



Ministry of Expatriates' Welfare  
and Overseas Employment



IOM International Organization for Migration

# **INSTITUTIONALISING DIASPORA LINKAGE**

## **THE EMIGRANT BANGLADESHIS IN UK AND USA**

**February 2004**

**Ministry of Expatriates' Welfare and Overseas Employment, GoB  
and  
International Organization for Migration (IOM), Dhaka, MRF**

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# INSTITUTIONALISING DIASPORA LINKAGE THE EMIGRANT BANGLADESHIS IN UK AND USA

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Ministry of Expatriates' Welfare  
and Overseas Employment



IOM International Organization for Migration  
আইওএম আন্তর্জাতিক অভিবাসন সংস্থা



## Preface

From the very birth of human civilisation, people have been moving across geographic frontiers, be it in search of food and shelter or to avoid persecution or for the insatiable need to explore. Currently about 175 million people are living outside their country of birth. Bangladeshis have also been going abroad in large numbers every year in search of employment or better economic opportunities. As of today, a total of nearly three million Bangladeshi workers have left for foreign employment; an average of 250,000 a year. According to a rough estimate, 1.05 million Bangladeshis are living abroad permanently either as citizens or with other valid documents. They make up the ever-growing Bangladeshi diaspora. The Bangladeshi diaspora contributes to the development of the country in many ways. One of the major contributions is in the form of remittances, which accounts for a significant one third of the foreign exchange reserve. Therefore, people who move away seldom sever ties with their home country. On the contrary, international migration is thought to play a positive role in helping forge economic, social and cultural links between peoples and States. Research has shown that global migration works as a bridge between host and home countries. The economic and social interaction of the diaspora can be beneficial for migrants, host countries and home countries. Unfortunately, knowledge on the Bangladesh diaspora remains inadequate. It is increasingly becoming essential to build understanding of the nature of the Bangladeshi diaspora and to address problems that they are facing.

Considering the importance of migration to Bangladesh, the Government has set up a separate Ministry named “Ministry of Expatriates’ Welfare and Overseas Employment” to further strengthen the Government mechanism in managing migration and ensuring welfare of expatriate communities abroad. The newly formed Ministry has been entrusted with the duties of managing both long-term and short-term migration. The Ministry is trying to extend all supports in ensuring the well-being of the Bangladeshi diaspora as well as initiating their participation in development activities in Bangladesh. In doing so, the Government needs to develop a concrete plan of action. However, a systematic information base to plan the sector is lacking in Bangladesh and there is no information about the nature of emigrant Bangladeshi communities abroad, their professional expertise, and types of problems they face either in the country of immigration or the country of origin. It is also essential for the Government to identify the needs for capacity development within its functionaries for the efficient management of this sector.

The International Organization for Migration (IOM), a partner to Governmental efforts in Bangladesh since mid 90s provides continuous support to the Government in its efforts in migration management. IOM is currently implementing a project “Building Capacity of Ministry of Expatriates Welfare and Overseas Employment in Bangladesh”. Under the project a number of activities have been undertaken for capacity building of the newly established Ministry. This study report “Institutionalising Diaspora Linkage: The Emigrant Bangladeshis in UK and USA” is one of the outcomes of this project.

As the Government of Bangladesh aims to ensure the well being of the diaspora communities, create space for them to participate in the development process of

Bangladesh, take initiatives for positive linkage building with second generation Expatriate Bangladeshis and devise measures for influencing public policy of the host countries, this study will provide the policy makers, civil society organisations, private sector and the emigrant/diaspora communities some necessary information.

In an Inter-Ministerial Consultation Meeting held on June 26, 2003 this study report was discussed and finalised. The Consultation was attended by the representatives from different Ministries, Government agencies, international agencies, private recruiting agencies, civil societies etc. The Honourable State Minister for Expatriates' Welfare and Overseas Employment of the Peoples' Republic of Bangladesh, Maj. (rtd.) Quamrul Islam inaugurated the Consultation as the Chief Guest.

Though this study is based on the experiences of Bangladesh emigrant communities of two countries - UK and USA – where the majority of them are residing, it is expected that it will provide a basic guideline to formulate overall plan and programme to ensure the welfare of the Bangladeshi diaspora as well as to initiate process to engage them in development works in Bangladesh. We hope this publication is the first attempt and will lead the way for other such empirical studies that aim to provide knowledge on various issues regarding the Bangladeshi migrants.

We take this opportunity to express our gratitude to the participants and moderator of the Consultation and others involved in the process of finalising this report for their sincere contribution.

We would also like to convey our deepest appreciation to the Researcher Professor Tasneem Siddiqui for her sincere efforts in carrying out this study report.

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## **Abbreviations**

BBC	British Broadcasting Corporation
BMET	Bureau of Manpower Employment and Training
DV	Diversity Visa
EBs	Emigrant Bangladeshis
EW&OE	Ministry of Expatriates' Welfare and Overseas Employment
GCSE	General Certificate Secondary Examination
GoB	Government of Bangladesh
GSC	Greater Sylhet Development and Welfare Council
HSC	Higher Secondary Certificate
INS	Immigration and Naturalisation Services
IOM	International Organization for Migration
NGO	Non-Government Organisation
OP 1	Opportunity Visa
RMMRU	Refugee and Migratory Movements Research Unit
SPSS	Statistical Package for Social Science
SSC	Secondary School Certificate
UK	United Kingdom
US	United States
USSR	Union of Soviet Socialist Republics

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Long-term migration from Bangladesh is a well-known phenomenon. A good number of people who are of Bangladeshi origin now reside in different countries of the world as long-term migrant. The emigrant population has certain emotional, social and cultural requirements for which they want to maintain a certain degree of relationship with Bangladesh. This in many cases results in economic, social and cultural interactions. Because of these links, Bangladesh along with the host countries has made significant gains from long-term emigration of a section of its population.

Realizing the benefits of migrants and the importance of managing migration for the benefits of all, the seventh parliamentary government took a decisive step and created a separate ministry, the Ministry of Expatriates' Welfare and Overseas Employment (EW&OE), in order to efficiently manage the migration sector. The ministry has been entrusted with the duties of managing both long-term and short-term migration. One of the aims of the Ministry in this area is to ensure the well being of the long term emigrants, as well as to create space for them to participate in the development process of Bangladesh. In order to do so, the government needs to develop a concrete plan of action. This study is a modest attempt to provide the policy makers, civil society organizations, private sector and the emigrant community with necessary information to develop policies and strategies in this regard.

For this research diaspora has been viewed as communities of migrants settled permanently in and owing allegiance to host countries while at the same time are aware of their origin and identity and maintain varying degrees of linkage with their country of origin and with other diasporic communities of same origin. The study is also focused on two major destinations of long term Bangladeshi immigrants, the UK and the US.

Long Term Bangladeshis immigrants mostly migrate to the industrial countries including UK, USA, Italy, Japan, Australia, Greece, Canada, Spain, Germany, South Africa, France, Netherlands, Belgium and Switzerland. In both UK and US two distinct groups of migrants are found; they differ in term of social, economic and demographic characteristics.

Expatriate Bangladeshis (EBs) have made their mark in diverse fields. Some has made original contribution in the field of research and education. Some others curved a niche for Bangladeshi EBs in the food industry though hard labour and creativity. Second generations showed great success in entering politics and the main stream media. They have also been forming different associations. These associations and media organisations serve the need of EB communities by providing an opportunity to enjoy a vibrant cultural life and also prove them access to all kind of information. More importantly, they have helped in developing a pan Bangladeshi identity in their countries of residence.

EBs can take part in the economic development process of Bangladesh in many ways. Those involved in business can expand their business domain extending to Bangladesh. They can also develop backward linkage in Bangladesh by importing necessary products from Bangladesh. Successful professionals can also participate in the development process of Bangladesh by sharing their skills in relevant areas. EBs involved in mainstream politics of the countries of migration can also take part in

the development process of Bangladesh by positively influencing the policies of those countries.

Both first and second generation EBs have varying degrees of links with the country of origin. These links have been created and are maintained for varying reasons including the important role of EBs in the war of liberation of Bangladesh; the regularly flow of remittances to Bangladesh; investments in the home country particularly in terms of property. However it was also found that the deep emotional attachment of the first generation EBs with Bangladesh will not automatically be passed on to the second generation. The former had undertaken various measures to keep the latter interested with the country of their roots. Different innovative steps have to be undertaken by the state, civil society and the private sector in Bangladesh to institutionalize the diaspora linkage.

It was found that while participating in the economic development of the country in terms of investments, the most popular avenue is real estate. Different categories of investor EBs faced various types of problems while investing. Some of these can be addressed by taking concrete steps. It was also found that a majority of professional EBs were deeply interested to participate in the development process of Bangladesh through sharing expertise that they have attained in different fields.

On the basis of the findings of the study, some recommendations have been made. These have been grouped in three sets. The first set of recommendations deal with policy issues. The second set is made to addresses the concerns of the EBs and to build their confidence on commitment of the government towards them. The third aim at institutionalizing the mutually beneficial relationship among EBs and Bangladesh through concrete measures.

At the policy level, it is suggested that along side the many Government initiatives already in place, the GoB may also highlight the problems of EBs to the government of host countries in bilateral discussions. It should also protect them by immediately considering the ratification of the 1990 *Convention on the Rights of Migrant Workers and all Members of their Families*. Efforts must be made towards positive image building that is based on positive achievements made by the people of the country. Furthermore the concerned agencies of the government should explore the possible market opportunities in Europe and North America and other long-term migrant receiving countries. On the basis of the market needs the government has to make significant investment towards developing human resource to cater to such market. In order to make globalisation process meaningful Bangladesh government should also take initiative so that the labour sending countries demand greater liberalisation in accessing labour market in the developed countries.

To build the confidence of the EBs, the government must give priority to some of the problems they are facing; steps must be taken; to improve airport management, provide migrants with voting rights and the right to contest in election and ensure speedy legal redress. A separate welfare fund might also be created for the welfare of EBs.

It has also been recommended that the contribution made by the EBs in the War of Liberation and continuous support through remittances, investment, education and welfare work should be recognised through national celebration of a special day for

the EBs. An award scheme for the Bangladeshi diaspora including both EBs and short-term migrants should also be introduced.

There should also be steps taken to strengthen the linkages between the second generation and the home countries. Efforts could be made to organize Bangladesh study programs, student exchange programs, study travel programs and joint projects with Young EBs and Young Bangladeshis. A Diaspora Research Centre could also be set up to carry out research on policy agendas charted out by the ministry. Steps must also be taken to encourage investment of EBs and encourage them to utilize their skills and expertise for the betterment of the country of origin. The government might consider taking steps to disseminate information, organize talks and workshops, setup websites and launch projects to share skills and expertise such as education and health projects and training centers on catering etc. However the government must also take steps to improve the law and order situation of the countries. EBs must also be encouraged to influence the policies in the host countries.

To ensure these the government must also have special organizational setups including, an Inter-ministerial Coordination Committee, Cells in Bangladesh Missions and Sub-Committees under the Ministry of EW&OE.

In conclusion it must be highlighted that the capacity of the Ministry must be developed further to enable them to take these steps and institutionalize the relationship between the Bangladeshi diaspora and the Bangladesh. Many countries of the world have large diaspora populations. The diaspora groups generally possess deep psychological attachment with their roots. Experiences of global diasporas make it clear that feeling of diaspora communities for their countries of origin do not automatically produce mutually beneficial outcome. The country of origin has to take significant proactive measures to get on board its diaspora as partners in development.

## CHAPTER I

### 1. INTRODUCTION

Long-term migration from Bangladesh is a well-known phenomenon. A good number of people who are of Bangladeshi origin now reside in different countries of the world as long-term migrants. Industrialised countries of Europe, North America and Australia are the most important destinations of these long-term emigrants. However, currently Bangladeshis can be found in almost all parts of the world. People of Bangladeshi origin who are residing in different parts of the world as long-term migrants have made their marks in many fields ranging from economic activities to the academic arena. They have developed successful enterprises. The restaurant industry is one such enterprise that brought the long-term emigrant Bangladeshis to the forefront. Due to the ingenuity of emigrant Bangladeshis, curry has become the second staple food of the UK.

Along with host countries, Bangladesh has also made significant gains from long-term emigration of a section of its population. Long-term emigrants played a glorious role during the war of independence of Bangladesh. The continuous flow of remittance is another of their well-recognised contributions to the home country. New export markets have opened up for Bangladesh. Bengali ethnic goods, cultural and spiritual materials are being exported to different countries of the world to cater to the demand created by long-term emigrants. The emigrant population is also showing an interest to invest. Regular visits to Bangladesh by the emigrant population play a positive role in keeping the Bangladeshi airlines economically viable. In some of the countries, emigrant Bangladeshis are also getting involved in electoral politics. This opens up new opportunities for influencing public policies of those countries in favour of Bangladesh.

The emigrant population has certain emotional, social and cultural requirements for which they want to maintain a certain degree of relationship with Bangladesh. This in many cases result in economic, social and cultural interactions. Different studies on global migration have shown that migrant community can work as a bridge between host and home countries, and migrants' economic and social interaction can be beneficial for all three parties; the migrant, the host country and the home country.

The successive Governments of Bangladesh have gradually realised the importance of its emigrant communities. The seventh parliamentary Government took the most decisive step in this respect and created a separate ministry, the Ministry of Expatriates' Welfare and Overseas Employment, in order to efficiently manage the migration sector. The Ministry has been entrusted with the duties of managing both long-term and short-term migration.

Since the mid-1970s, the Government of Bangladesh has been involved in regulating and controlling short-term labour migration. Long-term migration however, is a completely new area of Government's intervention. Aims of the Ministry in this area is to ensure the well being of the long term emigrants, as well as to create space for them to participate in the development process of Bangladesh. In order to do so, the Government needs to develop a concrete plan of action. Moreover, there hardly exists any systematic information base to plan the sector. There is no information about nature of emigrant Bangladeshi communities abroad, their professional

expertise, and types of problems they face either in the country of immigration or the country of their origin. Besides, the Government also requires to identify the needs for capacity building of its functionaries for the efficient management of this sector. Hence, it is important to undertake an in-depth study on the issue to ensure efficient use of the limited resources of the Government. This study is a modest attempt to provide the policy makers, civil society organisations, private sector and the emigrant community with necessary information to develop policies and strategies in this regard. The Long-term emigrant community of Bangladesh is very dispersed. However, the overwhelming majority of them reside in the UK and the US. Due to time and resource constraints this study was based on the experiences of emigrant Bangladeshis of these two countries.

## **1.1 OBJECTIVES**

The objectives of the study can be divided into two parts: policy objectives and, research objectives.

*The research objectives of the study are:*

- i. Review existing literature and studies on long term emigrant Bangladeshis living particularly in the UK and the US.
- ii. Trace the processes of their migration and settlement patterns.
- iii. Sketch social, economic and cultural profiles of emigrant Bangladeshi communities.
- iv. Gather data and analyze those for identifying their needs, concerns, and priorities.
- v. Gauge the level and nature of links of such emigrants with Bangladesh, particularly of second and third generation diaspora.
- vi. Assess scope and the role of emigrant Bangladeshis on the political and economic machineries of the host country in formulating policies towards Bangladesh.

*The policy objectives of the study are:*

- i. Suggest policy measures for addressing immediate and long-term issues of concerns of the emigrant communities of Bangladesh.
- ii. Suggest policy and recommend programmes for linking resources/ remittances/ skills of emigrant communities with the development process in Bangladesh.
- iii. Suggest policy guideline to strengthen as well as establish new institutions both at Government and civil society levels to create opportunities for linking expatriates with Bangladeshi society and economy.

## **1.2 ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK**

There are a few analytical perspectives available for explaining the relationship of long-term migrants with their countries of origin and destination. These perspectives however, mostly reflect either host country's views or that of sending country. From the perspective of the host country, three concepts are well known. These are melting pot theory, cultural mosaic theory and multiculturalism. From the sending country perspective, brain drain theory is the most well known. Two other concepts have come into recent usage. These are, diaspora and trans-nationalism. The following section makes a brief discussion on the above concepts and decides on a frame-work for analysing the Bangladeshi diaspora abroad.

### **1.2.1 Melting Pot, Cultural Mosaic and Multiculturalism**

The idea of melting pot is predominantly used with reference to the creation of the United States as a nation. Melting pot refers to the ideas that societies formed by immigrant cultures, religions, and ethnic groups produces new hybrid social and cultural forms (Lura, 2000). The notion comes from the pot in which metals are melted at great heat, melting together into new compounds, with great strength and other combined advantages. In comparison with assimilation, it implies the ability of new or subordinate groups to affect the values of the dominant group. Sometimes it is referred to as amalgamation, in the opposition to both assimilation and pluralism. The term melting pot may be applied to many countries such as Brazil, Bangladesh or even France, mostly referring to increased level of mixed race and culture.

The melting pot theory has later been criticized as being both unrealistic and racist. It is argued that this theory focused on the Western heritage and excluded non-European immigrants. Besides, despite its proclaimed "melting" character its results have been assimilationist. The concept of cultural mosaic is used in the context of Canada. Each immigrant's or family's culture of origin is respected as independent. They are not expected to "melt". Australia uses the term multiculturalism. It also respects immigrant's choice to keep their cultural identity (Willet,1998). Although theoretically the US, Canada and Australia differs with regard to looking into cultural identity of their immigrants, practically however there is hardly any difference in methods they use in creating or moulding the culture of subsequent generations. It is argued by some that in all these three countries the immigrants gradually become part of the dominant culture through language, education and other processes of integration. Most importantly, these concepts concentrated on the needs of receiving societies and to some extent, individual immigrants, but do not explore the relationship with the sending states.

### **1.2.2 Brain Drain/ Circulation**

Major theorizing on long-term migration took place during the 1960s that reflected the concerns of the developing world. Migration under this perspective was generally perceived as brain drain from the developing world to the developed world. The industrialised countries have been encouraging migration of particular groups of people from the developing countries. They were the professional and skilled human resource of the countries concerned. The developing states make huge investment for human resource development with the expectation that such trained manpower

will advance the society and economy at large. As education in most of the developing states is highly subsidised, migration of this trained workforce to the developed world is viewed as having a retarding effect on the former.

In recent times however, long-term migration is being seen from a somewhat different perspective. Some examples are found where a section of them at certain stage of their life return to their country of origin and contribute positively by using the knowledge and technology learnt in the country of immigration. It is in this context that the term brain circulation enters into the migration discourse (Naim: 2003)<sup>1</sup>. The concept of brain drain and brain circulation is mostly applied in case of educated and skilled migrants. The concepts of diaspora and transnationalism on the other hand, incorporate all kinds of migrants.

### **1.2.3 Diaspora and Transnationalism**

Diaspora is an old term originating from a Greek word. The term is used in many ways. Historically, it was used in explaining dispersion of the Jews from Palestine following the conquest of Babylonia by the Judaeen Kingdom in the 6<sup>th</sup> century BC and again following the Roman's destruction of the Second Temple in 70 AD.<sup>2</sup> The term diaspora has also been used in the New Testament to describe the Christians living outside Palestine. Before the creation of the State of Israel the term diaspora was used to describe the stateless Jews who were dispersed in many countries. The Jewish diaspora dreamt of a State and emotionally wanted to return to that State. During this phase, the return was an important issue in the discussion of diaspora. However, once the Jewish State was established, a section of the Jews went to Israel but a large number continued to remain in other countries but participated in the development of Israel. This gave birth to liberal formulation of diaspora where return is not an essential part of the concept. In such dispensation, diaspora is defined as transnational groups of immigrants living abroad in host countries but maintaining economic, political, social and emotional ties with their homeland and with other diasporic communities of same origin (Sek pye LIM :2001). Such view sometimes brought suspicion in some quarters about the ultimate loyalty of the emigrants. Transnationalism in this context helped explain the loyalty of the immigrants.

Transnationalism stresses that migrants can live in two spaces at the same time. They argue that migrants seemed to be continuously negotiating their identities between the context of sending and receiving states (Salazar, 2001). Development in information and communication technologies has enabled migrant groups to keep in contact with their families and friends at home with relative ease. Contemporary processes of global economic, social and cultural integration are creating transnational communities. For this research, diaspora has been viewed as communities of migrants settled permanently in and owing allegiance to host countries while at the same time aware of their origin and identity and maintaining varying degrees of linkage with their country of origin and with other diasporic communities of same origin.

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<sup>1</sup> Quoted in World Economic Forum Knowledge Navigator's Web.

<sup>2</sup> Encarta World English Dictionary, 1999-2000.

