively involved in finding a solution.

We are supporting multinational organisations, NGOs and INGOs and also providing technical support and expertise. We will continue to work closely with Myanmar and Bangladesh to ensure safety and protection of the refugees and their voluntary and safe return to Myanmar.

R Rohingyas' most important demand is citizenship and safety in Myanmar, but Myanmar is still reluctant on it. How do you see it?

Statelessness of people is a big injustice. It deprives people of their basic rights. In the long run the citizenship issue must be solved. Any relocation to Bhashan Char has to be voluntary. We encourage the Bangladesh government to continue its close collaboration with the humanitarian organisations, to preserve humanitarian operational space and to enable them to function in a free and unimpeded manner and in a safe and secure environment.

Many uses of Al Baghdadi: Why did they kill him?



SAEED NAQVI

IN these dark days when terrorism has become a strategic asset, to bump off a superior practitioner like Abu Bakr al Baghdadi has implications. Had he begun to serve the interests not of his original handlers but, possibly, their rivals? Has he been eliminated at all? Does his disappearance leave unprotected those oil wells, which his gang or his patrons profited from? Is the drama in murky light, a bait to drag President Trump back to the West Asian arena which he is militarily withdrawing from? From the very beginning, Syria was at the heart of the conflict between Trump and the Deep State which is now accepted even by the *New York Times*.

In fact, *New York Times's* Establishment columnist Thomas Friedman, while applauding the killing of the ISIS, reveals which side he is on in the Trump-Deep State conflict. He notes, satirically, how "effusive Trump was of the intelligence agencies who found and tracked al Baghdadi to the lair in Syria where he blew himself up to avoid being captured."

Friedman then gives vent to the bile he has accumulated against Trump for having been at cross purposes with the Deep State Friedman so obviously adores. "Well, Mr President, those are the same intelligence agencies who told you that Russia intervened in our last election in an effort to tip the vote to you and against Hillary Clinton." What does this line of reasoning mean?

When history is written, Trump will be faulted on a hundred counts, and severely. But it would be uncharitable not to note one truth about him: Trump is the only president

in recent history who tried to end military conflicts the US was involved in and who did not start a conflict. There have been 13 military conflicts in recent decades costing USD 18 trillion, by some estimates.

The Baghdadi image did have its uses. The last time his photograph appeared on front pages of newspapers was after the Easter Sunday massacre in Colombo, Sri Lanka on April 21. On TV too Baghdadi was shown claiming the massacre as "revenge" for attack on a mosque in New Zealand. French experts, among others, soon established that it was a fraudulent clip—a voice had been super imposed on his visage.

Which outfit would like to stir up a conflict between Sri Lanka's two frail minorities—Muslims and Christians? New Delhi alerted Colombo as early as April 4, that a major terrorist attack can be expected. How did New Delhi know?

At this time Sri Lanka was sharply divided between two camps: President Maithripala Sirisena had embraced China's Road and Belt Initiative; Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe was in convulsions to sign the (SOFA) Status of Forces Agreement with the US before the next general elections.

A puzzle remains. The island nation is at the centre of fierce competition between a rising China and a retreating US for influence in the Indian Ocean. Over 300 people are killed; 500 injured. Among those killed are Chinese Marine engineers. Hotels attacked have Chinese links. Whodunit?

There were stories about Saudis leaving because they had advance knowledge. Supposing the Al Baghdadi clip claiming the massacre had been borne out by facts, which direction would the needle of suspicion point to? Islamic terror? What purpose would that narrative serve?

Looking for simple answers would not help. A small island nation, just recovering



PHOTO: AFP

Islamic State's slain chief Abu Bakr Al-Baghdadi.

from a vicious civil war, would be shaken up by the sheer scale of the massacre, warranting the appearance of intelligence agencies from everywhere—US, UK, Israel, Australia, India. An initial pooling in of intelligence would lead to a penetration of systems until the benefactors achieve their hallowed goal: place roadblocks in the way of the Belt and Road project.

That may or may not have been the plan but police sniffer dogs found something extraordinary while walking through the Jaic

Hilton hotel. The dogs stopped in front of an apartment and would not stop barking.

The management cited some difficulties in opening that apartment, national security or no national security. After considerable time had lapsed, two persons claiming to be with the US embassy turned up. In the room were two "explosive detectors". The detectors, said the two men, were for their personal security. Just look at the cockiness of this stance. They ignored the obvious fact: dogs would only bark if the detectors had been in

touch with explosives. These details are part of the investigations conducted by Dr Michael Roberts of the University of Adelaide.

Those who tried to foist the tragedy on Al Baghdadi were obviously embarrassed. But even a fraudulent use of the ISIS chief was possible when he was still theoretically alive. He may be missed. Even *New York Times's* Friedman, I have quoted earlier, had recommended that Al Baghdadi can be creatively used in the American interest. He advises Trump not to waste his time fighting the ISIS. He wants "Trump to be Trump—utterly cynical and unpredictable." He continues, "Trump should let ISIS be Assad's, Iran's, Hezbollah's and Russia's headache."

Friedman has not cooked up the theory of terrorism as a strategic asset on his own. He has acquired this wisdom from leaders, including US Presidents like Barack Obama. In the course of a lengthy interview in August, 2015, he asked Obama a very pertinent question. When ISIS first reared its head in Mosul a year ago, why did the president not immediately bomb it out of existence?