Long-term emigrants from Bangladesh fit in nicely to this concept. The primary allegiance of the long-term emigrant Bangladeshi is of course towards their host countries. It is the host country, which benefits the most from the value that is being created by their economic activities. In the receiving countries the emigrant Bangladeshis also get opportunity to maximise return from their skills, or enjoy other gains, social or political. Along with this they pursue a relationship with Bangladesh, to satisfy their social and cultural needs. Such relationship in case of many countries has produced spontaneous economic interactions. When such relationship are institutionalised, they bring in benefits to all parties, the sending states, receiving states, and the emigrants. In studying long-term emigrant Bangladeshis, this conceptual frame-work has been used.

### **1.3 SOURCES OF INFORMATION**

It has been mentioned earlier that the issue of Bangladeshi Diaspora is one of the least explored areas in the existing migration literature of Bangladesh. Therefore, it was very important to identify different sources for gathering information. The Government, non-Government and private sources of information are identified as follows:

#### Government:

- Different ministries including the Ministry of Expatriates' Welfare and Overseas Employment and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs have been identified as potential sources of information. Inter-ministerial meetings were a good source of information as well as the right forum for putting the issue before the Government.
- Bangladeshi missions located in the UK and the US (Bangladesh High Commission in London and Bangladesh Consulate in New York) were identified as other potential sources of information regarding the expatriate communities in the respective countries.

#### Academic/Private Organisations:

- Bangladeshi associations located in the host countries were also a good source of information on the nature of emigrants in those countries. Associations of Bangladeshis were also important sources for contacting and interviewing Bangladeshi expatriates of different professional and economic backgrounds.
- Different research institutions like the Sussex Migration Research Centre (SMRC), University of Sussex, UK Centre for Bangladeshi Ethnic Community, University of South Roehampton, UK, and University of Gold Smith, UK were also useful sources of secondary literature regarding expatriates and diaspora.
- Some key resource persons were identified to prioritise major issues. Professor John Eade of Roehampton University, Professor Riaz Rahman of New York University and Dr. Raisul A Mahmood of BIDS were some of such persons.

## IOM:

The IOM Regional Office at Dhaka has a good collection of literature on international migration and on EBs in the UK and the US. It also constituted an important source of information.

### **1.4 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

In pursuing a study on a new area with limited resources, a comprehensive research methodology needed to be developed. Methodological techniques that were applied in this study are described below.

#### **1.4.1 Gathering of Secondary Information:**

Published materials and research reports that are available in various Government agencies, research institutions and selected universities in the UK and the US, constituted the most important source of secondary information. RMMRU already has some secondary materials in its collection. Along with these, other secondary materials such as books, journals, and periodicals were collected.

#### **1.4.2 Gathering of Primary Data:**

Given the paucity of information, a methodology has been designed that relies more on the generation of primary data. The UK and the US are the two major destination points for the Bangladeshi expatriates. Therefore, field research was conducted in these two countries. 37% of the Bangladeshi expatriates of UK are located in 4 to 5 Boroughs of East London. Therefore in the UK, London was selected as the primary site for data collection. Again half of the total number of Bangladeshis who went to the US as long-term residents, stays in New York and its surrounding areas. Therefore, for the US, New York was selected as the study area.

Information was gathered at two stages. Firstly, through interviews of key resource persons, Bangladesh mission officials, office holders of different associations and secondly, by interviewing expatriate Bangladeshis. However, this study did not allow much scope for a broad-based field survey of expatriates. Therefore, in-depth interview of a select group of emigrants, both male and female, representing various professional, non-professional and skill categories were conducted.

Three separate questionnaires were prepared. One was for Bangladesh Missions in the UK and the US, another for Bangladesh associations, newspapers and business organisations and the other one for individual emigrants. The questionnaire designed for individuals was pre-tested by sending it to a few migrant Bangladeshis through e-mail. On the basis of their responses it was revised.

The fieldwork in the US and UK took place between 8 October and 2 November, 2002. In both areas, officials of the Ministry of Expatriates' Welfare and Overseas Employment participated in the fieldwork for some time. Their participation convinced the expatriates about the commitment of the new Ministry and helped the data generation process. The fieldwork was conducted under a strict time schedule. Mission officials were informed before hand about the type of organisations and individuals that the research team would like to interview. In both the study areas meetings were first conducted with the Mission heads and relevant officials. In case

of the US, the Consul General's office of New York then helped the study team by organising meetings with professional bodies, investors, EBs involved in mainstream politics, and, those involved with the media. The media then supported the fieldwork by seeking suggestions from larger groups of EBs through publishing reports on the study. This initiative of the media resulted in people contacting with the researchers and organising meeting with their associations.

In the UK, the research methodology had to be changed as it was difficult to organise meetings through the mission due to shortage of time. A list of key resource persons was prepared before the fieldwork. These people were approached for organising meetings with their respective organisations. Four broad categories of people were covered; those who were involved in the mainstream political process in the UK, have experience of investing in Bangladesh, members of local level associations, and journalists.

In London, individual interviews were conducted mostly in Tower Hamlets. In New York individual interviews were conducted in four areas Jackson Heights, Church McDonalds, Astoria and Manhattan. Few interviews in both UK and US were conducted through e-mail. Those were mainly the professionals. Around, fifty percent of the interviews was conducted by the researcher, and in rest of the cases questionnaires was filled in by respondents themselves. Altogether two returnees were interviewed in Dhaka, one from US, and the other from UK.

In London, a local Bengali radio channel named *Betar Bangla* organised a talk show. The programme was announced in the newspaper. A large number of Bangladeshis from different parts of the UK participated in the talk show and provided their thoughtful suggestions for the study.

Quantitative data has been processed using the SPSS package. Qualitative data was processed manually.

Once the first draft of the report was completed, comments were gathered from different sections at different stages. Two meetings were held in the Ministry of EW&OE, with the Secretary as the Chair. Representatives of IOM, Dhaka, including the Regional Representative, participated in both the meetings and provided their inputs. Written comments were received from the IOM, the cabinet division and a few other ministries. An Inter-ministerial meeting was also held<sup>3</sup>. State Minister for Ministry of Expatriates' Welfare and Overseas Employment participated in the meeting as the Chief Guest. Secretary, Ministry of Expatriates' Welfare and Overseas Employment, Regional Representative, IOM, Dhaka, Executive Director RMMRU, Senior Social Development Adviser, DFID, UK, Joint Secretary, Ministry of Establishment, Joint Secretary, Ministry of Civil Aviation and Tourism, Joint Director, Foreign Exchange Policy Department of Bangladesh Bank, Vice Principal, Academy for Planning and Development, Secretary General, BAIRA, Joint Secretary, Ministry of Establishment, Ministry of Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs, Senior Assistant Secretary, Ministry of Expatriates' Welfare and Overseas Employment, Senior Assistant Secretary, Ministry of Home contributed to the deliberations of the meeting. A debriefing also took place in London in June with the assistance of the Greater

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<sup>3</sup> June 26, 2003

Sylhet Council.<sup>4</sup> On the basis of suggestions from the above sources, the final report has been prepared.

There are a few limitations of this study. Time for field work was short. Selection of the interviewees was biased. Purposively mostly the legal emigrants were interviewed. Membership to association, investment experience, experience in participating in mainstream politics were the major criteria for selecting the interviewees. Information on Hundi has been deliberately omitted at the request of some interviewees.

## **1.5 ORGANISATION OF THE REPORT**

The report is divided into ten chapters including the introduction and summary conclusion. Chapter II highlights experiences of few important countries that have been successful in creating mutually beneficial diaspora linkage. Chapter III traces the process of migration and the settlement of Bangladeshis in the UK and the US. It also attempted to understand the nature and extent of migration of Bangladeshis to these countries. Chapter IV presents case studies of some successful EBs. Chapter V gives an idea of associations and media of the EBs. Chapters VI to VIII present the findings of the empirical research. Chapter IX highlights the role of the Bangladesh Government in respect to EBs. The concluding chapter X, summarises the major findings of the study and offers some recommendations.

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<sup>4</sup> June 13, 2003

## CHAPTER-II

### 2. GLOBAL EXPERIENCES OF DIASPORA

This chapter presents experiences of some countries that have been greatly successful in institutionalising bonds with their diaspora. The countries discussed are China, Italy, Greece, Lebanon and India.

#### 2.1 THE CHINESE DIASPORA

The Chinese diaspora is the largest in the world. Emigration from China to Southeast Asia took place on a large scale since the 12<sup>th</sup> century. Over a period of thousand years, over 20 million people of Chinese origin are now settled in various Southeast Asian countries. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, 3 to 6 million Chinese indentured labourers were often forcibly shipped out of China. United States, the Caribbean and Southeast Asia were major destination points. In the 20<sup>th</sup> century, skilled and better educated Chinese migrated to US, Canada and Australia. In this process, the total number of the Chinese diaspora has currently reached 70 million. These emigrant Chinese have made significant contributions to China's development process. Over 70% of the Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) flow came from the overseas Chinese. Labour intensive export processing sectors and real estate are the two major areas where the diaspora investments have taken place. However, it is noteworthy that the Chinese diaspora invested in their home country not only out of their deep commitment to their roots, the Chinese Government also pursued proactive policies by bringing about widespread and meaningful economic reforms, stable investment environment, and offering incentive packages, good infrastructure and a flexible labour policy. Most importantly, China could establish decentralised authority to the lowest possible administrative unit. All these facilitated diaspora investment.

#### 2.2 THE ITALIAN DIASPORA

Italy has a population of 57 million but the size of its diaspora is 60 million. During the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, a large number of Italians left Italy in search of employment and better economic prospects. Emigration continued after the establishment of the Fascist regime and in the period leading to the Second World War. Western Europe, South America and North America were the major destination points of the Italian emigrants. Italy experienced major inflow of remittance from its emigrants since the 1880s. Migration appeared to be a ready solution in reducing unemployment and creating income sources for the poor families left behind. It is from the realisation that emigrants are an important source of the country's earning, in 1901, an Emigrant Act was promulgated that created the General Commission for Migration. The Italian Government still treats its diaspora with great importance and creates various institutional structures to maintain its regular interaction with the diaspora. In 1985, it encouraged the establishment of the Committees of the Italians Abroad in areas with a minimum of 3000 nationals. With a view to foster closer links with the Italians abroad, its parliament passed a citizenship law in 1992 that explicitly allows its diaspora to retain their Italian citizenship. There are reserved seats for the Italians abroad in both the houses of parliament. It also provides financial assistance to its diaspora for teaching the Italian language.

### **2.3 THE GREEK DIASPORA**

The total population of Greece is 10.6 million and the estimated size of her diaspora is about 6.7 million. They are spread over nearly 86 countries from the US to the countries of former Soviet Union, from Canada to Australia, from Latin America to Central Europe, from South Africa to Germany and England. International trade between the west and the east resulted in creating major migratory waves from Greece in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. The diaspora maintained steady relationship with Greece and helped her during the time of need. The Greeks are culturally and religiously a homogeneous society. The successive Governments in Greece pursued coordinated policies and strategies to keep the diaspora linkages actively functional through helping them maintain their ethnic, cultural and religious identities. In 1983, the Government of Greece established the General Secretariat of the Greeks Abroad (GSGA) as an autonomous entity under the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The GSGA implements a wide range of activities and programmes in order to maintain a dynamic relationship with its diaspora. Providing economic assistance, organising conferences, distributing information kits and audio-visual materials, sponsoring scientific research on diaspora, organising cultural events - all take place under the purview of this organisation. The Greek diaspora have organised themselves in 3,500 organisations in their host countries. Through collaboration with these organisations, GSGA implements many of its above activities.

### **2.4 THE LEBANESE DIASPORA**

Lebanon has a resident population of 3.5 million but its worldwide diaspora population is 14 million. 92 percent of the Lebanese diaspora is settled in North and South America. Brazil and US hosts the lion's share of the Lebanese diaspora. Outside the Americas, Saudi Arabia is another country with significant overseas Lebanese. The Lebanese Government allows dual nationality. The diaspora mostly enjoy the same rights and privileges like resident Lebanese. Lebanon has maintained strong cultural and commercial links with its diaspora. The remittances sent by them plays an important role in Lebanon's economy. Its large trade deficit of US\$ 6.2 billion is met by these remittances. In North America and Australia, the Lebanese diaspora is politically very active. They have formed different lobby groups through which they counter the Jewish lobby in the US. In order to strengthen the link between motherland and diaspora, the Lebanese Government has formed the World Lebanese Cultural Union (WLCU). The Government also makes substantial financial contribution to the WLCU. The Union organises cultural events, celebrates Lebanon's national day, runs youth exchange programmes etc. in countries with large number of emigrants.

### **2.5 THE INDIAN DIASPORA**

The Indian diaspora, at present, stands around twenty million. People of Indian origin began to migrate overseas in a significant number in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Once the British abolished slavery in 1833-34, enormous demand for cheap labour followed. The British colonial masters met this demand through indentured Indian labour. They were mainly taken to countries of Africa, Southeast Asia, the Caribbean and Fiji. There has been a tremendous upward mobility among the subsequent generations of labour diaspora in most of these countries. In many instances they have risen to

prominent political and economic positions. Since the mid-50s, another trend became visible in Indian emigration. A large number of Indian professionals migrated to the industrialised West. Currently, there are 1.7 million Non Resident Indians (NRIs) in the US. They are considered as one of the highest earning, best educated and fastest growing ethnic groups of the US. Indian Americans are one of the two most successful ethnic groups in the Silicon Valley. In Canada, NRIs constitute almost 3% of its total 30 million population. There are about a million overseas Indians in the UK. Indians have achieved eminence in business, information technology, engineering, medicine, media, music etc. in the UK. The Indian community has their presence in the political arena as well, with four elected members in the House of Commons and 11 in the House of Lords.

The Indian diaspora is increasingly playing an important role in mobilising political support in UK, USA and Canada for issues of vital interest to India. In the US, the Indian Caucus has been successfully lobbying Congresspersons and other eminent figures to rally support on sensitive issues of concern to India. The Indian Government treats NRIs as extraordinary assets. The Government acknowledged the NRIs' role during the Kargil conflict and the aftermath of Pokhran nuclear tests. They extended a valuable service to the Indian Government by explaining the official Indian perspective to the opinion makers of their countries of residence. The current Indian Government has undertaken various programmes to institutionalise the relationship of India with its diaspora. It is considering the issue of dual citizenship, standing committee in parliament on diaspora and improvement in consular services. It is also undertaking concrete reforms to encourage investment of the NRIs in India.

## **2.6 CONCLUSION**

From the discussion above, it is evident that many countries of the world have large diaspora populations. The diaspora groups generally possess deep psychological attachment with their roots. It was seen that such feelings continue to be passed on to successive generations and may remain operational even after thousand years of the initial migration experience. Major investment that boosted Chinese economy was mainly by the migrants of Chinese origin in Southeast Asia. The Indian intellectual and business diaspora have been formally recognised by the Indian Government as emissaries of India in their countries of residence. Huge trade deficit of Lebanon is balanced by the remittances sent by its diaspora, which is around five times bigger than the resident population. Historically diasporas played key roles in nationalist and independence movements of some countries like Italy and Greece. Experiences of global diaspora discussed above makes it clear that feeling of diaspora communities for their countries of origin do not automatically produce mutually beneficial outcome. The country of origin has to take significant proactive measures to get its diaspora on board as partners in development.

## CHAPTER-III

### 3. BANGLADESH DIASPORA: CASES OF THE UK AND THE US

This chapter begins with a discussion on Bangladeshi diaspora. It then concentrates on Bangladeshis in two countries, the UK and the US. It traces the immigration history of the diaspora to these countries. The chapter also attempts to draw a socio-economic profile of the diaspora. It gives an idea of remittance flows to Bangladesh from the two countries.

#### 3.1 GLOBAL BANGLADESHI DIASPORA

##### 3.1.1 Number

It was stated earlier that the Bangladeshis who had gone abroad for a better life are spread in many corners of the world. Of course, Western Europe, North America, Australia and New Zealand are their most preferred destinations. Nonetheless, they are also located in almost all the erstwhile federating states of former Soviet Union and the eastern European states of Bulgaria, Hungary, Czech and Slovak Republics, Romania and Poland. However, there is a relatively small presence of Bangladeshis in Africa and Latin America, South Africa being the only exception.

There is no information readily available on the number of Bangladeshi long-term emigrants. The population census data of Bangladesh does not include information on migration, internal or international. BMET, the repository of information on short-term migration, does not have any mechanism to keep record on the long-term migrants. This study has tried to collate information from informed sources having first hand knowledge on the long-term immigrants of Bangladesh. The figures provided are mostly their estimation. The countries on which such estimation was available are: UK, USA, Italy, Japan, Australia, Greece, Canada, Spain, Germany, South Africa, France, Netherlands, Belgium and Switzerland.

**Table 3.1: Number of Bangladeshi immigrants in industrialised countries.**

Country	Number of Bangladeshi Immigrant
UK	500,000
USA	500,000
Italy	70,000
Canada	35,000
Japan	22,000
Australia	15,000
Greece	11,000
Spain	7,000
Germany	5,000
South Africa	4,000
France	3,500
Netherlands	2,500
Belgium	2,000
Switzerland	1,400
Total	1,178,400

Source: Educated guess made by Government officials of Bangladesh who have first hand experience with the immigrant community.

Table 3.1 presents the estimated number of Bangladeshi migrants in those countries. It provides estimates of fourteen countries. In these countries there are about 1.178 million Bangladeshis now living abroad permanently either as citizen or with other valid documents.<sup>5</sup> South Africa is the only country of the African continent that has some information on expatriate Bangladeshis. On the other hand, though Japan does not admit long-term residents officially, there is a good segment of Bangladeshi diaspora population living in Japan.

All the countries except Japan and South Africa are from Western Europe and North America. The population census data of the UK and the US put the figure of EBs around 300,000 each. However, ethnic Bangladeshi press and also those who have information, claim that there are 500,000 Bangladeshis in each of these countries making them the two largest emigrant Bangladeshi receiving countries. Table 3.1 shows that the next largest concentration of EBs is in Italy.

### **3.2 DIASPORA IN THE UK AND THE US**

In this section a detail study is made on two major host countries of EBs on the basis of available secondary information. Quite a few studies have been undertaken with regard to migration of Bangladeshis to the UK, (Eade, Vemplew & Peach (1990), Wrench & Qureshi (1996), Gardner (1995), Samad & Eade (2002) and Carey & Shukur (1985)). Ahmed Kaufman & Naim (1996), Haddad (1986), Ali (1996) and Angell and Rahim (1996) have conducted some research on EBs in the US.

#### **3.2.1 History of Emigration**

Migration history of people from the area that now constitutes Bangladesh has been quite long in the making. Tracing mythology, Sri Lankans believe that Singhala communities first migrated to Sri Lanka from this area. Aatish Dipangkar, the Buddhist scholar-traveler carried the knowledge of earthen embankment cross-dam to China during the 10<sup>th</sup> century. During the British period, people from this area also migrated to Assam and Burma. However, migration in an organised scale to UK and US of course was intimately connected to that of British colonialism. Bengalis in particular, gained the reputation as 'Lashkar' or seamen over the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. In Bangladeshi context seamen mostly originated from the southeast part of the country, i.e., Chittagong and Noakhali, which face the Bay of Bengal. People from those areas found jobs in British ships, which carried goods from Kolkata to all over the world. People from Sylhet region that was not adjoining the sea also joined the British merchant navy as 'Khalashis', cooks, cook-mates and cleaners.<sup>6</sup> Experts on Sylheti migration speculate that, this group did not have much experience with the sea and they jumped ship at the first opportunity. Due to the 'ship jumping' tendency of the seamen, small settlement of the Bengalis, especially Sylheti persons have been established in port vicinities in a number of countries including Burma, Singapore, Hong Kong, US and UK. Those who jumped ship in UK ended up settling in London, Liverpool and Bristol. These Sylheti seamen are identified as

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<sup>5</sup> Concept Paper on Building Capacity of Ministry of Expatriates' Welfare and Overseas Employment, IOM, Dhaka, 2002 also made similar rough estimation. According to this estimate, the number of long term EBs is 1.05 million.

<sup>6</sup> It is speculated that the section of landless peasants from Sylhet who had no hopes of work in their homelands, found job opportunities in the dockyards of Hooghli. Section of them may have joined the British merchant ships (Alam, 1988).

pioneer migrants of Bengal. Literature on Bengali migration to the US also shows that in the 1920s and 1930s a small number of Bengalis jumped ship in Detroit and Michigan port cities. Naff (1992) documented that many immigrants from Bengal also ended up in different South American countries thinking them to be the US. In the following section, the nature and growth of migrant communities in the UK and US has been discussed.

The pioneer migrants of Bengal who landed in UK were predominantly of Sylheti origin. Information about the area from where the pioneer migrants to US originated is not available. However Sylhetis and people from Swandip constitute a large segment of the current Bangladeshi communities in US. The early migrants to the UK found jobs as labourers in different industries. Those in the US got employed as shopkeepers and security guards. Early migrants both in UK and US were mostly illiterate. They represented landless peasantry and all of them were male. In case of UK, most of the early settlers got married to the locals and established their families in the host country.

The second wave of migration to the UK started in the 1950s; in case of the US it gained momentum in the 1960s. The British Government adopted a policy to encourage labour migration from its erstwhile colonies, as there was acute labour shortage after the World War II. Once the British Government introduced its new immigration policy, a section of the sea faring migrants who had by then settled in the UK, sponsored their kith and kin from their villages. Arriving as young men in the post war period, most lived and worked in the northern cities such as Birmingham and Oldham. They found employment in heavy industries. Some went to London, worked in the garment trade as pressers or tailors. During the 1970s, the heavy industry sector of the UK was declining and a large number of Bangladeshis lost their jobs. This brought many Sylhetis to London from the north of UK. In the 1980s they started bringing their wives and children to the UK in a large scale. A small number of highly educated people representing the upper and middle class of Bangladeshi urban society, also migrated to Europe even before the Second World War. They came to UK for higher education. Gradually they entered into professional life in UK and changed their legal status into citizens. Nonetheless, the number of those who came as non-economic migrants is relatively small.

Nature of Bangladeshi migration to the US during the second wave is significantly different compared to that of UK. Professionals and skilled migrants dominated the second wave of migration. Students started arriving in US in the 1960s. A large number of students, after finishing their studies, did not return to the then East Pakistan. Rather they chose to remain in the US by changing their immigration status from student to permanent residents. According to the 1986 immigration data, 61% of the Bangladeshi aliens who adjusted to the permanent resident status were students. By the year 1992, it was estimated that 90% of the total population of Bangladeshi immigrants were professionals (Mali 1996). However, one must remember that people who migrated up to 1971 from the territory that now comprises Bangladesh, were not counted here. Up to 1947 they were counted as Asian Indian and during the period from 1947 to 1971 they were counted as Pakistanis.

Since 1990s Bangladeshis are entering the US also under 'Opportunity Visa' (OP-1 1990-91) and Diversity Visa (DV 1995-96). Majority of those who are coming to US

under these Visa schemes are relatively less educated in comparison to previously skilled professionals and students, who later changed status. In any case, most of the immigrants under the latter two categories also have finished secondary education. They have settled in big cities of New York, Boston, Dallas, Houston, Newark, Jersey City etc. These new immigrants prefer to live in those cities where they have relatives or acquaintances. They find jobs in small businesses such as gas stations, restaurants, small construction companies, small stores, security companies, and car services including driving taxis.

### 3.2.2 Number of EBs in UK and US

The exact number of EBs living in these two countries will always be difficult to arrive at because of the reasons mentioned above. Table 3.2 shows that up to 1961, the total Bengali population originating from the then East Pakistan in UK was 6,000. In the next thirty years it rose to 162,835. Among them, 105,012 were Bangladesh born and 59,679 were born in the UK. Peach (1990) suggests that the number of Bangladeshi children born in Britain doubled from 16,000 to 32,000 between 1981 and 1985/87 and doubled again between 1985/87 and 1991 census. In 1991, 36.4 percent of the Bangladeshi population was born in the UK. The census of 2001 shows that the total number of EBs in UK had risen to 300,000. However, the ethnic Bangladeshi media holds that the current number of Bangladeshi immigrants should be around 500,000.

**Table 3.2: Estimate of growth of Bangladeshi population in UK 1961-2001.**

Year	Bangladeshi born	UK born Bangladeshis	Total ethnic BD population
1961	6,000		6,000
1971	21,000	1,000	22,000
1981	48,517	16,000	64,561
1985/87	79,000	32,000	111,000
1991	105,012	59,679	162,835
2001			300,000

*Source:* Data of 1961,71,81 census, is gathered from Peach (1990), 1985/87 data is from 'Labour Force Survey' and 1991 census of UK. Data source of 2001 is weekly *Patrika*, October, 2002.

According to the statistics of the Visa Office of the Bureau of Consular Affairs of the US Department of States and the Immigration and Naturalization Services (INS) of the US Department of Justice, from 1972-95, a total of 35,817 persons of Bangladeshi origin received immigrant status. Another 156,196 persons of Bangladeshi origin came to US with non-immigrant visa. Non-immigrant visas are usually issued to students, tourists, business people, diplomats, and any other person who need to stay in the US temporarily. From 1981 to 1995, 11,040 of those non-immigrant visa holders changed their visa status and became immigrants.

**Table 3.3: Annual figures of Bangladeshi people awarded US Visas.**

Year	Immigrant Visas	Non-Immigrant Visas	Adjustment of Visas	Awarded Citizenship
1972	17	98	-	-
1973	122	795	-	8
1974	97	1,483	-	25
1975	382	1,212	-	39
1976	410	1,385	-	55
1977	362	1,766	-	86
1978	449	2,124	-	78
1979	382	2,610	-	132
1980	423	3,395	-	146
1981	607	4,519	-	207
1982	504	4,852	182	223
1983	504	4,226	301	273
1984	590	4,178	306	275
1985	873	4,857	373	337
1986	1,239	7,185	437	296
1987	1,293	7,091	410	334
1988	1,129	9,570	354	419
1989	1,373	10,864	813	496
1990	3,811	8,963	980	696
1991	6,202	9,804	4,651	874
1992	2,248	12,888	1,202	967
1993	2,928	16,889	544	942
1994	29,771	7,582	487	1,151
1995	6,895	17,860	-	-
1972-95	35,817	156,196	11,040	8,05

Source: Reports of the Visa Office, 1974 to 1995 and the Statistical Year Book of INS, Department of Justice 1973 to 1994

In 1996, Mohsin Ali made some estimations about the total number of EBs in US on the basis of some assumptions. According to him, among Bangladeshis in America it is believed that at least 30 percent of those who came to America with non-immigrant visas continue to live in the US, trying to change their status to immigrant. Some have succeeded and the rest are still pursuing their cases. So, there might be about 46,800 Bangladeshis who are living in America with non-immigrant visas. In addition, Bangladeshis who came prior to 1972 and their descendants might have been about 6,000. The descendants of those who went there after 1971 might have been about another 7,200. If the growth rate of the Bangladeshi population in America is estimated at a rate of 3 percent per year for an average of 10,000 people over the last 24 years, the American-born Bangladeshis might be estimated at 7,200 from 1972 to 1996. The death rate of Bangladeshis in America is not significantly different from the death rate of those who are still living in Bangladesh. With all these statistics

and assumptions Ali estimated that there might have been about 107,657 Bangladeshis living in US including 46,800 (43.5%) non-immigrants up to 1995<sup>7</sup>.

Nonetheless, there is also no method to determine the exact number of Bangladeshis living in New York City. The 1990 Census Report of New York City did not show any count of Bangladeshi people. New immigrants, who are from low-income groups, tend to stay in the big cities because of easy access to job markets and to public transportation.

We do not have any data or estimation about the total number of Bangladeshi immigrants in the US in the year 2002. The community leaders in New York stated figures that ranged from 300,000 to 500,000. Few others mentioned that out of total EBs in US, 60 per cent are legal immigrants, 20 per cent are those whose papers are under process and another 20 per cent are undocumented.<sup>8</sup>

### 3.2.3 Geographical Coverage

The Bangladeshi population of UK is overwhelmingly located in England (97 per cent). Again in England, the bulk of the Bangladeshi population live in the largest urban centers of Greater London, the west Midlands and Greater Manchester. Nearly half of the London Bangladeshis are found in the single Borough of Tower Hamlets, which hosts a quarter of the total Bangladeshis living in the UK. (*Source*: 1991 census). Tower Hamlets and the neighboring London Boroughs of Newham, Hackney, Haringey, Islington and Camden together contained 37 per cent of the Bangladeshi population of Great Britain in 1991. (Wrench & Qureshi, 1996). According to the census of 2001, 144,000 Bangladeshis are residing in London, making up just fewer than two per cent of the total city population. The numbers are projected to increase by over a third by 2011 (Kenny, 2002). The next largest concentration is in Birmingham.

The first wave of EBs in the US located itself mainly in Detroit and Michigan. By the time the 1980 census took place, the Bangladeshis were geographically dispersed throughout the United States. They were found in all states of the US except seven.<sup>9</sup> New York received the largest clusters of EBs i.e. 29%. In the 1991 census, the geographic location of the EBs changed significantly. Over 64% of the new immigrants chose to live in New York. Currently in the US, the largest concentration of Bangladeshis is in New York and in surrounding areas. These include New Jersey, Connecticut, Massachusetts, Pennsylvania, Maine, Washington DC, and Delaware. Ali estimates that in 1996, 50 percent of the total EBs were living in New York alone. The second concentration is in Florida and Texas, while the third largest concentration is around Los Angeles, Arizona, Oregon and Colorado. The following section looks at the socio-economic profile of EBs in the UK and US.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> The figures of immigrant, non-immigrant and visa adjustment are not yet available for 1996.

<sup>8</sup> Meeting with the Bangladeshi investors in New York organized by the Bangladesh Consulate, October 10, 2002.

<sup>9</sup> Alaska, Idaho, Maine, Montana, South Dakota, Utah, and Wyoming.

<sup>10</sup> Relevant information on UK is gathered from 1971, 1981 and 1991 census data. Sections on the US are mostly written on the basis of 1990 census counts on specific racial groups, the Statistical Yearbook of INS, Department of Justice 1973 to 1994.

### **3.2.4 Socio-Economic Profile**

#### Male-Female Ratio

There are more men than women among the immigrants in both the UK and the US. According to the 1991 census in the UK, males outnumbered females in the Bangladeshi ethnic group, with 1091 males for every 1000 females (Wrench & Qureshi 1996). It also shows that the male-female ratio of British-born Bangladeshis is more or less symmetrical. Therefore, the gender imbalance is a feature of those who were born in Bangladesh. The male dominance is particularly marked in the 50 years and older age group. The average age of Bangladeshi husbands is 10 years more than Bangladeshi wives.

The gender ratio for the total number of Bangladeshis in the United States in 1980 was 65% men and 35% women. Among those who came before 1959, the ratio was 83% men and 17% women. Among those arriving from 1975 to 1980, the ratio was 60% men and 40% women. Among the new entrants in 1990s, the ratio is again 65 men: 35 women.

#### Age

Both in the UK and the US, the Bangladeshis are one of the youngest population groups. In 2001, among the EBs in the UK, nearly twice as many are under the age of 15 than the Caucasian ethnic population (33% compared with 17%). Just over 5% of the EBs in the UK is aged 60 and over, whereas 19% of the Caucasian ethnic population belongs to that age group.

In the US, 80% in the 1980 census were aged 15-44; of which 55% were between 25-39. Children within 14 years of age made up 12%; those in the midlife years of 45-64 constituted 6%; and only 1% were 65 or more years of age. The 1990 new entrants profile shows slight changes. 75% were aged 15-44 and 40% were between 25-39. Children up to the age of 14 were 15%; those between 45-64 were 8%; and 2% were 65 years and over.

#### Education

In case of the UK, it is well known that during 1950s and 1960s, when major migration flow took place, men from rural Sylhet with very little educational background joined the UK labour force to work in local factories. This less educated status is reflected on the educational status of the whole of EBs in the UK. Two-fifths of the Bangladeshi working age population in the UK does not possess any educational qualification (Kenny, 2002). The UK born Bangladeshi population is enrolled in schools. In 1999, 30 percent of the young EBs achieved 5 or more grades between A and C in General School Certificate Examinations. This is, however, less than the Indian ethnic community in the UK and the Caucasian ethnic community there. 62 percent of the young expatriates of Indian origin have been able to reach such grades and in case of Caucasian ethnic population, 50 percent reached that.

In the last few years, a small number of youths have been prepared to stay at schools, or go into higher education in order to study electronics, engineering, law, teachers' training, and youth and community work. (Carey & Shukur 1985).

In the US, EBs are a strikingly educated population overall, although with that advantage going proportionately to men more than women. Those in 1980 reporting up to four years of elementary school were 3.5% of the total population over the age of 20; 5-8 years of elementary school, 5%; with 1-3 years of high school, 7%; with four years of high school, 12%; with 1-3 years of college, 19%; and with four or more years of college, 53%. That latter category is made up of 3 men to 1 woman; it is comprised of 58% of the men over 20 and 42% of the women in the same age group.

### Marital status

In the UK, according to the 1991 census, the percentages of Bangladeshi men and women married and single were similar to those of white ethnic group, except that a rather higher percentage of Bangladeshi women were married. Bangladeshi people were less likely to be widowed or divorced. Divorce was clearly much less common among EBs than the Caucasian ethnic population.

In the US, in 1980 although a sizable proportion of EBs were young, they were predominantly married (77%). Young men who arrived single had all married by age 45 at the latest. Only 2.2% of the men over 15 listed themselves as separated, 1.5% as divorced and .65% as widowed. Among women over 15, 88% were married, none were single over age 45. only .8% were separated, 1% divorced, and 1.7% were widowed.

### Occupation

In the UK nearly two-thirds of the Bangladeshi men aged sixteen and over are in manual employment. 16% of them are in professional and managerial positions. Bangladeshis were the latest immigrants to revive the garment industry and to create ethnic enclaves of small shops, cafes, restaurants, taxi companies and travel agencies. The industrial distribution of work for Bangladeshi men is very different. More than two-thirds work in the distribution sector covering retailing, restaurants and other catering services with the largest other sources of employment being textiles and clothing, health and education. (Wrench & Qureshi 1996).

The second and third generations of Bangladeshis are eager to find work outside the ethnic niche. A good number of Bangladeshis are now in business, restaurants being the major growth industry where the EBs are doing extremely well. Bangladeshi women are predominantly working in 'other skilled trades', clerical occupations, personal services, sales and teaching. A higher percentage of Bangladeshi women work in unskilled jobs (Wrench & Qureshi: 1996).

In the US, EBs as a whole are predominately employed in professional and technical occupations. In 1980, 63% of the EBs were employed as (a) executive, administrative and managerial;(b) professional; and (c) technical, sales and administrative support. 19% of them were employed in services categories. 18% were employed in operators, fabricators and labourers category. Of all the Bangladeshis who were employed, 77% worked for wage or salary, 20% were Government employees and 3% were self-employed.

### **3.2.5 Labour Force Participation and Unemployment**

In 1991, 74.3% of the male EBs in UK were participating in the labour force. In the UK, compared to other ethnic groups Bangladeshis suffer higher rates of unemployment. In the 1991 census, 22.7 percent of Brit-Bangladeshi males of 16 years and above, were unemployed with the national average of 12.6 percent. (Samad and Eade: 2002). The unemployment rate in London in 2000-01 was 24 per cent among Bangladeshis. This is the highest among the black and other minority groups (Kenny: 2002).

Women's participation in the labour market is very low. Only 22.2 percent of the Bangladeshi women aged 16 and over are economically active compared to the national average of 50 per cent (Eade, Vamplew, Peach 1996).

In the US, according to the 1980 census, the rate of labour force participation for all EBs aged 16 and above was 73%. All EB work forces are constituted by 69% male and 31% female. However, 18% of the total EB work force in the US were women.

#### Income

EBs have the lowest ever earnings of all ethnic groups in London. In 2000-01, Bangladeshi workers earned an average of 5.92 pound per hour compared with 12.11 pound for employees from caucasian ethnic groups and 25 per cent of the Bangladeshi women earned less than 3.75 pound per hour.

The US 1980 income data differential between US born and foreign born household heads shows that the mean family income of foreign born head was US\$24,659 and that of American born head was US\$35,638.

### **3.2.6 Remittance Flow**

From the discussion above it is clear that the socio-economic condition of EBs of UK and US is not homogenous. A section of them is quite well off, whereas some other section may not be in good economic condition. Macro level data also reveals that those belonging to the professional category are relatively small, whereas large section of the EBs is associated with small services. Some represent very high educational qualification, while others are less educated, or uneducated. An important trait of this group is their propensity to remit money home for some reason or the other. Table 3.5 presents the country wise and year wise remittances sent to Bangladesh from 1997 to November 2002. One can see from the table, UK and US are two important remittance-sending countries. During the 1950s and 1960s these were the two major remittance-sending countries for Bangladesh. However, during the 1970s and 1980s the Middle Eastern countries took the lead. Since mid-1990s one witnesses that US has again gained importance.

In this context, it may be noted that over the years the US gradually became the second largest source country of remittance for Bangladesh. Table 3.4 shows that from January 1997 to November 2002 Bangladesh received a total of US \$11572.47m. as remittance. Of this, 1559.66m (13.5%) came from the U.S. Up to 1990s, white-collar workers dominated the Bangladesh immigrant community in the

US. It is understood that these immigrants usually spend a major share of their earnings in the host country. Whereas those who migrated under the OP1 and Diversity Visa send a significant share of their earning to Bangladesh, thus contributing in a major way in the remittance flow from the US. Another important element with regard to remittance flow is that, the Government of Bangladesh benefited in a major way from certain policies of the US Government. After September 11, the US Government is strictly monitoring the financial flows from and to the US. This has resulted in a major increase in financial flows through official channels to Bangladesh. Table 3.4 demonstrates rate of percentage increase in yearly remittance from the US since 1997 to 2001 ranged from 4.54% to 8.86%. The full statistics for the year 2002 is not yet available. Still it is evident that from January to November 2002, remittance flow compared to the previous year increased by 48%. It may therefore be concluded that the US is one of the top remittance sending countries where significant growth is taking place. Saudi Arabia, UAE and the UK are three other countries from where remittance flow is increasing.

Since 1997 to 2002 the flow of remittance from the UK amounted to US \$ 461.46 m. However, in case of UK, remittance flow does not represent any steady pattern. In some years it registered increase, while in others, the flow registered a negative growth. In the year 1998, remittance flow registered a growth of 5.92% from the previous year. In 1999, however, it registered a downward trend (-12.86%). Again in the year 2000, it grew by 25.56% from its previous year. The remittance flow swung in the negative in 2001 by -7.17%. In line with the US experience, remittance flow from UK also registered a sharp rise. In comparison to the previous year, the rise was 136.86%. The reason behind such growth could be attributed to the increased surveillance on monetary transactions following the 11 September incident. However, the average growth rate for UK for the period 1997 to 2002 stood at 29.66% and for the US, 14.63%.

**Table 3.4: Year wise growth of remittance flow from the US (In million dollars) from 1997-2002.**

Year	US		UK	
	Amount	% increase	Amount	% increase
1997	207.65	-	59.43	--
1998	217.09	4.57	62.95	5.92
1999	229.64	5.78	54.85	-12.86
2000	248.21	8.08	68.87	25.56
2001	264.95	6.74	63.93	-7.17
2002 (Nov.)	392.12	47.99	151.43	136.86
1997-2002	1559.66	14.63	461.46	29.66

Source: prepared on the basis of BMET data of 2003.

**Table 3.5: Year wise and country wise remittance flow of wage earners to Bangladesh from Jan '97 to Nov '02.**

Year	1997		1998		1999		2000		2001		2002 (Jan-Nov.)		Total	
Country	US. \$ Million	Core Taka	US. \$ Million	Core Taka	US\$ Million	Core Taka								
S. Arabia	521.71	2285.63	626.08	2941.32	791.93	3919.96	932.98	4869.7	978.59	5476.75	1158.83	6711.76	5010.12	26205.1
UAE	91.79	404.74	116.28	546.28	124.53	608.66	143.15	746.34	186.93	1046.17	247.02	1430.7	909.7	4782.89
Qatar	57.52	252.99	60.25	283.05	64.5	315.26	61.24	319.41	76.67	429.09	93.55	541.83	413.73	2141.63
Oman	52.05	229.51	88.84	417.37	94.1	460.8	87.13	454.36	90.6	507.05	99.95	578.89	512.67	2647.98
Bahrain	2.81	12.39	33.22	156.07	41.08	200.54	42.79	223.15	49.24	275.58	53.08	307.43	222.22	1175.15
Kuwait	207.96	916.97	219.22	1029.9	242.45	1187.45	246.47	1286.57	254.75	1425.73	293.39	1699.27	1464.24	7545.88
Libya	188.93	833.08	0.25	1.17	0.04	0.19	0.1	0.52		0	0.09	0.52	189.41	835.49
Iran	31.66	139.6	0.39	1.83	0.39	1.95				0	0.03	0.17	32.47	143.56
US	207.65	915.62	217.09	1019.89	229.64	1122.72	248.21	1294.05	264.95	1482.81	392.12	2271.1	1559.66	8106.19
UK	59.43	262.05	62.95	295.74	54.85	268.56	68.87	358.79	63.93	357.79	151.43	877.06	461.46	2419.99
Germany	6.11	26.94	4.05	19.03	4.84	23.81	3.94	20.63	4.83	27.03	7.35	45.57	31.12	160.01
Japan	0.98	4.32	29.98	140.85	45.16	220.11	16.09	83.6	11.6	64.92	14.19	82.19	118	595.98
Malaysia	22.47	99.08	71.28	334.87	57.22	279.76	45.56	236.84	31.85	178.25	46.99	272.16	275.37	1400.96
S.pore	66.45	293.01	12.16	57.13	11.28	55.11	10.53	54.73	8.15	45.61	23.48	135.99	132.05	641.58
Australia											0.65	3.76	0.65	3.76
Italy											3.8	22.01	3.8	22.01
S.Korea											1.05	6.08	1.05	6.08
Hong Kong											2.04	11.82	2.04	11.82
Canada												0	0	0
Switzerland												0	0	0
Others	7.51	33.22	57.2	268.73	44.62	217.86	47.89	250.43	46.61	260.86	28.88	167.27	232.71	1198.36
Total	1525.03	6709.15	1599.24	7513.23	1806.63	8882.74	1954.95	10199.12	2068.7	11577.64	2617.92	15165.6	11572.5	60044.4

Source: BMET, 2003

### 3.3 CONCLUSION

This chapter provided a cursory idea about global Bangladeshi diaspora. It was seen that there is a Bangladeshi diaspora population within the region. However, this diaspora is assimilated in their country of residence. Moreover, the historical context of the diaspora within the region has its own uniqueness. The chapter also establishes that there is a good number of long-term emigrants dispersed around the world but there hardly exists any data about their number.