Obama stated quite plainly: "we did not just start taking a bunch of air strikes all across Iraq because that would have taken the pressure off Iraqi Prime Minister, Nouri al Maliki." Obama's priority was not the elimination of the founder of the Caliphate. His priority was to exert pressure on Nouri al Maliki to vacate the Iraqi Prime Minister's office. Why? Because Maliki was "brazenly" pro Shia and had refused to sign the Status of Forces Agreement with the US. Obama's "one-two" (to use a term from boxing) worked. US pressure, and al Baghdadi's menacing presence at the gates of Iraq's capital, helped ease Maliki out.

Saeed Naqvi is a senior Indian journalist, television commentator and interviewer.

ON THIS DAY IN HISTORY



November 3, 1998
Another section of Great Wall of China discovered

Announced on this day in 1998 was the discovery in the Hui Autonomous Region of Ningxia of a previously unknown 15.5-mile (25-km) segment of the Great Wall of China, which runs a total of about 4,500 miles (7,300 km).

CROSSWORD BY THOMAS JOSEPH

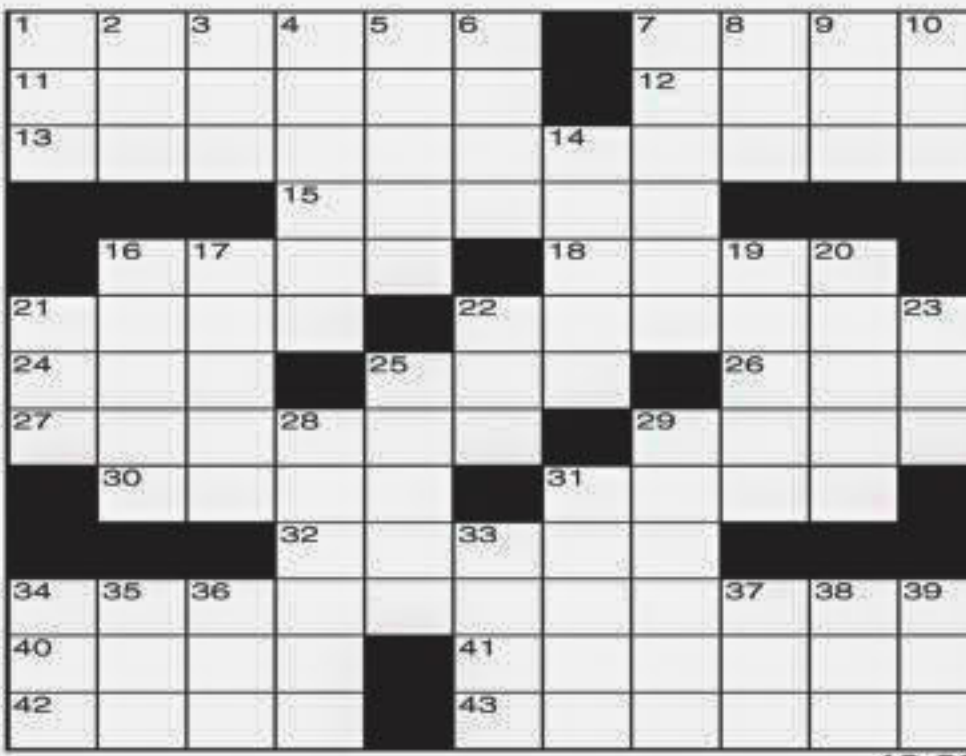
ACROSS

- 1 Bringer of news
- 7 Give the cold shoulder
- 11 Roma's land
- 12 Fast runner
- 13 "Tell It to My Heart" singer
- 15 Having tattoos
- 16 Diner desserts
- 18 Supply with a free pass
- 21 Locate
- 22 Yellow fellow
- 24 Hill worker
- 25 Spoil
- 26 —Grande
- 27 Sure to fail
- 29 Plane part
- 30 Ninny

- 31 Slimming plan
- 32 Edna Ferber book
- 34 "Bad Blood" singer
- 40 Lotion ingredient
- 41 National park in Maine
- 42 Rock group
- 43 Soup choice

DOWN

- 1 Wallop
- 2 Greek vowel
- 3 Bright beam
- 4 In cahoots
- 5 Detroit team
- 6 Gloomy
- 7 Follow secretly
- 8 Opposing vote
- 9 Ornate vase
- 10 Honey maker
- 14 Home style
- 16 Wine grape
- 17 As a follower
- 19 Scientist Curie
- 20 Use a press
- 21 Craze
- 22 Scoundrel
- 23 Pound occupant
- 25 Copycat's cry
- 28 Deceived
- 29 Native hut
- 31 Dance music
- 33 Babysitter's bane
- 34 Bar bill
- 35 In the manner of
- 36 Hither's partner
- 37 Writer Tarbell
- 38 In shape
- 39 Eastern "way"



YESTERDAY'S ANSWERS

D	I	A	L	S	I	N	C	A	S
I	N	L	E	T	P	I	A	N	O
K	N	I	F	E	A	X	I	O	M
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BEETLE BAILEY

by Mort Walker



BABY BLUES

by Kirkman & Scott