This chapter also attempted to trace the processes of migration and settlement of Bangladeshis in the UK and the US. In both the places, pioneer migrants were the 'ship jumpers'. However migration pattern changed significantly in these two countries during the 1960s. In that decade, skilled and professionals mainly got the opportunity to migrate to US, whereas in case of UK it is the kith and kin of first generation migrants from same kind of rural socio-economic background who migrated to UK to work as labourer in the heavy industries. By the 1970s, such migration again got restricted in UK and family reunification remained as the only major avenue for migration. In respect to the US, since 1990s, new opportunities of migration under OP-1 and DV opened up. In both UK and US two distinct groups of migrants are found. Types of job and social status are essentially determined by their educational status. It was also seen that UK and US hold important positions among remittance-sending countries of Bangladesh. Over the years US has become the second largest remittance-sending country and in 2002 highest growth in remittance transfer to Bangladesh was witnessed from the UK.

## CHAPTER IV

### 4. CASE STUDIES OF SOME SUCCESSFUL EBs

Chapter VI gives an account of few EBs who have achieved great deal of success in their own fields. The section also provides some example of successful business ventures of the Bangladeshi diaspora.

#### 4.1 SUCCESSFUL EBs AND ENTERPRISES IN UK

##### **Mr. K M Abu Taher Choudhury, Community Leader, UK**

Mr. K M Abu Taher Choudhury is an icon of the Bangladeshi community in UK. He is one of the most successful Brit-Bangladeshi community leaders. Mr. Abu Taher is the current chair of Greater Sylhet Development and Welfare Council (GSC).

GSC is a national voluntary organisation working for the welfare of Sylheti people living in Britain and Bangladesh. Sylhetis constitute 95% of about half a million Bangladeshis living in Britain. GSC is Britain's largest Bangladeshi organisation. Mr. Choudhury became the Chair of the organisation for the second consecutive time in late 2002. He is the first Asian community leader to win 'The Best Community Leader Award' from all ethnic communities in the UK in 2000. In July 1997, Prince Charles summoned and honoured him at St. James Palace for his contribution and dedication to advance the welfare of the Bangladeshi community. He also has the 'Distinguished Leadership Award' of American Biographical Institute under his sleeve.

Besides being a community leader, Mr. Choudhury is a skilled engineer, seasoned businessman and renowned journalist. He is the Chief Editor of Euro Bangla, a major Bangla tabloid published from Britain. But instead of pursuing individual ambition, he prefers the community engagement. Essentially a community figure, he does not fancy merely to be in the public eye. He has so far helped many community projects to thrive. He helped Bangla Mirror, the first English language daily of the Bangladeshi community at the initial stage. He made great contribution to the Bangladeshi community in the areas of education, employment, housing etc<sup>11</sup>.

##### **Mr. Mohammad Shafique Miah, Social Worker, UK**

Mohammad Shafique Miah is a respected social worker of East London. Although not a highly educated person, Mr. Miah realising the importance of education for migrant communities, dedicated himself to advance the cause of emigrants' right to education. Miah actively took part in the war of independence of Bangladesh and emigrated to the UK in 1978. As children's education to a great extent depends on parents guidance, he organised association of parents of Stepny Green School of East London and in 1992 became the Parent Governor of the school. He was also the Parent Governor of the Brew Gate Field Junior School and the founding member of Tower Hamlet Asian Care Centre and Chair of the Brick Lane Trust. Currently, he is also the Co-Chair of the Collectives of School Governors of East London. He was instrumental in retaining Bangla as an A-level subject for GCSE examinations. Miah also played a leading role in establishing Bangla Town and a Shaheed Minar in East London.

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<sup>11</sup> Bangla Mirror, p.20, Thursday, October 17, 2002, London, UK.

He convinced the British education administrators about the need for holding examinations at junior school and successfully organised exchange programme between British and Bangladeshi teachers. He was also at the forefront in introducing Bangla classes in the evening sessions in some schools of East London. Miah maintains a deep link with Bangladesh. He established a primary school and a mosque in his village at Sylhet.

On the golden jubilee of the Queen's accession to the throne, Miah received the Queen Golden Jubilee Civic Award for his contribution to the development of the Bangladeshi community in the UK.

### **Mr. Amin Ali, Entrepreneur, UK**

Since its introduction, *Asian Business Award* is the most prestigious accolade for Asian businesspersons in UK. Mr. Amin Ali, an EB curry tycoon was one of the most prominent winners of the award last year. The award was presented by Prince Charles in a magnificent ceremony in the *London Museum of Natural History Auditorium*. The other Bangladeshis in the list were fishing and poultry businessman of Manchester Mr. Iqbal Ahmed, Mr. Mukim Ahmed, owner of Bangla Town's Café Naz and food distribution property businessmen Bari brothers: Faizul, Ashraful and Ehsanul.

After migrating to UK in the 80s, Amin Ali has become one of the most successful restaurant businessmen of UK within a decade. He has set a milestone in catering by pioneering designer restaurant. Besides *Red Fort*, his other famous holdings are *Soho Spice* and *Mosabo Thai Restaurant*. The Red Fort in 77 Dean Street is sort of a landmark in London's culinary map. It has been highly lauded by Britain's prestigious newspapers like The Evening Standard, The Sunday Times, The Sunday Business, The Newsweek and The Guardian. Simultaneously, Mr. Ali himself is also very popular with media. Different newspapers and magazines including The Daily Times, The Guardian, The Mirror, The Telegraph and The Evening Standard published reports about him. The Sunday Times did a cover story on Amin Ali. British Television has broadcasted a documentary named 'Will to Dawn' which is based on his life. He has won a number of prestigious British awards as restaurant owner, designer and promoter.

Besides being a wealthy businessman, he is also a major patron of community welfare initiatives. He initiated *Textile and Naxikantha Exhibition* in White Chapel Gallery. *The Bangladesh Festival* in Spitalfield market founded by him has significantly contributed in elevating the image of the EB community. Mr. Ali also supports various community newspapers. He is an important Asian member of the British Labour Party<sup>12</sup>.

### **Mr. Tommy Miah, Entrepreneur, UK**

In 1969, a 10 year old boy called Ajmon Miah, from Moulvibazar set out for the shores of Britain in search of a better life. Not speaking a word of English and

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<sup>12</sup> Chutir Dine 190, the Saturday magazine of the Daily Prothom Alo, p.4, 19 October 2002, Dhaka, Bangladesh

bewildered by his new surroundings, young Ajmon found it difficult to fit in. At 16, when he left school, all he took along was the name Tommy, given to him by his schoolmates who found "Ajmon" difficult to pronounce. He started working at a restaurant and gradually developed a fascination for the art of cooking. A few years later, Tommy moved to Edinburgh to open his own restaurant, The Raj, the first Indian restaurant of the city.

Thirty years on, Tommy Miah is a culinary mogul and a household name across Europe. He owns one of the top 'Indian' restaurants of UK, has been front-page news on The Telegraph, and is food consultant to some of the premier airlines in the world. Tommy was the Chef selected to deliver a curry lunch-box to 10 Downing Street for erstwhile Prime Minister John Major's 50<sup>th</sup> birthday. His Kuchi Bhindi is the most favourite curry dish of Cherie Blair, the wife of present British Prime Minister. And as the icing on the cake, he has the Queen of England featuring in his latest recipe book.

Through out the last decade, it has been difficult to keep Tommy Miah out of news. In 1991 Tommy launched an International Chef of the Year competition in Britain. In its eleventh year, in 2002, it drew more than 5,000 entries. In 1994, he made his way to the Guinness Book of World Records for cooking the largest curry ever, enough, they say, to feed 10,000 people. In 2001, he opened the Original Raj Hotel- Britain's first Indian-themed chain of hotels- which he plans to expand across the country.

Amidst sky-high fame and fortune, Tommy never forgets his responsibility to society and country. The entire proceeds of all three best-selling recipe books that he has written have been donated to charities, among them two orphanages in Dhaka and Sylhet that Tommy supports through his work. When he cooks, Tommy Miah is clad in his signature Bangladeshi flag appliqué gourmet coat<sup>13</sup>.

### **Dr. Rupa Huq, Labour Party MEP Candidate, UK**

Second generation Brit-Bangladeshis are redefining their roles in British society, irrespective of gender. They are gradually moving up the mainstream of British life. Dr. Rupa Huq is one of the forerunners in the new wave. Labour Party has nominated her as Member of European Parliament (MEP) candidate for North West region on October 2002. Once elected, she will be the first Brit Bangladeshi Muslim Female MEP.

Huq, 30, although a greenhorn in political age, is a bona fide, quintessential politician. Who else would have "fond recollection" of Thatcher days? Huq has a list of extensive European qualifications and academic accolades notched under her belt. Having finished BA Honours in Politics at Cambridge, studied at Strasbourg University, she did her Ph.D on the European Cultural Policy in London. From 1996-1997, Huq worked in European Parliament for Labour MEP Carole Tongue. She presently undertakes advisory work for EU in Strasbourg alongside lecturing in Management & Leisure at the University of Manchester. Rupa is also skilled in Eurospeak, being a fluent French speaker.

However, Dr. Huq is far from the archetypal politician that one identifies with and refuses to be labeled as one. She may be one of those run of the mill lecturers by

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<sup>13</sup> Slate, the monthly magazine from Holiday, p.9, July 2002, Vol. I, Issue IV, Dhaka

day, but by night Rupa metamorphoses into a superstar DJ, spinning and mixing records at some of Manchester's top hotspots. Her moonlighting activities as a DJ have coveted her national recognition in the musical world and as a formative part of the Blairite "Cool Britannia" vision.<sup>14</sup>

### **Lisa Aziz, Media Celebrity, UK**

Lisa Aziz is one of the most famous second generation EBs in media. She has been a presenter of Sky News and Live at Five for the last seven years. Since graduating from London University in Art & History, Lisa has been a journalist for the last eighteen years. She started in broadcasting by joining Radio City in Liverpool. Her television career began in 1984 when she got a job as a regional TV journalist with BBC Television West, based in Bristol. In 1985, she joined HTV West as a news reporter and later became co-presenter of HTV's award winning current affairs programme, *The West This Week*. In 1988, she joined TV as a reporter on the current affairs programme. A year later, she had already become the programme's main daily newscaster. During her last three years there, Lisa covered some of the show's most powerful stories such as the devastating cyclone in Bangladesh. After leaving, Lisa worked briefly in BBC World Service and NBC before joining Sky News.

The impressive success of Lisa culminated in her winning the 'Presenter of the Year' Award in 1992. She also won the Asian Community and Asian City Business Club Achievement Awards in 1989 and 1993 and picking up an 'Asian of the Year' Award along the way. She is also a famous winner of the 'Personality of the Year' Award from the Bangladesh British Chamber of Commerce.<sup>15</sup>

### **Syed Samadul Hoque, Bangla TV, UK**

Syed Samadul Hoque is a pioneer in Bangla print and electronic media in UK. He first earned his fame as the accomplished editor of *Janomat*, the leading Bangla weekly newspaper of Britain which has become a household institution of British Bengalis. Currently, he is drawing wide attention as the founding managing director of the successful three-year running Bangla TV.

Samadul Hoque, through Bangla TV, has spearheaded an ethnic TV revolution in UK. According to a survey published by the Independent TV Commission (ITC), Bangla TV has been one of two successful ethnic language channels broadcasting to the UK with a significant viewer share in the UK market.

After finishing a successful three months trial transmission in September 1998, Bangla TV started permanent transmission on 16 September 1999. It is the only channel that is produced in the UK for the growing British-Bangladeshi community, providing first-class and superior programmes, screening the latest news and entertainment. In late July 2002, Bangla TV surpassed the 10,000 subscription mark and that is an incremental process, paving the way for higher revenues and therefore more quality programmes. It is also a successfully exported franchise, having consolidated a significant proportion of the European and Middle Eastern viewer market. The next phase of its long term strategy is to corner the niche markets, expand into the US and be recognised as a globally viable media organisation.

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<sup>14</sup> Bangla Mirror, p.7, Thursday, October 24, 2002, London, UK.

<sup>15</sup> Bangla Woman, p.3, Issue 1, 24 October 2002, London, UK

Syed Samadul Hoque has led years of hard toil and single-mindedness of a group of men and women to produce an innovative and uniquely refreshing channel tailored to the needs of the British Bangladeshi community.<sup>16</sup>

#### **Mr. Nabab Uddin, Literature, UK**

EBs have not only succeeded in building their careers. Many of them have also taken time from their busy schedule to pursue a literary interest in Bangla. Some of them have achieved substantial success. One such important literary figure among EBs is Mr. Nabab Uddin. He is one of the most successful Bangla playwrights in UK and the current editor of *Janomat*, the oldest Bangla weekly of London.

Mr. Nabab Uddin is engaged in the Bangla theatre movement of UK for about two decades now. *New Home, Jibon Jemon Ekhane, Marichika, Anal, and Tarpar* are some of his most successful plays. Known performers from Bangladesh and UK performed in those plays. The plays were staged in major cities and towns of Britain like London, Birmingham, Manchester, Bristol and Luton. Over last half a decade he has expanded his interest into showbiz. He has established Link Promotions which is involved in producing and supporting different cultural events including plays and beauty pageants. He is the licensee of *Ms. Bangladesh* in *Ms. World Organisation*. He has authored and edited several books in Bangla.<sup>17</sup>

### **4.2 SUCCESSFUL ECONOMIC ENTERPRISES OF EBs IN UK**

#### **Bangladesh Caterers' Preeminence in British Curry Industry, UK**

Catering has become the flagship business of British Bangladeshis in the UK. The emigrant Bangladeshi owned curry restaurant was opened in Windmill Street, West London, in 1938. Today, after 60 years, British Bangladeshis are managing some 12,000 restaurants with a yearly turnover of nearly 3 billion pounds. Together they make a direct and VAT contribution of more than 85 million pounds and 300 million pounds respectively. Indirectly, many suppliers and related industries are being benefited from their success. The total number of employees currently stands at about 100,000 which are more than the number of people working in steel, shipbuilding and mining combined. Bangladesh Caterers Association (BCA) who represents Brit-Bangladeshi restaurateurs is one of the dominant business associations of the UK. Their Yearbook begins with felicitation of the British Prime Minister himself.<sup>18</sup>

### **4.3 SUCCESSFUL EBs AND ENTERPRISES IN US**

#### **Dr. Mohammad Ataul Karim, Academia**

Higher studies had always been one of the primary reasons for migrating to North America from Bangladesh. Since 1950s large numbers of students went to US for pursuing higher education. Many of them stayed over there and became successful scholars. Some of them have earned international recognition for their contribution. Dr. Mohammad Ataul Karim, Dean of the City University of New York and distinguished optical scientist is one of those luminaries.

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<sup>16</sup> Bangla Mirror, p.20, Thursday, October 24, 2002, London, UK

<sup>17</sup>Negative Positive, *About the Author*, LinkBangla, Dhaka, 2000

<sup>18</sup>BCA Yearbook, London, UK

After graduating in physics from Dhaka University in 1976, Dr. Ataul Karim went to United States in 1977. The next year, he had his first MS from the University of Alabama in physics. Then he did both MS and Ph.D in Electrical Engineering. Optical Image Processing was his area of study. After gaining US citizenship in '83, he joined Wichita State University of Kansas as Assistant Professor of Electrical Engineering. In the mid-80s, Star War Programme of President Regan opened a host of opportunities for research in optics. To tap this opportunity, Dr. Karim joined Daton University of Ohio in '86, as it was one of major centres of military research. He later became the Founder Director of Daton's Electro-Optics Programme. In '94 he became Head of the Electrical Engineering Department. He joined Tennessee University as Head of Electrical Engineering in 1998. He was selected from among 100 competent applicants. Since 2000, Dr. Karim has been working in his current position as Dean of Engineering in the CUNY. This institution that has been established for two hundred years is the oldest public university of America. It has, hitherto, produced 8 Noble laureates, highest among US public universities.

Apart from teaching, Dr. Ataul Karim has made his mark in research. Eight of his books are textbooks in different universities across the world. His first book, *Digital Design: A Pragmatic Approach* is in the syllabus of over one hundred universities of the world. He is the Editor of the Journal of Optics and Laser Technology (North American Edition). Some of his major inventions are *Fiber Optic Coupling System*, *Trinary Associative Memory* and *Ultra Sensitive Optical Imaging System*.

Years of teaching, research and writing have brought Dr. M. A. Karim endless recognitions. He has been recognised as one of the 2000 most significant scientists of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. He has received NASA Tech Brief Award. He has been appointed Fellow of the Society of Photo-Instrumental Engineers and Optical Society of America. He is also a respected member of Institute of Electrical & Electronic Engineers and American Society of Engineering Education.<sup>19</sup>

#### **Dr. Mir Masoom Ali, Academia**

'Sagamore of the Wabash' is the highest Governor's Award of the State of Indiana, USA. On 24 October 2002, the Award was given to one Bangladeshi American Dr. Mir Masoom Ali. He is a Professor of Statistics & Mathematical Sciences in Ball state University of Indiana for over three decades.

After finishing his Honours and Masters in Statistics from the University of Dhaka in 1957, Dr. Masum Ali started his career in Pakistan Central Government in 1959. In 1966, he took leave from Public Service and went to Canada for doing his Ph.D in the University of Toronto. As soon as he successfully completed his Ph.D in mathematical science in '69, he received a call from Ballstate University, Indiana. They offered him Assistant Professorship in their newly established Mathematical Science programme. He had his leave from Pakistan Government extended and went ahead to Indiana for a year. Ultimately, he has been teaching in the Ballstate University for last 34 years. Dr. Ali is a full professor of the University for quite some time now. In '71 he established graduate programme of statistics in Ballstate. In '85, he received *Researcher Award* of the University for his contribution in statistics research. His role in teaching and research was lauded with *Faculty Award* for the

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<sup>19</sup>Chutir Dine 181, Saturday Magazine of Dainik Prothom Alo, p.4, 17 August 2002, Dhaka, Bangladesh

'92-93 term. Besides, he was honoured in 20<sup>th</sup>, 25<sup>th</sup> and 30<sup>th</sup> anniversaries of his career respectively in '89, '94 and '99. In the year 2000, Ballstate honoured Dr. Masoom Ali as 'George & Frances Ball Distinguished Professor of Statistics'. He has been equally recognized from outside the University. He thrice received 'Meritorious Service Award' in '87, '97 and 2002. They were to recognise his role in founding 'Midwest Biopharmaceutical Statistics Workshop' in 1978 and gradually developing it into a national conference. He is an elected fellow of American Statistical Association, the biggest of its kind in the whole world. He is the Founder Chairperson of North America Bangladesh Statistical Association and the life member of Bangladesh Statistical Association (BSA). In 1990, BSA introduced *Kazi Motahar Hossain Gold Medal* and Dr. Mir Masoom Ali was the first person to receive it. The Bangladeshi-American Foundation identified him as a famous Bangladeshi American in 2001.

Dr. Mir Masoom Ali has so far published about 120 scholarly articles and 150 reviews in famous journals of statistics. He has also presented over a hundred papers in different universities and professional gatherings around the world. His main areas of research are *Finite Sampling*, *Statistical Inference* and *Order Statistics*. Dr. Ali has widely researched in these areas. He is editing two international statistics journals published from Dhaka. He is the associate editor of two Indian and one Pakistani statistics journal. He is a member of the editorial board of a statistics journal published from Korea. He plans to write a book with relevance to Bangladesh shortly.<sup>20</sup>

#### **Mr. Giash Ahmed, State Senator Candidate, Republican Party**

Mr. Giash Ahmed, a Bangladeshi American has been nominated by the US Republican Party for the post of State Senator of State Senatorial District-13 of the State of New York. The nomination was awarded to him on 14<sup>th</sup> June 2002. Mr. Ahmed has been actively associated in the American mainstream politics. He happens to be Secretary of the Trustee Board of the American-Bangladesh Friendship Society. He also took initiative in the formation of the Bangladesh Caucus. For the interest of Bangladesh and the citizens of Bangladesh living in the USA he has been lobbying with both the Democratic and Republican leaders for a long time.

#### **4.4 CONCLUSION**

The case studies show that EBs have made their mark in diverse fields. Some have made original contribution in the field of research and education. Some others carved a niche for Bangladeshi EBs in the food industry through hard labour and creativity. Second generations showed great success in entering politics and the main stream media.

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<sup>20</sup>Chutir Din 204, Saturday Magazine of the Daily Prothom Alo, p.4, 1 FEBruary 2003, Dhaka, Bangladesh

## CHAPTER V

### 5. ASSOCIATIONS AND MEDIA OF EBs

This chapter provides a cultural profile of EBs in UK and US. It mainly describes different types of associations that EBs in the UK and the US have formed. Different forms of media have also emerged in both the countries. A discussion is also made on the role they play in lives of EBs.

#### 5.1 ASSOCIATIONS OF EBs

Both in the UK and US, EBs have organised themselves in different associations and organisations. There is a wide range of associations. These include (a) associations of communities residing in particular geographical locations such as cities or states, (b) associations formed on the basis of district, thana, union or village of origin, (c) professional bodies, and (d) spiritual and religious bodies.

##### Associations Based on Geographical Location at Country of Residence:

Association centering a city or state is usually formed with membership of persons residing in those geographical locations. In fact almost all the cities and states in the US with a significant Bangladeshi population have an association of Bangladeshis. In the US some of the examples are, Bangladesh Society of New York, Bangladesh Association of Washington DC, Bangladesh Association of South Florida and Bangladesh Association of Greater Kansas.

The functions of these associations include holding cultural programmes, celebration of Bengali New Year, Ekushey February, observance of national days, religious festivals. All these events provide an opportunity to Bangladeshis living in the locality to get together, meet people from home, enjoy Bangladeshi food and music. Occasional musical performances from renowned Bangladeshi or South Asian artistes, talent shows, beauty pageants are also organised by the associations. Associations also organise sports events that are popular in Bangladesh. Soccer and cricket are particularly popular. All these give a diffused sense of belonging to a larger entity, i.e., a set of people "from home" (Angell and Rahim, 1996) and contribute to the development of a bond of ethnic community. Many such associations have developed directories of Bangladeshis living in the concerned areas.

##### Associations Based on Region of Origin:

In most cases where there are large Bangladeshi concentrations, they also parallelly form groups centering their places of origin. Through these associations the members collectively keep links and serve the village, union or city from where they come from. These EBs raise funds to support schools, colleges, madrasas and mosques, help construction and repair of roads and culverts and provide scholarships to meritorious and needy students. During natural calamities or any other emergency needs members of these associations organise relief and reconstruction efforts.

Some of the examples of such organisations in the US are Georgia Greater Noakhali Society, Florida City Greater Chittagong Society, Habiganj Zila Samity of New York and Sunamganj District Social Welfare Society of Bronx. In the UK some of these

organizations are Bianibazar Association of London and Baniachang Association of East End.

#### Professional Bodies:

Both in the UK and US, many associations are formed by EBs to fulfill specific vocational and professional needs. These associations are formed to help each other in their professional advancement through sharing knowledge, organising technical seminars, training etc. In the UK some of the organizations that belong to this category include Caterer's Association of Bangladesh, British Bangladeshi Chef Association, British Bangla Chamber of Commerce, Doctors Association of Bangladesh and Collective of Bangladesh School Governors. In the US the examples include, American Association of Bangladeshi Engineers and Architects, American Association of Bangladesh Pharmacists and American Association of Bangladeshi Travel Agencies. It is estimated that there are 4,000 Bangladeshi taxi drivers in New York alone. They have also formed their own association.

#### Religious and Spiritual Associations:

Religion is an important part in the private life of Bangladeshis. People of all faith perform their religious rituals. Some elements of religion, particularly festivals, such as Eids, pujas and Bouddha Purnima have become an integral part of Bangladeshi cultural life. In the receiving countries, one sees forming of associations based on religion. By far, the Muslim migrants constitute the overwhelming majority of the EBs. Mosques, as an institution, plays an important role in the lives of some migrants. A number of mosques have been established in London and New York and various committees have been formed to manage these mosques. Those associated with the mosque management are also likely to play an important role in their respective communities. In some instances Bangladeshis themselves have established mosques, in others, they participate in management of mosques along with representatives of other communities. In the East End area of London there are three mosques that are managed by the Bangladeshis. In New York five such mosques exist. One also finds branches of other type of spiritual organisations such as Maizbhandari Gausia Committee in US.

On the basis of ethnicity, the Indian and Bangladeshi Bengalis share certain bonds that go beyond the national divides. However, the Bangladeshi Muslim and Hindu communities possess certain national culture that is different from the Indian national identity. It is for this reason one finds the Bangladeshi Hindu community, though small in number, form their own association to perform puja and other religious festivals. Bangladesh Puja Samity of USA is an example of a such body. The United Bengali Lutheran Church Committee, on the other hand, is a joint initiative of Bengali Christians of Bangladesh and India.

#### Federating Bodies:

Till late 1980s there did not exist any federating body of Bangladesh associations in the UK or US. It was only in the 1990s such federating bodies emerged in both UK and US. In the UK, the Greater Sylhet Development and Welfare Council and in US the Federation of Bangladesh Association of North America were formed.

Greater Sylhet Development and Welfare Council (GSDWC) was formed in a convention held at Birmingham in 1993. The leaders of EB community realised that in

every city there are lots of associations and organisations formed by the EBs, but most of them operate in isolation. Therefore, in order to develop a common platform for the Sylheties living in UK, this organisation was formed. Since its inception, it has provided leadership in nation-wide programmes ranging from campaign for voting rights to racial discrimination. GSDWC has twelve regional committees in England and Ireland. It also has branch offices in four districts in greater Sylhet. Its affiliated bodies have 7,500 members. The nature of the EB community in UK is reflected in this federating body. As 95% of the EBs are from Sylhet the federating body essentially represents them.

The growth of ethnic Bangla media, facilitated linkages between wider and dispersed Bangladeshi population in the US. Among other things, it resulted in the articulation of the need for a pan-group public identity (Angell and Rahim, 1996). Gradually the Federation of Bangladesh Association of North America (FOBANA) was born. The current membership of its affiliate associations is 96,000. Every year FOBANA holds an annual convention in one of the major cities in US or Canada. FOBANA plays a major role in linking eminent Bangladeshi scholars, litterateurs, artistes and politicians with the EBs. In the last few years one witnesses two separate conventions being held under the banner of FOBANA.

It is important to mention that there are associations that fall outside the purview of the four categories of associations stated above. University alumni associations, issue based groups such as Farakka Committee are some of the examples.

## 5.2 MEDIA

Both in the UK and US various forms of Bangladeshi ethnic media have developed. These include Bangla and English weeklies, radio stations and television channels. A few enterprising individual EBs have played a major role in establishing them.

There are six Bengali newsweeklies in the UK: *Janamat*, *Natun Din*, *Shurma*, *Patriaka*, *Sylheter Dak*, and *Euro-Bangla*. Recently one English daily, *Dainik Bangladesh*, has begun publishing. Young EBs have also begun publishing another English weekly, *Bangla Mirror*. It targets the second and third generation Brit-Bangladeshis. Besides, various organisations have their own publications. Greater Sylhet Welfare Council publishes annual souvenir, the *Shurmar Dak*. It also publishes a newsletter named bulletin.

In the US, *Probashi* was the pioneer publication of the Bengali community. Initially it was published as a bi-weekly, now a weekly. The other weeklies published from New York are *Shaptakhik Thikana*, *Bangali*, *Bangla Patrika*, *Shaptahik Parichoy*, *Shaptakhik Darpan*, *Shaptahik Bangladesh* and *Ekhon Shomoy*. One of the EBs stated that “although these are weekly publications, as they are published on different days of the week, we use them as daily newspapers with added benefit of varied perspectives”. *Jogajog* of Los Angeles, is the only weekly that is published from outside New York.

A cursory survey of these newspapers show that they mainly publish of four types news.

Firstly, it gives information on the programmes of different associations. They inform on drama shows, theaters, prize distribution ceremonies, Miss Bangladesh competition, seminars, forming of new associations, cultural clubs etc. These papers

also serve as medium of communication of potential electoral candidates for association positions.

Secondly, they also provide important information needed by the immigrants for meaningful integration and participation in the receiving countries. Legal information such as immigration procedures, methods of availing housing benefits, methods of acquiring driving licenses and information on training guides for teaching the mother tongue are provided. Methods for bridging the gap with second generation, coming out from drug addiction, issue of marriage of second generation get a lot of attention of these papers. Dates of religious festivals like *Eid, Sobe Barat, Sobe Meraj, Lailatul Kadar, Durga Puga, Lakhai Puga, Buddha Purnima* etc. can easily be known from these papers.

Thirdly, papers also work as avenues for articulating EBs demand to the Bangladesh Government. Withdrawal of visa fees on non-immigrants imposed by the GoB, demand for prosecution of murders of EBs, protest against ill practices of Biman and airport staff regularly feature in the papers. Information needed in establishing economic linkage with Bangladesh appears strongly in these papers. They are good source of information on were to procure wage earner bonds, application forms for housing plots and visiting of investment teams from Bangladesh.

Fourthly, day-to-day politics of Bangladesh takes a huge chunk of these papers. A section of EBs seems to be emotionally very involved in what is happening in Bangladesh. Detailed news is made on issues such as differences among political parties, arrest of leaders of one party by others or disputes among MPs in parliament.

Electronic media is also gaining currency both in the UK and US. In UK there are two Bengali TV channels and few radio channels. According to a survey published in Independent TV Commission, one of the Bengali Channel named, the '*Bangla TV*' was recognised as one of the two successful ethnic language TV channels broadcasting to the UK with a significant viewer share in the UK market.<sup>21</sup> This channel is operating since 1998. By late July 2002 it surpassed the 10,000 subscription mark. Bangla TV is the only channel that produces its programme in the UK.

*Rupasi Bangla* is a New York based Bangla TV channel which is operating for more than five years. Among different Bangla programmes '*Paddar Dhew*' is the most famous. This is also a New York based radio channel.

### **5.3 CONCLUSION**

From the discussion on associations and media, it can be said that both serves the need of EB communities. The associations and media not only provides them opportunity to enjoy a vibrant cultural life, it also proves them access to all kinds of information. More importantly, they have helped the EBs to develop a pan Bangladeshi identity in their countries of residence. If a comparison is made between the UK and the US media, it appears that UK media provides more space to issues pertaining to the EBs in the UK. Newspapers in the US particularly give a lot of space to day-to-day politics in Bangladesh. This sometimes results in dividing the EBs in both the countries. In the next three chapters findings of the empirical research will be presented.

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<sup>21</sup> Layli Uddin, *Bangla Mirror*, Thursday October 24 2002.

## CHAPTER- VI

### 6. SURVEY FINDINGS

Chapters III gave some idea about the nature and extent of the Bangladeshi diaspora in the UK and the US. Chapter IV presented a profile of successful emigrants and their enterprises. Chapter V made a brief analysis of their associations and media. The following three chapters present the survey findings of 100 interviewees of the UK and US. These three chapters are particularly geared towards understanding current levels of linkage of EBs with Bangladesh, problems they encounter in pursuing such linkage, pattern of their current levels of investments in Bangladesh and its future potential, scope of linking the expertise of emigrant Bangladeshis with the development of Bangladesh. It is mentioned in the methodology section that interviewees of this survey were purposively selected. They had a general understanding about the immigrant community and had the potential to play a role in institutionalising the diaspora bond. In other words, they were either community leaders, successful entrepreneurs or managers, educationists or have already invested in Bangladesh. Most of them were legal residents. This chapter provides basic socio-economic and legal profile of the interviewees. It includes their immigration status, age, sex, marital status, educational background, and family size.

#### 6.1 IMMIGRATION STATUS

Table 6.1 gives an idea about the legal status of the respondents. Majority of the interviewees from the UK stated that they were the citizens of the UK. 6 of them were permanent residents. Two of them informed that their papers were currently under process. In US more than half (28) of the interviewees were citizens of the US and 16 stated they were permanent residents but not citizens. Three persons stated that their papers were under process and three refrained from responding to this question.

**Table 6.1: Immigration status of the respondents by country of immigration.**

Immigration Category	UK	US	Total
Citizen of the country of migration	42	28	70
Long term resident//Permanent resident	6	16	22
Temporary resident	2	3	5
Paper under process		3	2
Other	-	-	-
Total	50	50	100

**Table 6.2: Method of acquiring citizenship.**

Method	UK	US	Total
By birth	4	-	4
Through family reunification	20	11	31
Came on work visa and acquired current status	20	4	24
Came as student then acquired current status	2	16	18
D.V		3	3
O.P		5	5
Came as refugee and acquired current status		4	4
Others	4	7	11
Total	50	50	100

Table 6.2 shows how the respondents acquired their current immigration status. Interviewees received their current immigration status through application of different methods. In case of UK, the major methods identified were, by birth, through a process of family reunification, work voucher, changing status from students to citizen/residents. In this respect as well one finds major differences between the UK and the US experience. In respect to US along with the above-mentioned methods skilled migration, OP-1 visa and Diversity Visa were the three other methods identified by the interviewees. Instances were also found of political asylum seeking and overstaying of tourist visas.

In the UK, four of the interviewees received current immigration status by birth, whereas none of the interviewees were born in the US. In the UK 20 of the interviewees received current immigration status through family reunification process, whereas in the US, 11 received their current status through this process. Family reunification constituted those cases where the wives/ husbands and children who were left behind by the principal migrants were brought to the country of immigration. It also included situations where the principal migrants sponsored his/her parents to the country of immigration and gradually through the parents, other siblings also joined. Again when an expatriate Bangladeshi visited Bangladesh, got married and processed the paper of his/her spouse to join him/her in the country of migration, it is also considered as family reunification. In most cases of sponsorship through marriage, males were the sponsoring migrants. In one case it was the wife who sponsored her husband. In this case the family arranged the marriage.

Twenty of the interviewees in UK went there with work vouchers. In the US a few highly skilled professionals, IT experts, and pharmacists received their green card in their country of origin and went there as skilled migrants. Here as well, one finds major differences between UK and US. In case of UK, those who migrated with work voucher were mostly less educated and were recruited for working in heavy industries; whereas in case of US, skilled migrants were taken to participate in highly technical jobs. In case of UK, three persons were working in BBC Bengali Service and they changed their legal status and gained residency/citizenship once their contracts were over. They are also considered under work visa. In UK, among the interviewees, only two persons came as students and later acquired current legal status. Whereas in case of US, 16 of the interviewees came as students. Eight of the interviewees went to US through participating in OP-1 and DV. Diversity Visa is usually provided to those countries whose ethnic representation is small in the US. The column of 'others' is constituted by business migration, tourist visa and those who came as part of private and official delegation etc.

## **6.2 YEARS OF MIGRATION**

In comparison to the immigrants of the US, the UK immigrants have a much longer migration history. The average migration period (time of stay as migrant in the host country) of the Bangladeshi expatriates to UK was 23.32 years and in the US, 14.32 years. Two interviewees from the UK had been residing in that country for 42 years and in case of US, the highest number of years of migration of a respondent was 28. In case of UK, the person with the lowest year of migration experience was 1.5 years and in US 1 person was interviewed who migrated only a year ago. Her husband, of course, was residing there for quite some time.

**Table 6.3: Year of migration by country of immigration.**

Year	UK	US	Total
Mean	23.32	14.32	17.25
Minimum	1.50	1	1
Maximum	42	28	42
Sum	935	404	1639.00
Missing	4	1	5

### 6.3 PAST MIGRATION EXPERIENCE

Table 6.4 shows the migration experience of the interviewees. Out of 46 immigrants from the UK, only three had any other previous migration experience. The rest 43 had only one migration experience, that is to the UK. One of the three who had prior experience came to UK from Switzerland as a business migrant. This person left Bangladesh in 1975 and stayed in Germany for a while and then went to Switzerland. There he established his restaurant business and by the mid-1990s he became quite successful in his endeavour. Four years ago he migrated to UK to access a larger market of restaurant business. Another person lived in Karachi for ten years as a student when Bangladesh was part of Pakistan. One female interviewee completed her study in India and Moscow, and therefore from her very early childhood she was out of Bangladesh. While studying in Moscow she married a Pakistani and migrated to the UK, since neither of the partners wanted to live in the other's country.

Past migration experience is much higher in case of those who were interviewed in the US. 15 out of the 50 have resided somewhere else before coming to the US. 4 of them stayed in UK for a while then migrated to US. 2 lived in Middle Eastern countries (Saudi Arabia and Oman). One was residing in Norway and one in Gambia. Three were in former USSR as students. One person is a permanent resident of Australia. But, over the years, he lived in Burma and Sri Lanka as a UN official. Currently he is residing in New York working for the UN. One of the interviewees was an immigrant of Canada. She got married to an Expatriate Bangladeshi of US and joined him.

**Table 6.4: Migration experience of the interviewee.**

Experience	UK	US	Total
Migrated only to this country	43	35	78
Migrated also to other countries	3	15	18
Total	46*	50	96

\* Four persons were born in UK.

### 6.4 DISTRICT OF LAST RESIDENCE

It is important to know the areas from where the respondents migrated. Table 6.5 shows that 37 of the interviewees in case of UK migrated from the greater Sylhet district. The parents of the 4 interviewees who were born in UK were also from Sylhet. This means that 41 of the interviewees hailed from Sylhet. From the rest, 6 were from Dhaka, 1 from Comilla and 1 from Moscow. In case of US, 33 of the respondents were residing in Dhaka when they processed their immigration papers for the US<sup>1</sup>. Five were residing in Chittagong, four in Swandip, one each in Tangail

<sup>1</sup> These does not mean that the respondents' home districts was Dhaka. They could be from all over Bangladesh. However for job, education or family's current residence, they were residing in Dhaka.

and Jamalpur and four from the UK. There could be several reasons why Dhaka was the last residence of majority of those who migrated to the US. Firstly, the professionals are mainly concentrated in Dhaka. Information on opportunities on higher education is available in Dhaka. Therefore those who lived in Dhaka could avail them with relative ease. There could be a selection bias in scholarship allocation in favour of those who completed their degrees from Dhaka based educational institutions.

**Table 6.5: District of last residence before immigration by country of immigration.**

District	UK	US	Total
Dhaka	6	33	39
Sylhet	37	5	42
Chittagong	-	5	5
Swandip	-	4	4
Tangail	-	1	1
Jamalpur	-	1	1
Comilla	2	-	2
Moscow	1	-	1
Australia	-	1	1
Total	*46	50	96

\* 4 of the respondents were born in the UK and hence the number in case of UK is 46.

## 6.5 PRIMARY CAUSES OF MIGRATION

A major difference is visible among the respondents of UK and US in this respect. 16 of the respondents from US, migrated first for higher studies. After finishing university degrees in Bangladesh, this group of respondents went abroad to do higher studies, either for Masters or PhD in engineering, physics, chemistry, economics, finance, and political science.

The primary reason of migration of only five of the UK interviewees was to do higher studies. Predominantly they went to study Chartered Accountancy. Primary purpose of 29 UK respondents was for economic betterment. Relatively older respondents went with job visa and relatively younger respondents went under family reunification visa. A section of them migrated with specific job descriptions in specific restaurants. In US, 17 respondents went abroad to find jobs. 3 of these 17 respondents also went abroad for work in some specialised skilled areas. 4 of them went to work in the construction industry. Their family members who were already involved in the construction industry, sponsored them. Those who went abroad to find work in DV, OP-1 and tourist visas constitute the rest. There were also those who went to these countries initially on professional posting and subsequently stayed back; 4 in UK and 2 in US.

Three interviewees in the UK and eight in the US went abroad to join their husbands or wives. The only doctor interviewed went as a spouse. She spent considerable amount of time in preparing for and successfully completing professional examination required to practice as a doctor. 4 came to UK as minors to join their fathers. Career wise and financially a well-established person, a Ph.D degree holder, migrated to US with the sole aim of providing better educational opportunities to his sons.

One person migrated to UK from Switzerland with huge amount of capital to expand his restaurant business. From the above discussion, it can be concluded that some

respondents went for higher education, some for making their fortune through employment or business, others on professional posting and some to join their husbands or fathers. There is also a small group who went simply to ensure a better future for their children.

## 6.6 GENDER DISTRIBUTION

In the previous chapter it was stated that among the EBs there were more male migrants than females, both in the UK and the US. Table 6.6 shows their gender distribution by country of migration.

**Table 6.6: Gender distribution of 100 respondents.**

Type	UK	US	Total
Male	40	40	80
Female	10	10	20
Total	50	50	100

Purposively both from UK and US, 10 females were interviewed and rest of the 40 interviewees were males. This of course did not represent the actual sex ratio of male and female in any of these countries. As stated earlier, male-female ratio in the UK is 100:64 and almost 100:50 in the US.

## 6.7 AGE DISTRIBUTION

Table 6.7 shows the age distribution of the respondents. The highest number of interviewees belonged to the age group of 41-50 years, followed by 36-40. Altogether 57 of the interviewees belonged to these two age groups. In UK, four persons were interviewed who were less than 22 years old. On the other hand, 5 persons were interviewed who were more than 60 years old. The age distribution also did not reflect the nature of expatriate Bangladeshi population in UK and US. Most respondents were approached for interviews through their social and cultural organisations. Therefore, those who were involved in organisational activities were over-represented in the sample. A large number of them were community leaders, and therefore, belonged to a higher age group bracket. This was not to overlook the fact that the average age group of the expatriate Bangladeshi population was relatively young.

**Table 6.7: Age distribution of the respondents by country.**

Age	UK	US	Total
18 to 21 years	4		4
22 to 25 years	2	2	4
26 to 30 years	6	3	9
31 to 35 years	2	5	7
36 to 40 years	8	8	16
41 to 50 years	19	22	41
51 to 60 years	4	9	13
61 to 70 years	5	1	6
Total	50	50	100

## 6.8 EDUCATIONAL BACKGROUND

Table 6.8 indicates the current educational background of the interviewees and compares that with their educational status before migration. The interviewees represented highly educated, reasonably educated, and less educated status. The number of less educated interviewees was more in the UK. Ten of the respondents from UK either passed SSC/O level or had some schooling experience. In case of US interviewees, only two fell in this category. None of the interviewees however were illiterate. Altogether 17 finished HSC or high school diploma and another 32 had finished their Bachelor degrees. Another 19 of the interviewees were Masters degree holders and two of the interviewees had obtained PhD degrees.

**Table 6.8: Pre migration and current education status by country of migration.**

Level	UK		US	
	Pre	Current	Pre	Current
Up to SSC/O level	10	7	2	2
HSC/High School diploma	10	9	7	6
BA/BSC/B com	17	11	15	13
MA/MSC/M com	6	10	13	17
PhD.	-	-	2	4
Others*	3	9	4	7
Currently Students	-	4	4	1
Total	46**	50	47	50

\*Other CA, Diploma, Doctors

\*\* 4 were born in UK

In case of both UK and US, current education status of the interviewees had registered a change from pre-migration period. Particularly in case of US, a significant number of the interviewees attained higher degrees, i.e., Masters and PhDs. After migration some of them enhanced their skills on computing, education etc. through attaining diploma and other courses.

## 6.9 OCCUPATION

Table 6.9 gives an idea about the occupational pattern of the respondents. The number of people who are involved in business in UK and US are 19. In UK few of the businesspersons were restaurant owners. One among them was the owner of a large restaurant chain. A few were engaged in travel agency business. In case of US, the businesspersons were owners of pharmaceutical industries, partner owner of a nationally accredited tax and financial planning firm, owner of construction business, travel agencies, and newspaper.

Eight journalists were interviewed in the UK. Four of them were either owner editors or executive editors.<sup>22</sup> Three journalists were interviewed in the US representing three newspapers.<sup>23</sup>

<sup>22</sup> Names of the newspapers are *Bangla Mirror*, *Euro Bangla*, *Janamat*, and *Patrika*.

<sup>23</sup> Names of the newspapers are *Bangla Patrika*, *Thikana*, *Akhon Somoy*.

**Table 6.9: Current occupational status of respondents by area.**

Type of Profession	UK	US	Total
Business/self employed	10	9	19
Private sector workers	8	7	15
Public service	2	3	5
Journalist	8	3	11
Home maker	3	2	5
Teacher	4	4	8
Council/Member com ---	2	1	3
Taxi driver	-	4	4
Engineer	-	8	8
IT professional	2	2	4
Accountant	1	3	4
Unemployment	2	1	3
Student	4	1	5
Retired	1	-	1
UN System	1	1	2
Doctor		1	1
Total	48*	50	98

\*2 missing

15 interviewees, eight from UK and seven from US, were workers in the private sector. In UK, most of them were shopkeepers, salesmen/women and waiters in Bengali stores and restaurants. One was working as customer care advisor in a chain store. In US, private sector was again dominated by salesmen / women in Indian, and Bengali stores. A few of them were also working in food chains, such as Dunkin Doughnuts and McDonalds.

Eight persons were interviewed who belonged to the teaching profession; four of them were from UK and four from US. In US, one was teaching in a public school, one in a private college, and two in universities. In UK, three of them were schoolteachers and one a university teacher.

Compared to UK, the number of professionals were higher in US. Altogether two were IT professionals, eight of them were engineers, and one accountant. In UK, there was one accountant and two IT professionals. Two counselors were interviewed in UK and one member of the Community Board in the US. Four taxi-drivers were interviewed in the US. Among the interviewees, four were students from UK. Three of them were doing undergraduate degrees, and the other one was a PhD student.

Altogether three persons were unemployed, two in the US and one in the UK. In the US, an engineer and an IT professional recently had been laid off from their jobs. One of the interviewees was a retired person.

If one looks into female interviewees, among the ten women interviewees of the UK, three were housewives and three were schoolteachers, two were students and one was a newspaper editor and another one was a student. Out of the ten female interviewees of the US, one interviewee works in Bangladesh Biman, one works as a travel consultant, one works in a law firm, one is a practicing doctor, one is a sales girl in a food chain and the other is working in a departmental store, two were

engineers and two were housewives. The two housewives from US were found very active socially and culturally. One is the Vice-Chair of the Engineering Association of New Jersey and the other is cultural Secretary of the Association.

### 6.10 FAMILY SIZE

Table 6.10 shows the average family size of the respondents. The average family size of those interviewed in UK was 4.70 and in US was 4.05. Both in UK and US, smallest family size is comprised of one person. The highest household size was comprised of nine members. In case of UK, the number of male and female family member are similar, whereas in US, nine families were constituted only by the interviewee male migrants. Most of their families resided in Bangladesh and in few cases they were not married. It is however problematic to use the traditional definition of family here. Usually family is defined as members of household who live under the same roof and eat from the same cooking facility and have kinship relations. It was found that a section of single men who had their families in Bangladesh lived in a group by renting a flat and eat from the same kitchen. The practical definition of family applied here is number of persons living under the same roof, eat food prepared in the same kitchen and have immediate kinship relations. There were altogether 405 members in these one hundred families.

**Table 6.10 Average family size of respondents by country of immigration.**

Type	UK		Total	US		Total	Grand Total
	Male	Female		Male	Female		
Mean	2.45	2.59	4.70	186	180	3.40	4.05
Minimum	-	-	1	1	-	1	1
Maximum	5	5	9	4	3	6	9
Sum	113	114	235	93	74	170	405

UK missing 4 male, 6 female

US missing 9 female

### 6.11 CONCLUSION

This chapter gave an idea about the socio-economic and legal status of the respondents. A majority of the interviewees were either citizens or the permanent residents of the country of migration. A majority of the migrants to the UK acquired their current status through family reunification and work voucher. A significant number of interviewees of US first went there as students. The average migration year of the UK interviewees was six years more than their US counterparts. Among the interviewees there are those who are highly educated, and the educational level of a section of them was poor. The highest concentration of interviewees was of 41-50 years age group.

## CHAPTER VII

### 7. CURRENT LEVEL OF LINKAGE

This chapter looks into extent of first generation link with Bangladesh and its importance for the country. Then it explores what happens to the link when the first generation disappears. Will such relationship continue with the second generation immigrants or will it cease to exist? It also deals with the question, what needs to be done to keep the second generation interested in maintaining the link with their country of origin.

#### 7.1 THE FIRST GENERATION EBs

From the interviews it was very clear that first generation EBs have profound feelings for their motherland. This is manifested in the statement of the oldest interviewee who was from UK. He stated, "My body is in London but my mind is lying somewhere in Sylhet." Even today they keep themselves extremely updated on political and economic developments in Bangladesh. They visit Bangladesh on a regular basis. Majority of them send money to their kith and kins. They usually send contributions to Bangladesh for religious purposes (zakat), and some go out of their way to help family members and relatives in their efforts to migrate. Some of them built houses and flats in Bangladesh, others invested their capital in business ventures. During natural disasters they make major contributions. If we look into remittance aspect in details it will give us the idea about their deep sense of belonging to their country of origin.

#### 7.2 ROLE OF EBs IN THE LIBERATION WAR OF BANGLADESH

While explaining their feelings towards Bangladesh, some of the first generation interviewees particularly from the UK, highlighted their role in the liberation war of 1971. They mentioned that the glorious role played by the EBs in the war of liberation of Bangladesh has to be highlighted in the study. One interviewee mentioned that the EBs connection with the political process of Bangladesh goes further back. They were very much part of the movement for the autonomy of East Pakistan. During the 1960s they had formed East Pakistan House in the UK. Once the students movement of 1969 started, it was the EBs who created space for expressing dissent through publishing the newspaper, *Janamat*. This newspaper became the voice for the Mujibnagar Government when the liberation war started. In the following section a brief account of their role is presented.

#### UK

The EBs of UK of that time can be divided into four broad categories, i.e, students, migrant labourers, business persons and professionals. Among them, long-term labour migrants were the largest group. Along with others, the labour migrants became actively involved with programmes in support of the war. Experts believe it is the involvement of the labour migrants that turned the participation of the EBs in the liberation war into a movement.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> Interview of Afsan Chowdhury, February 10 2003.

Soon after the military crackdown on 25<sup>th</sup> March, 1971, the EBs in the UK formed Action Committees in various cities to mobilise public opinion in favour of the campaign for an independent Bangladesh and to raise funds. To coordinate the activities a Convention was organised in Coventry in June 1971, where a five-member committee was formed with Justice Abu Sayeed Chowdhury as the Chief Adviser. The members of the Steering Committee included S Rahman and Sheikh A Mannan from London, Azizul Hoque Bhuiya from Birmingham, Dr. Kabir Chowdhury from Manchester in the Northwest and Mosharraf Hossain from Bradford. Following strategic planning, the Steering Committee organised rallies at local, regional and national level within UK that included holding major programmes at the Hyde Park Corner and Trafalgar Square. It also lobbied political leaders both in Europe and also in North America by continuously providing them with information about the war. The Steering Committee also led a successful campaign in the world media, press and television.<sup>25</sup> This group raised Pound Sterling 406,856.20. The EBs through generating huge resources helped sustain the international campaign for Bangladesh.

The EBs of UK also took various measures to sensitise the BBC broadcasters towards the atrocities of the war. They organised the trip of the British MP to the border areas of India and Bangladesh during the war. The EBs of various localities organised themselves into groups and approached their respective MPs to support independence of Bangladesh. The EB doctors of the UK formed Bangladesh Medical Association and under its umbrella they undertook different activities in support of the war. Two cultural fronts were developed in the UK with the same goal. These were the Bangladesh Cultural Association and the Bangladesh Ganashangskriti Shangsad. Their cultural shows and exhibitions played a crucial role in forming British public opinion in favour of the Liberation of Bangladesh. The first eight stamps of Bangladesh were also printed from the UK. Justice Abu Sayeed Chowdhury formally launched them in Hurcourt room of the House of Commons.

## US

Following the army crackdown in Dhaka, the Bangladeshis living in the US spontaneously began to organise themselves in support of an independent Bangladesh. Associations were formed in cities of New York, Washington D.C., Boston, Philadelphia, and Chicago where Bangladeshis were large in number. A Bangladesh Information Center was established in Washington D.C. It played a crucial role in disseminating information and lobbying the United States Congress to end the military assistance to Pakistan (Mohammad: 2001). Students of Bangladeshi origin studying in US played a major role in lobbying. They were also involved in collection of relief funds for the refugees. Throughout the summer, to draw attention to their cause, Bangladeshis, particularly the student community, organised several demonstrations in front of the US State Department, Capitol Hill and the White House. It was at the end of the summer that the officials of Bangladeshi origin of the Pakistan Embassy in the US resigned and set up the Bangladesh Mission in

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<sup>25</sup> Information on the role of EB community in the UK during the war of liberation was mainly drawn from Dr Khandokar Musharraf Hossain, 1998 and Kabir Chowdhury, 'Bangladesh: The Birth of a Nation', *Surmar Dak*, a souvenir published GSDWC, 2000.

Washington D.C.<sup>26</sup> The then Government of Pakistan portrayed the war of independence of Bangladesh as a civil war. Defection of the bureaucrats destroyed the legitimacy of such claims of the ruling military elite of Pakistan. Their resignation gave more legitimacy to the war. Like the UK, there was no established Bangladeshi business class in the US. Few persons, like the famous architect F R Khan made huge personal contributions.

One may therefore note that the EBs of the UK and US played a major role in the War of Liberation. Their efforts were directed on the one hand to mobilise international public opinion against the Pakistani occupation forces, and on the other, to generate funds for the relief efforts for the refugees. There is a general perception among the EBs that their role has not been accorded due recognition by the successive Governments of Bangladesh.

### 7.3 REMITTANCE

Table 7.1 shows that 88 of the respondents currently send remittance to Bangladesh. Only 12 interviewees informed that they did not need to remit to Bangladesh for any reason. Eight of those who did not remit were second-generation immigrants of UK. They were either students or young service holders. The other four non-senders were from US and all of them belonged to the professional category.

**Table 7.1: Number of interviewees who remits.**

Response	UK	US	Total
Remits	42	46	88
Does not remit	8	4	12
Total	50	50	100

**Table 7.2: Frequency of remittance transfer in a year.**

Frequency	UK	US	Total
10-12 times in a year	6	12	18
6-9 times in a year	5	7	12
3-5 times in a year	6	8	14
Ones or twice a year	8	8	16
Not regularly	13	9	22
Others	4	2	6
Total	42	46	88

Table 7.2 gives an idea about the frequency of remittance transfer. It appears that 6 respondents from the UK and 12 from the US send remittance, ten to twelve times in a year. Another 12 persons remit six to nine times in a year, 14 others remit three to six times in a year, 16 respondents once or twice in a year and 6 others only remit when it is necessary.

#### Reason for sending remittance:

Expatriate Bangladeshis of UK and US needed to remit to Bangladesh for many reasons. Important among them were, maintaining own or extended families at home; occasional support to extended families, neighbours and friends; to create a

<sup>26</sup> Information provided on role of the Bangladeshi EBs has been drawn from Tajul Mohammad 2001, and Angell and Rahim, 1996.

source of income for the family or him/her self; to undertake social welfare activities; for charity, zakat or support during natural disasters. Table 7.3 shows 20 respondents remitted regularly to their immediate families for their maintenance. 62 respondents sent remittance for providing occasional support to their extended families. A large number of respondents from UK mentioned that quite sometime ago they used to send money to their immediate families on a regular basis. Need for that remittance transfer has reduced for couple of reasons.

**Table 7.3: Reasons for sending remittances\*.**

Reason	UK	US	Total
For maintaining own/extended family home	6	14	20
For occasional support to extended family	35	28	61
For community development	29	17	48
Purchase/construction of land/ house	14	17	31
Business investment	4	5	9
Charity	12	7	19
Natural disaster	8	9	17
Election	4	1	5
Zakat	33	28	61
Others	2	4	6

\* Each row represents the response of 88 respondents.

They brought their families to UK. Some have already constructed their homes or established some kind of business, which has created some income for those who were currently residing in Bangladesh.

Some of the respondents had bought flats, some had bought land and some others were constructing houses in Bangladesh. They remitted to pay for the installments. Nine of the interviewees made business investments. Among them a few had businesses in Bangladesh. They sometimes remitted to support their businesses back home. One person had migrated five years ago under DV programme. He maintained businesses at two places; in the US and in Bangladesh. Another person who belonging to a group of investors stated that his firm regularly remitted to Bangladesh to finance its project. Many respondents have constructed mosques and rural roads; established orphanages and madrasas. A section of them sent yearly contributions to these mosques or madrasas for their management or recurrent expenses. Mr. Mansur had bought land and constructed a hostel which accommodates hundred students, constructed girls' school, installed tube wells in every house of his village. Few professionals stated that they contributed to NGO programmes in their areas, for example one sponsored a child through World Vision. Besides, almost all the respondents sent money for paying zakat but these were only occasional payments sent mostly through friends and relatives or self-carried while visiting Bangladesh. Almost everyone sent money to Bangladesh during natural disasters like floods and tornadoes. One person got nomination during the last general election so he spent money for that purpose. Later the person decided not to contest. A few others sent money to relatives and friends who were contesting in elections. Few mentioned they sent money to Bangladesh to pay for settlements of legal disputes. These reasons are taken into account in the column of 'Others'.

From the discussion above it is evident that EBs not only feel emotional bond with their country of origin, they translate that into deep material commitment. However, while pursuing a relationship with Bangladesh the EBs face certain general problems. These problems are seen by the EBs as immediate issues of concern. Some of the issues are emotional, and some are practical. In the following some of the concerns expressed by the interviewee EBs have been highlighted.

#### **7.4 IMMEDIATE ISSUES OF CONCERN**

There is a feeling among the EBs that the Bangladesh State and society at large failed to recognise their contribution in Bangladesh's War of Liberation. In the national history of the liberation war, the hard work of EBs of UK and US was not recorded. Until today none of the EBs have been awarded any national award that can be treated as recognition for their contribution.

The EBs feel that their regular contribution in the form of remittance is also not highlighted by the State. The total amount of remittances sent by them or percentage share in respect to worldwide remittance to Bangladesh are never publicised by the Government or no special treatment, such as land allotment or other State allocations, is given to those who remit substantial sums regularly.

Successive Governments' lack of acceptance of voting rights is another issue of concern for the EBs. Some stated that it was the late President Ziaur Rahman who introduced dual citizenship. The provision of dual citizenship was widely appreciated by EBs. Such recognition facilitated EBs casting their votes if they were in Bangladesh during the election. The recent Election Commission reform stipulating that a person has to be present during voters' registration has practically taken away the voting rights of EBs. In the mid-1990s a writ petition was filed on behalf of the EBs demanding their constitutional right to vote. It has been claimed that the writ was successful but no concrete step was taken to implement the judgement.<sup>27</sup>

Lack of personal security of the EBs when they visit Bangladesh has become another issue of concern. This is aggravated by the fact that two EBs, Surat Miah and Mughal Quereshi, were murdered when they came to visit Bangladesh.

In 1996, Surat Mia, a young Brit-Bangladeshi came to visit his ancestral home in Sylhet. On his way back to Britain in the morning of 9<sup>th</sup> May, he was murdered in Zia International Airport. A case was filed in Cantonment Thana by its Sub-Inspector Delwar Hossain accusing four Custom Inspectors namely Syed Humayun Akter, Edward Jacob, Abdul Haque and Md. Makbul Hossain. The Additional District & Session Judge of Dhaka released all defendants by declaring them not guilty on 23 October 2001. Surprisingly, nobody appeared as witness in the case. Prosecution did not set up close circuit camera during the trial. When the state appealed against the verdict in the High Court, the Court accepted the appeal and ordered the four released accused to surrender to the authorities within 30 days of receiving the notice. Otherwise, they will be arrested.

EBs residing in Britain and their various organisations have been continuously pursuing for justice in the Surat Mia murder case through procession, agitation, sit-in

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<sup>27</sup> Md. Rahmat Ali, 'Where does the movement for voting rights for expatriates stand?', *Surmar Dak*, Conference souvenir of GSDWC, 2001. Ali notes that the writ was filed by expatriate lawyer Ali Reza Khan on advise of Dr. Kamal Hossain.

etc. in both England and Bangladesh. But so far, as we see, nothing significant could be achieved. In the meantime, murder of yet another Brit-Bangladeshi took place. Moghul Koreshi was found murdered on 10 August 2001 in a Sylhet bound domestic flight of Biman. His killers are yet to be identified and nabbed.

These two incidents and hitherto failure of Bangladesh Government to bring the respective killers to justice have dealt a severe blow to the already shaking confidence of EBs in Bangladesh establishment.<sup>28</sup> EB opinion makers apprehend that unless justice is done in those two cases and sufficient measures are taken for security of expatriates, lesser number of EBs will be encouraged to visit Bangladesh. Particularly, the second generation EBs will lose their interest about Bangladesh altogether.

The EBs, as part of their commitment to Bangladesh want to travel by Bangladesh Biman. However, this they noted as the first point of harassment when EBs start planning their visit to Bangladesh. Price difference in one way ticket of Dhaka-New York and New York-Dhaka is US\$200. Biman return tickets are valid for four months. This leaves no other option for the EBs who want to stay longer without buying one way tickets, where they have to pay an additional \$200. For a long time EBs both from UK and US have been demanding an increase in the validity of the tickets, at least up to six months. Corruption in Biman is another major problem. When the ticket is purchased the Biman officials deliberately declines to confirm the return dates. Once EBs plan to return and ask for confirmation they pay in cases as high as Tk.10,000 as speed money. Non-payment of the sum may not allow the person to get a confirmed seat. Besides, there is a lack of coordination of timing between the international flights and local flights.

For years, the EBs have been complaining about harassments at the airports. In recent times airport services in Dhaka has witnessed some changes. A separate channel has been created for the immigration clearance for the EBs and a list of duty free baggage item is also provided to them beforehand. In Sylhet Osmani Airport however such systems are yet to emerge and there is no green channel in operation. No police booth is available at the Airport where the EBs can report if they are in trouble. Another major problem in Dhaka airport is that there is no interlinked passage between the international and domestic airports. This creates major security threats for the EBs. When they are in transit with their belongings, they become easy prey of the miscreants. The murder incident of Surat Miah is the case in point.

EBs also have concerns about the Bangladesh missions in respective countries. There are problems both at the policy level and in practice. The officials of the missions fail to see themselves as service providers to the EB communities. Rather they see themselves as diplomatic functionaries. The current Government of Bangladesh substantially increased the visa and passport fees for the EBs. Such decision was not well received by the EBs. The Greater Sylhet Association of London formed a committee with all other district associations and protested the decision.

The Counsellor of Tower Hamlets stated that in his experience the Governments of other immigrant sending countries stand strongly behind their community when they

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<sup>28</sup> Information on the above two cases were drawn from *Darpon*, 12<sup>th</sup> Issue, August 2002; 3<sup>rd</sup> Year, GSC Bulletin, Issue 4, January 2002; GSC Biennial Review 2000-2002; GSC Bulletin, Issue 3, June 2001; London, UK.

face difficulties. Unfortunately, the mission personnel in London are hesitant in taking such stand when such support is needed for example, when the Bangladesh community faced racist attacks in the recent past.

The above are some of the immediate issues of concern expressed by the EBs of both the study areas. Now let us look into what the first generation do to expose and link the second generation with Bangladesh and what role should the State play in strengthening such linkages.

## **7.5 EFFORTS OF LINKAGE BUILDING**

### **7.5.1 With Second Generation EBs :**

In this paper those persons are considered as second generation EBs, whose parents went abroad on the first instance and gradually brought the children to the country of migration. Those who were born in the families of first generation migrants in UK or US also constitute second-generation migrants. In UK, two focus group discussions were held with the second generation EBs. The second generation EBs also participated in the talk show that was organised through *Betar Bangla*. In addition, 8 persons in UK were interviewed who represented second generation EBs. Second generation interviewees and participants of focus group discussions can be divided into three categories: those who went to London when they were studying in senior school or colleges, those who went to London at a very early age and those who were born in the UK.

This section highlights the steps undertaken by first generation EBs to provide positive exposure to their children towards their roots in Bangladesh. Then it discusses the problems faced by the first generation EBs in pursuing such tasks and finally, it presents the suggestions made by the EBs for the Ministry of Expatriates' Welfare and Overseas Employments to undertake in this respect.

### **7.5.2 Activities Undertaken:**

The first generation EBs tried to maintain and promote Bengali culture within the family. This involved speaking in Bangla, eating Bengali food, wearing Bengali dresses on social occasions etc. Respondents, particularly from Sylhet, also included teaching Arabic to the children and maintaining conservative dress code as part of practicing Bengali culture.

In order to create a home cultural environment, some brought as many members of their immediate family as possible and closely interacted with them. A section of them regularly sent their families back to Bangladesh. In some cases this was treated as letting the children know from where their families came from and in some other cases they even put them into school to have a long-term experience about their country of origin.

Some respondents informed that the principal reason why they take part in Bangladeshi associations and professional bodies is to keep in touch with the community. With the help of these organisations they organise cultural shows where their children take active part. In order to teach Bangla, interviewees stated that they have established community schools. Some of the interviewees stated they made

extra efforts in teaching their children Bengali songs, classical dance and instruments.

Special Bangladeshi national days like Independence Day, Victory Day, Language Martyrs Day are celebrated by the EBs through different associations. They also celebrated cultural occasions like Bangla New Year, Nazrul and Tagore's birthdays. The religious occasions like Shab-e-Barat, Shab-e-Miraj, Eid, Durga puja, Buddha Purnima were also celebrated by different Bangladeshi religious groups. Observance of these days provides avenues for exposing their children to Bengali culture.

A few interviewees stated that they took part in establishing mosques in their locality so that their children could get exposure to the Islamic traditions of the Bangladeshi culture. To them mosques play an important role in bringing together the Muslim Bangladeshis and also the Muslims of other nationalities and develop a united identity with the Muslim world. It also helped the Bangladeshi families to teach their children to read the Holy Quran.

### **7.5.3 Extent of Linkage:**

In the focus group meetings and interviews young EBs spoke about their own efforts of building the linkage. All the respondents have visited Bangladesh at least once. Some of them visited regularly and few of them had experienced staying in Bangladesh for a prolonged period.

Two of the respondents stated that they would like to keep in touch with their roots. Therefore they had taken initiatives of investment in Bangladesh. These respondents came to UK when they were studying in college.

Four of the respondents were associated with publication of 'Bangla Mirror'. They took the initiative of publishing the newspaper for different reasons. They wanted to highlight the problems of young EBs in the UK. They also wanted to make news of Bangladesh available in English to young EBs and encourage tourism in Bangladesh. One of the female interviewees mentioned that she was involved with the publication of a magazine titled 'Bangla Women'. This magazine highlighted the life of successful young expatriate 'Bangla Women' to encourage others to take up careers. Another section of young EBs was linked with audio-visual media. One of them was involved in a drama club where EBs wrote scripts; gave direction and their productions were staged in collaboration with Bangladeshi theatre artists. He also mentioned about their involvement with the radio station, Betar Balgla. Betar Bangla is mainly run by second generation EBs.

A distinct group of second generation EBs was visible who were upset with the political process of Bangladesh. Corruption was viewed as a major issue of their concern. This group of EBs had the propensity to generalise from their limited experiences in Bangladesh at the Dhaka and Sylhet airports. The death of Surat Miah and Mughal Qurashi had created a sense of distrust about Bangladesh among the young EBs. They, or for that matter even their elders, deeply held the view that law was not allowed to take its own course in these cases.

## **7.5 Problems they Face:**

The first generation EBs expressed that they were alone in providing Bengali cultural exposures to their children. They did not receive any institutional help from the Government of Bangladesh.

The Bangladeshi communities in UK and US have become divided along party lines. These created a negative image among second generation EBs. Quality cultural materials were not easily available. When the EBs undertook cultural programmes, they did not have enough materials to rely upon. There is an acute vacuum in respect to books, drama scripts and other materials highlighting an objective history of Bangladesh. Materials that were available, were partisan by nature. Young children got confused with those materials.

A schoolteacher pointed out that there was hardly any entertaining drama, serial or movie that reflected day-to-day middle class life and related that with the life of Bangladeshi expatriates abroad. She mentioned that when she was young, her parents discouraged her from watching Hindi movies with a nationalist viewpoint to minimise Indian cultural influence. However she had to rely on Hindi films and serials to make her daughter positively exposed towards wearing ethnic outfits. This says a lot about the vacuum where the expatriates were operating in exposing their children towards Bangladesh.

A section of the children of expatriates had developed considerable skills in Bengali music, dance and instruments. The EBs invited the talents of Bangladesh to perform in their cultural shows. However, they regretted that till today the Government of Bangladesh, its cultural Ministry or the private cultural forums never invited these children to their programmes. There is hardly any reciprocity from the Bangladeshi side to link the young performers of Bangladesh and that of the receiving countries.

Second and third generation EBs had taken some initiatives to strengthen their Bangladeshi identity. Positive encouragement is needed from the Bangladesh Government in this respect. For example few young Brit-Bangladeshis have started publishing a newspaper, Bangla Mirror. The aim of this newspaper is to develop a positive image of Bangladesh and strengthen their Bangladeshi identity. The editor of The Guardian, the Home Secretary and the MP of Tower Hamlets and a member of the House of Lords encouraged their initiative. These young EBs tried to receive a note of encouragement from the High Commissioner of Bangladesh for two months but failed.

### **7.5.5 Suggested Measures:**

The Ministry of EW&OE can prepare cultural material, jointly with the Ministry of Cultural Affairs, which can be staged by the young EBs. These materials should give importance to cultural heritage than partisan politics. For developing these types of materials, suggestions from the expatriate community may be solicited. There can also be joint ventures between young EBs and young Bangladeshis for producing musical CDs and preparing scripts for drama. To attract the young EBs their problems need to be reflected in those dramas.

Two-way communication has to be ensured by the Government of Bangladesh. For example, when the Government sends cultural troupes to different countries of the

world, it should consider including the talents from EBs. Again when official cultural delegations are performing in UK or US, they should provide some space for EBs to participate.

Student Exchange Programmes may be organised under the auspices of the Ministry of Expatriates' Welfare and Overseas Employments. The programme may link academic institutions in US and UK where there is a large concentration of Bangladeshis, with the ones in Bangladesh. These exchange programmes should not be Dhaka centric only. It should take into consideration the source areas of Bangladeshis in UK and the US. In collaboration with leading NGOs involved in rural development, internship programmes may be launched. Such programmes are likely to attract young adult EBs with social science backgrounds.

In order to attract the young generation of migrants to Bangladesh, efforts must be made to develop attractive tourism packages. These packages need to be advertised in EB run newspapers and the media. Government should use the newspapers and media run by the young EBs in host community to reach the second generation. In order to succeed in such efforts, one of the necessary preconditions is to ensure security of the expatriates.

Every year the GoB announces prizes and awards for young talents. Talents of young EBs may also be recognised by Government by including them in the list. Likewise, private foundations and cultural organisations should also try to draw from the talents of young EBs.

The political parties and the civil society in Bangladesh have to collectively work hard to create a positive image of Bangladesh. A lot of positive developments have taken place in Bangladesh and it is those achievements that need to be presented to the young EBs. \_

## **7.6 CONCLUSION**

It was seen from this chapter that EBs played an important role in the war of liberation of Bangladesh. It was also seen that a large number of the interviewees regularly remit to Bangladesh. EBs who had migrated long ago remitted money to build property at home but now are more inclined to remit for maintenance of those property. A section also sends money for charity purposes. The chapter has also demonstrated that deep emotional attachment of the first generation EBs with Bangladesh will not automatically be passed on to the second generation. The former had undertaken various measures to keep the latter interested with the country of their roots. Different innovative steps have to be undertaken by the State, civil society and the private sector in Bangladesh to institutionalise the diaspora linkage.

## CHAPTER VIII

### 8. PARTICIPATION IN ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PROCESS

EBs can take part in the economic development process of Bangladesh in many ways. Those involved in business can expand their business domain extending to Bangladesh. They can also develop backward linkage in Bangladesh by importing necessary products from Bangladesh. Successful professionals can also participate in the development process of Bangladesh by sharing their skills in relevant areas. EBs involved in mainstream politics of the countries of migration can also take part in the development process of Bangladesh by positively influencing the policies of those countries. This chapter concentrates on the experience of EBs in these three areas. It makes an attempt to identify the constraints faced by the EBs in these areas and avenues suggested by the EBs in addressing them. First section deals with the investment experience of the EBs.

#### 8.1 INVESTMENT

##### 8.1.1 Pattern of Investment:

A section of the interviewees have already invested in Bangladesh. Few of them are large investors; majority being medium scale investors and few are small investors. Few investors from the UK developed a project in Bangladesh named 'Nandan'. Its Director was interviewed. He stated that Nandan has undertaken two large-scale projects in Bangladesh. Both of them are being implemented in Dhaka. Under the first project a theme park is being developed in Chandra in a sixty-acre property. It is a joint collaboration of EBs from the UK and an Indian enterprise. Under the project a super market has been constructed in Gulshan. Another interviewee who is from the US is involved in a business venture, which is setting up a pharmaceutical industry for producing hormone replacement drugs. The most popular form of investment of EBs both from UK and US is the real estate sector. Most of the EBs had purchased apartments, few had constructed shopping complexes. Some EBs bought possessions of shops in market places and others invested their savings into various financial instruments, such as savings certificates.

**Table 8.1: Scope for economic investment by expatriates in Bangladesh.**

Response	UK	US	Total
Yes	36	41	77
No	--	9	9
Both yes & no	6	--	6
Did not respond	8	--	8
Total	50	50	100

##### 8.1.2 Scope of Investment:

Even those who did not make any investment in Bangladesh felt that there exists a major market in Bangladesh for making different kinds of investment by the expatriate Bangladeshis. Table 8.1 shows that 77 of the respondents responded affirmatively. Only 9 from US did not think that it is possible for the EBs to invest in Bangladesh. Response of six UK interviewees is interesting. They stated that from economic point of view, they did see a lot of potential for investment. However the

governance environment is not conducive. Eight of the interviewees did not respond. Those who answered affirmatively identified economic and psychological reasons why the EBs will be interested to invest in Bangladesh. These are,

- investment provides opportunities for maintaining a link with the country of origin;
- it creates alternative options to fall back when required;
- it makes provision for self after retirement;
- it creates opportunity for being recognised in a person's own society;
- it gives satisfaction of being able to do something for the people of the country;
- It is possible to maximise latent opportunities by investing in Bangladesh;
- it has potential for offering reliable and good return;
- it provides opportunity to maximise benefits due to low interest rates in the country of residence;
- it has cheaper operating cost;

The respondents identified some of the sectors where EBs can invest. These are real estate, trade, business and manufacturing, transportation, Information Technology, textile, agro-based small-scale industries, buying industries from Government under privatisation scheme, tourism, savings, health sector, leather industry, small-scale food processing etc. Opportunities identified by the expatriates for investment in Bangladesh can be divided into 4 broad categories.

Firstly, investments that require large scale resources and major negotiation with the State. In some cases this investment may also require joint ventures with multinational or other international partners. Telecommunication and energy sectors are the two major areas identified by the respondents. Interestingly, those who identified these sectors of investment are from the US.

Investment opportunities that requires relatively large investment yet it is much smaller than the first type constitutes the second group. Individual investors or joint stock companies along with local partners would be able to manage the fund requirement. Borrowing facilities from the country of residence or Bangladesh will suffice their capital needs. State owned industries, which are currently being privatised, make one such investment sector. Tourism, leather and pharmaceutical industries are three other areas of such investments. Need for interaction with the State for development of such industries is also quite high. State plays a major role in privatisation decision although privatisation board is there.

The highest number of interviewees as an area of investment mentioned development of real estate. This can be treated as a separate category with some overlapping with the second category. Investors can operate with relatively less interactions with state machineries. Role of the State is mainly at the level of granting permission. Purchase of land and construction of multistoried building with the purpose of selling or renting, construction of shopping complexes or purchase of flat or individual shops are some of the examples. There are some specific investment options particularly mentioned by the UK respondents that also fall into the third

category. These are small-scale industry for production of spices, processed food and pickles. 12,500 Bangladeshi restaurants of UK would be the major market of such products. Investments in Information Technology sector can also be part of this category.

A majority of the expatriates interviewed were involved in different kinds of jobs in the UK and US. They were not interested to be engaged in a business venture themselves. They wanted to invest their earning into different savings schemes, which should accrue reasonable interest and should be fully secure. This type of sleeping investment by small investors can be seen as the fourth category. The number of this type of investors were the highest among the interviewees.

### **8.1.3 Problems in Investing:**

Respondents faced certain difficulties when they attempted to invest in Bangladesh. The following will deal with types of problems faced by different categories of investors. From the US two persons were interviewed who attempted to make large-scale investment in Bangladesh. In the year 2000-01 Mr. Gias Ahmed made eight visits to Bangladesh to invest in the telecommunication sector. He wanted to undertake a joint venture with Siemens (Germany) and Homeland Security (US) for providing technical support in updating telephone exchanges in 64 districts of Bangladesh. He brought in a Congressional delegation headed by Congressman Benjamin Grill and met the President, the Prime Minister and other concerned ministers. A huge sum of money was sent to Bangladesh to start off the project. Even after holding meetings with the relevant ministers, he failed to proceed with the project. He identified slackness, not giving due importance to the matter, bureaucratic red-tapeism and corruption as major reasons behind the failure.

A member of British-Bangla Chamber works for linking the British investors with the Bangladeshi businessmen. In this respect investors from the UK can be of British or Bangladeshi origin. He stated that most of the business tenders are advertised in Bangladesh. Biddings are not advertised in the website or any other easily accessible sources. Besides, in order to invest or bid for a particular project the investors require a lot of preliminary information. It is however very difficult to access such information.

Md. Awlad Hossain Khan and Md. Akther Hossain are two established businesspersons in the US. One owns a pharmaceutical industry and the other is a chemist. Both of them are involved with the Bangladesh Society of US and served the Association as Presidents and Vice-presidents. Both of them saw immense potential for establishing a section of their pharmaceutical industry in Bangladesh. However, both emphasised on the law and order situation in Bangladesh and stated that unless significant improvements are made in this regard, there is no likelihood for EBs investing in Bangladesh in a major way. Mr. Azmal Hossain owns four restaurants in UK, all located in the Brick Lane area. He came to Bangladesh in the last few years quite often. When Chatak cement factory was tendered for privatisation, he was the highest bidder. He was approached for bribe to expedite the decision. He was in contact with some high political authority to intervene, however his initiatives failed. Gradually he lost his interest in the project. He also wanted to establish a bank, there as well he failed because of the built in disincentives in the system.

The member of British-Bangla Chamber pointed out that when new Governments are formed, relevant ministers make trips to the US and the UK. Through Bangladesh missions, they invite the expatriate investors. The ministers give all kinds of assurances to the investors<sup>29</sup>. However once authorities go home, those decisions are not respected and no effective policy change takes place, he added. This also made the expatriate investors apathetic towards investment in Bangladesh.

Problems faced by the second or third category investors are a little different. Most of the Bangladeshi expatriates interviewed have bought flats; others want to buy those in future. Getting information on reliable building societies or Government ventures were found to be very difficult. The projects undertaken by the Government initiative are usually announce in the newspapers of Bangladesh. It is difficult for average expatriate Bangladeshis to get information on different requirements for application. Besides they are unable to acquire updated forms, or make payments from abroad. Someone from Bangladesh on behalf of the Ministry of Expatriates' Welfare and Overseas Employment has to perform the tasks. They highlighted the difficulties in participating in such ventures.

A section of those, who have invested in housing in the urban areas, have rented out those premises. They face major problem in looking after the property. There are certain tasks associated with renting out premises. One has to collect the rents regularly. Regular maintenance needs to be undertaken. Every now and then they have to look for new tenants when the premises fall vacant. Signing of contract with the tenant and when a tenant is not fulfilling the contract they also have to be removed. The expatriates mostly rely on relatives to perform these jobs. In the context of Bangladesh this type of work takes a large amount of time. Therefore in cases, relatives do make lapses and right measures for maintenance is not assured. Instances were mentioned where the tenants have taken control of the house. For some it led to legal disputes. Few mentioned that they have stopped renting their premises and kept it lying as it is. Proper agencies are there in UK and US to provide these services. In Bangladesh there exist no such institutional support system.

Constructing house, particularly in villages had been problematic for some interviewees. When a person constructs a new house in the rural area, it is their kith and kin that usually resides in them. In some cases the EBs employ families to look after their houses. This is applicable in case of agricultural land as well. Over the years, those who look after the properties develop certain interest in them. In some instances the kith and kins do not want the owners of the properties to come to Bangladesh or to retain any effective control over their properties. In other cases, the relatives take help of the local mastans in appropriating the properties of the expatriates. A few stated that in their cases disputes led to a point where their life at home was at risk.

Another problem faced by some of the expatriates, particularly those who invested capital in constructing buildings, residential or market places, is extortion. During the construction phase and also afterwards, local mastans make demands, and in cases, create terror, for extortion. Mr. A Matin who is currently residing in Brooklyn of New York is from the Lokkhonbandh Union of Golapganj Thana of Sylhet. He has recently

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<sup>29</sup> These include providing speedy one-stop service to the investors, facilitation infrastructural needs, access to information and streamlining immigration and customs formalities.

finished the construction of stores in his village. Local hoodlums have occupied his shopping complex. They would not vacate the premise unless they were paid Tk. 50,000 in cash or handed out one of the stores. He has contacted the local police station, which refused to take the case for a while. He also got in touch with the Ministry of Expatriates' Welfare and Overseas Employment and was waiting for necessary action. Mr. Abdul Mannan is currently residing in New York with his three sons. Originally they are from Barisal, where they have established their business and other properties. His eldest son is in Barisal and looks after those. Recently local extortionist entered their house with arms in the afternoon and asked for Tk. 1 lakh. They threatened that if the family is unable to pay the money, Mr. Mannan's eldest son would be killed. So one can see that few families have faced severe security problem due to their investment in Bangladesh. One however has to note that these are extreme cases.

#### **8.1.4 Solutions Suggested by the Expatriates:**

The large-scale investors suggested that the Ministry of Expatriates' Welfare and Overseas Employment needs to institutionalise a process for maintaining liaison with the Privatisation Board. A person from the Ministry should be in charge for maintaining such liaison. S/he will make a monthly update on a lists of new industries declared for privatisation. S/he will also collect technical papers required to evaluate the financial viability of that particular industry and prepare specific briefs. His/her other task is to make that information available to the expatriates. S/he can send those materials to the Bangladesh embassy or s/he can open a website and put all relevant information in the site. Time to time the Ministry of Expatriates' Welfare and Overseas Employment should announce the website address and about each specific division of the Ministry in Local Bangla magazines and Bengali TV channels in UK and US. Provisions should be made so that migrants can make queries through the website, and that those queries are attended.

The EBs also suggested involving their representatives in the National Board for Investment. Large-scale investors also pointed out that the Government has to facilitate access to stable infrastructure to the investors. In order to encourage the investment of the expatriates, it should ensure quick access to basic services such as phone, fax, major improvement in airport facilities, streamlining of immigration and custom clearance, guarantee and preparation of profile of reliable trustworthy partners. It also needs to create a database of skilled manpower. But on top of everything the Government has to ensure healthy law and order situation and put a leash on extortionist and rent-seeking activities.

The expatriates who want to invest in flats want more Government sponsored projects in this regard. The Government's involvement will make their investment more secured and they will not be cheated by the private builders. Such housing projects should be undertaken in all regions of Bangladesh, not only in the capital. Government should take a pilot project on property management, if the pilot project is successful, the private entrepreneurs will emerge for managing the properties of the expatriates; that is maintenance of apartments, collection of rent and providing lease to tenants. The news of plot allotment should be published in the Bengali newspaper, TV, radio of the country of residence and be made available in websites so that all expatriates have access to such information.

If major steps are not taken to stop extortion of local mastans than in any case the expatriates will gradually sell off their properties.

Information on different opportunities for the small investors like Wage Earners Bond, savings certificate, defense saving certificate has to be provided to the expatriates on a regular basis. Information on these needs to be advertised on ethnic Bangla TV and newspapers. Brochures should be developed on investment opportunities with specific information on requirements for purchasing those and name of the place where they are available. These brochures again should be disseminated by the Bangla ethnic shops, restaurants and through electronic media. The expatriates should be given the opportunities of buying these bonds in the country of residence.

Now we have some idea on avenues where EBs have already invested or would like to invest in future. It was also seen that the EBs faced all kinds of problems when they invested in Bangladesh. In the following section a presentation is made on the findings of the study concerning linking the skills and expertise of the EBs with the development process of Bangladesh.

## **8.2 LINKING SKILLS AND EXPERTISE OF EBs WITH DEVELOPMENT OF BANGLADESH:**

As seen earlier, a section of the interviewees were school, college and university teachers, IT professionals, accountants, local level politicians, tax planners, engineers, and journalists. Interviewees of all these categories showed keen interest to participate in the economic development process of Bangladesh in their own way. They have developed certain professional skills, which they would like to share.

Some forms of expertise sharing have already started in Bangladesh. The first British Bangladesh Fusion Food Festival was held on 1-7 September 2002 in Dhaka. It was jointly organised by Dhaka Sheraton and British Bangladesh Chef Association (BBCA). The superior gastronomic event was inaugurated by the then Acting British High Commissioner in Dhaka Mr. Robert Gibson. It was participated by four star British Bangladeshi chefs namely: Messrs. Mohammed Azad Hussain, President of BBCA, Rois Ali, Fokhrul Islam Dewan and Mohammed Eahia Hussain.

Mr. Mohammed Azad Hossain has more than 15 years experience in the ethnic restaurant business in the UK. Starting as a humble waiter, he rapidly moved to his first love in the kitchen where he quickly learned the fundamentals of Bengali cooking. Though Azad's productions range from traditional dishes to sophisticated creations, he specialises in Bangladeshi fusion food. Café Turmeric in Oxford is his current workplace. He is also a consultant on food & hygiene issues. He is a winner of CIEH Chef of the Year Award. *The Hot Chef of the year 1998* Mr. Rois Ali works in the Rupali Restaurant of Coventry. He is also a winner of *Good Food Guide Award*. He was the promoter and master chef of *Bangladesh Food Festival UK 2002*. Mr. Ali is one of the judges of the *National Indian Chef of the Year* completion. Both Azad and Rois are popular faces of the *Ethnic Food Show*.

Mr. Fokhrul Islam Dewan is a founder member of BBCA. In addition to being an innovative and accomplished restaurateur of Britain for the past 25 years, he is also a qualified chef specialising in Bangladeshi and Indian cuisine. His restaurants are the first in Britain to include tips for healthy eating and pioneered the inclusion of the

prestigious food pyramid guide into his menus. Cardamom Tandoori of Thame, Oxon is Dewan's principal workplace. Mr. Mohammed Eahia Hussain began his career as a trainee chef in the internationally renowned, Le Raj Restaurant in Epsom, Surrey. He currently heads the Thai brigade of four staff at the Café Blue Cobra at Reading in Berkshire.

This type of collaboration can also take place among others. Those who are teaching in schools and colleges would like to develop collaborative projects with similar educational institutions in Bangladesh. University teachers would like to meet the Government of Bangladesh through the Ministry of Expatriates' Welfare and Overseas Employment and the universities in Bangladesh, initiate programs such as 'US Fulbright Junior and Senior Research Fellowship', UNDP Transfer of Knowledge Through Nationals (TOKTEN) Programme. One interviewee mentioned that the opportunity to participate in the economic development process of Bangladesh would serve both himself and the country. He would be able to exchange new ideas, techniques and methods with the Bangladeshi teachers and students. At the same time personally he will gain experience and get opportunity to do research on current issues effecting Bangladesh, South Asia and other countries in the region. Access to such research should help a person with his/her career abroad. If the Bangladesh State takes much initiatives, it will be interpreted by the expatriate Bangladeshis as recognition by their country of origin. This can also be interpreted as rewarding the expatriate Bangladeshis for their contributions.

The only doctor interviewed cited the example of Dr. Omar Faruk. At that point of time Dr. Omar Faruk came to Dhaka as a visiting professor at the Institute of Post Graduate and Medical Research for six months. He was involved in training of doctors who were working at Thana Health Complexes on handling of patients in emergency cases. She felt lots of doctors, dentists, surgeons who have reached certain status would like to participate in such endeavors out of the feeling of serving the nation, which provided him/her the opportunity to become a doctor. The Government of Bangladesh can also think in terms of initiating such programmes that are economically viable from the point of expatriate Bangladeshi doctors as well. A pilot project can be designed involving the renowned surgeons of Bangladeshi origin. Under the project, doctors will come to Bangladesh for a stipulated period of time and performed surgery. To provide incentive to him/her the income can be made tax exempted. Such partnership may be more appropriate with private sector medical institutions. In that respect Government role will be to create space for such linkage building.

Engineers pointed out that in the past some experience sharing with academics of Bangladesh and Expatriate Bangladeshis has taken place. However engineers have never been part of any such endeavour. Expertise of the civil engineers can be encouraged in infrastructure developments like construction of bridge, culvert, sluice gates, roads and highways, multistoried buildings and large architectural projects.

One of the counsellors of the Tower Hamlet mentioned that he has already initiated a few collaborative projects. The first one involved the offices of the Mayors of Dhaka and Tower Hamlets. It is on waste disposal. The other project is between local Governments of Dhaka city and London city. Experience of London City traffic management will be shared with the authorities of Dhaka City Corporation with the aim of increasing good governance at local level.

Another interviewee with expertise in Geriatric Nutrition stated that he would be interested to initiate projects with the Health Ministry, Nutrition Department of Dhaka University or with health NGOs on preventive health care. He emphasized some of the health conditions in Bangladesh are created because of wrong dietary habits. Fifty percent of these diseases can be minimised only by bringing changes in food habits. He emphasised that cost of health care can be reduced substantially if the knowledge and experience of different experts, both expatriate and local can be combindly applied in Bangladesh through inculcation of appropriate technology.

**Table 8.2: Lending expertise for contributing in the development process of Bangladesh.**

Response	UK	US	Total
Yes	20	26	46
No/ Not applicable	30	24	54
Total	50	50	100

Catering is a huge industry in the UK dominated by the Bangladeshi expatriates. President of Bangladesh Catering Association and other restaurant owners interviewed stated that Government and private sector of Bangladesh should concentrate on developing forward linkages with the catering industry of the UK. Third generation Brit-Bangladeshis are not interested to join this industry. Therefore there is a vacuum in the area of trained chef, waiter and performers.

In Bangladesh there is hardly any training institution of international standard, which can cater to the needs of these industries of UK. Currently the Ministry of Tourism and Civil Aviation runs a three-month course for chefs. It also offers courses for the waiters. However they have their shortcomings. The restaurant owners without having many options are sponsoring skilled persons from the above three categories from India. Caterers' Association showed interest to collaborate with public or private sector ventures in this respect. They can help in developing the course outline, the module for training, send chefs for a stipulated period to train and to develop mechanism for quality control. Training course for chefs should be at least six months in duration. All the restaurant owners or other interviewees stated that such training industry has to be developed in Sylhet as the expatriate Bangladeshis who are predominantly from Sylhet would like to sponsor people from their own region.

In the early stages restaurant owners usually sponsored their relatives to work as helper of the cook or waiter. Nowadays the industry has become extremely competitive. To sustain their enterprises in the market they need professional waitresses. The Bangladeshi restaurants also need singers, instrument players and classical Indian dancers. The Government of Bangladesh has imposed all kinds of restrictions on migration of women performers. Here as well Bangladesh is missing out from participating in this labour market.

Some networks have already emerged in New York who are trying to develop economic linkages with Bangladesh. A few of them are discussed below:

**Network for Bangladeshi Entrepreneurship (NBE):**

NBE was formed in March 2000 to create a platform for technology entrepreneurs, professionals, researchers and students for sharing entrepreneurial ideas, case studies and resources so that the practice of technology entrepreneurship can be

cultivated among the resident and non-resident Bangladeshis. Networking will be one of the key focuses for the platform. NBE should be thought of as a support network for both entrepreneurs and would-be entrepreneurs alike. NBE's first year's plan includes a series of regional seminars hosted in different cities of North America to generate local level support and simultaneously build the initial infrastructure.

#### Bangladesh Environment Network (BEN):

BEN has been set up to facilitate communication about Bangladesh's environmental problems and assists Bangladesh to solve these problems. The BEN's main goals are, to gather and disseminate information about environmental problems of Bangladesh and their possible solutions; to unite resident and non-resident Bangladeshis in their effort to protect Bangladesh's environment; to establish connection between environmental organisations in Bangladesh on the one hand and international environmental organisations, on the other; to facilitate connection among various environmental organisations in Bangladesh; to persuade the Government and other Bangladesh organisations to adopt environment-friendly policies and to assist them to implement these policies. In collaboration with BUET, it organises conferences in Dhaka where EBs come on their own initiative and in collaboration with experts in Dhaka explore policy and action for environmental protection.

#### TechBangla:

TechBangla is a non-profit organisation registered in the US and in Bangladesh, that is dedicated to catalyse the transfer of technology to Bangladesh. It was formed in June 1998, with the vision that technology, not aid, can bring lasting solutions to economic problems of Bangladesh. The fundamental strategy of TechBangla is to provide a platform for technological collaboration between the resident and non-resident Bangladeshis (RBs and NRBs) with a focus on joint ventures and foreign direct investment. TechBangla IT Research Cell (TBITRC) strongly feels that Bangladesh does not have enough resources to go through a trial and error method in adopting IT for economic development. IT, particularly e-commerce, emerges as an opportunity for developing countries, but as a threat if not utilised appropriately. TechBangla finds a complete absence of research on IT in Bangladesh and its possible impact on economic development. TechBangla IT Research Cell was formed with the commitment that a dedicated market research team for IT issues could resolve the vacuum of information.

#### Expatriate Bangladeshi 2000 (EB2000):

EB2000 convenes men and women of Bangladeshi origin living in different parts of the world with the objectives to create a common information network and platform among all expatriates and connect them with the policy and development process in Bangladesh; to create a repository of physical and human resources among the expatriates that could be utilized in complementing and reinforcing the policy and development process in Bangladesh; to establish strategic alliances and partnerships between the corporation and various local and foreign Governmental and non-Governmental organisations with shared objectives and visions.

### The Bangladeshi-American Foundation, Inc. (BAFI):

BAFI, is a membership-based, non-profit and mission-driven organisation with the primary objectives of upholding and fostering community development in the USA and the secondary objective of helping the poor and destitute in Bangladesh. It has been working with the United States Department of State to facilitate meetings and interactions between various Bangladeshi organisations and US Government officials concerning issues of common interests and concerns.

### ALOCHONA:

Alochona is the largest Bangladeshi forum in the Internet with more than 2,000 subscribers from 50 countries. It focuses on topics related to Bangladesh and Bengali culture. The objective is to promote positive changes in the society by instituting persuasive dialogue and action among those, who have interest or influence on the culture, philosophy, politics, economy, education, and technological developments of Bangladesh and the geographic region.

### Shetubondhon:

Shetubondhon is a web based discussion forum. Its mission is to enhance human tolerance, instill enduring sense of morality, foster an attitude of positive thinking and cooperation, and heighten awareness about pertinent human concerns among people of South Asian origin in general and Bangladesh in particular through interactive dialogue on socio-economic, geo-political, religious, education, cultural and agronomic issues. Its vision is to emerge as a premier web-based discussion forum that will enhance understanding among peoples of various social, political, religious, ideological, ethnic, and professional backgrounds.

## **8.3 INFLUENCING PUBLIC POLICY IN THE HOST COUNTRY**

The US and UK are the two most important countries of the industrialised west with whom Bangladesh has all kinds of economic relations. The US is the second largest source country of remittance for Bangladesh. Remittance flow from the UK is also very significant. Moreover, in 2002 flow of remittance from the UK grew by 136 per cent from the previous year. Both the countries are also major trade partners. US is the single largest buyer of the garment products of Bangladesh. Approximately, 40 per cent of the garments manufactured in Bangladesh are exported to the US market. In such a situation, Bangladesh needs a positive public policy environment in these two countries. Literature on diaspora has shown that migrants in the host country can play a major roles in influencing the political and economic machineries of the host country in formulating policies towards migrants' home country. Migrants have played such role in many ways: through their involvement in mainstream politics, through their participation in different social groups and through organising immigrant communities into different associations. In the following an attempt is made to find out the current position of EBs of UK and US with regard to diaspora politics.

The section on UK is written on the basis of discussions with local level political leaders, civil servants, Bangladesh experts in the UK and Bangladesh High Commissioner in London. The section of US again rely on interview of leader of community boards, organisers of various associations, Bangladesh's Permanent Representative to the UN and the Consul General of Bangladesh in New York.

### 8.3.1 UK

It was seen earlier that EBs in the UK are geographically concentrated in a few areas of greater London. A quarter of them live in a single borough of Tower Hamlets. Such concentration has created an opportunity for participation of EBs in local politics. In London EBs first directly contested local level borough elections in 1982. In Spitafield ward, an independent EB candidate won and became the first Counsellor of Bangladeshi origin. Currently, there are as many as 29 Counsellors of Bangladeshi origin in different boroughs of London. These Counsellors exercise Considerable power in respect to local governance concerning taxation, housing, water etc.

Concentration of Bengali population in a few localities created a unique opportunity for Bangladeshis in the UK to participate in the larger politics as well. As recognition of the contribution of Bengali community leaders in certain boroughs, a community leader of Bangladeshi origin has been awarded membership to the House of Lords. Such participation of EBs in mainstream politics indeed has created great opportunity for Bangladesh to benefit from its diaspora. However, the observers mentioned some specific hindrances in this respect.

The Bangladeshi community in the UK is divided in many ways. There exist associations of different tiers: district, thana, union, village of Bangladesh. Regional associations are also sometime divided along party lines. Therefore, instead of creating strength for the community, such associations may at times weaken it.

According to some members of Bangladeshi community, they are too much concerned about the day-to-day politics of Bangladesh. These issues create conflict among the community, whereas the community does not have anything to gain from it. Over a long time, the divisions between the groups along party lines are further accentuated by periodic visits of political leaders from Bangladesh. The EBs in the UK paid a high price of such division among their ranks. The Member who represented East London in the British Parliament for the last forty years retired before the last election. A Brit-Bangladeshi Labour Party member Jalaluddin was being considered for nomination to that seat. The community became sharply divided, rather than being united on the issue<sup>30</sup>

### 8.3.2 US

There is a large concentration of Bangladeshis in New York. However, unlike London, there is no locality where EBs can enjoy an advantage in electoral politics. A generalisation is usually made that EBs have been more active in the politics of Bangladesh than in the politics of the US (Angell and Rahim, 1996). Nonetheless, since late 1980s a section of the EBs, particularly from business background, is becoming involved in mainstream party politics of the US. In 1988 a group of Bangladeshis were involved in fund raising activities for a Congressional candidate in New York.

A few also became members of local District School Boards and Community Boards. In 1996, an immigrant Bangladeshi named Morshed Alam was elected to a school board in New York. Alam was successful because he could garner the support of a number of civic and ethnic groups by projecting himself as the spokesperson of the Asian American immigrant and other immigrant communities. Alam also launched

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<sup>30</sup> Personal interview with Prof. John Eade, Roehampton University, London.

several American-Bangladeshi friendship associations in New York City to encourage Bangladeshi participation in US political activities.

In 1992 a few Bangladeshis, again from business background, established the American Public Affairs Front. The aims of the Front is to educate Bangladeshi American community to participate in US politics, to encourage Bangladeshis to register as voters and to convince them about the necessity to participate in town hall meetings. The Front also exhorts Bangladeshis to participate in local Government elections both as voters and candidates. Through providing awards, it seeks to identify young talented Bangladeshis who have the potential to participate in mainstream politics.

The Front is also active in keeping city and Government authorities informed about the problems of Bangladeshi community and lobbying the US Government and Congressmen in favour of Bangladesh. In the past it took up issues such as access of Bangladesh garments in the US market, adverse impact of the Farakka dam and the pervasiveness of the arsenic pollution of ground water.

EBs involved in mainstreaming Bangladeshis in the US political process informed that a major limitation for lobbying for Bangladesh is their inability to raise funds in good amount for candidates that they endorse.

In 1990, a Bangladesh caucus was formed with sympathetic Congress members. Congressman Joseph Crowley is the Chair of the Caucus. It began functioning with five members. Now it has 23 Congressmen. The formation of the caucus was the result of a joint initiative of the garments sector of Bangladesh and EBs involved in the mainstream political process. However, the number of Congressmen is not large enough to effectively influence law making processes in the US.

In the US as well there are a number of associations of local and regional nature and they are also divided, like their counterparts in the UK. In recent years, a few organisations have emerged that work on specific issues. Some of these organisations are already playing important roles in diaspora politics of Bangladesh.

#### **8.4 CONCLUSION**

This chapter gave an idea about the current level of investment of EBs in Bangladesh. It showed that the most popular avenue for investment of the EBs is the real estate. Different categories of investor EBs faced various types of problems. Some of these can be addressed by taking concrete steps. The chapter also demonstrated that an overwhelming majority of professional EBs were deeply interested to participate in the development process of Bangladesh through sharing expertise that they have attained in different fields. It was found that EBs in the UK have become active in local level electoral politics, whereas in the US it was difficult for them to carve out an electoral political niche. Nonetheless, unfortunately in both the places Bangladeshi communities are divided along partisan and other lines. If Bangladesh is interested to optimise the positive results of diaspora then it has to take concrete steps to uplift the community from such divisive politics.

## CHAPTER IX

### 9. ROLE OF THE GOVERNMENT OF BANGLADESH

The Ministry of Expatriates' Welfare and Overseas Employment was formed in 20 December 2001. Since its inception, the Ministry has undertaken various steps to look after the interests of both long-term EBs and short-term migrant worker of Bangladesh. In this section a brief account is provided about the programmes and activities that this Ministry has undertaken particularly for the EBs.

#### 9.1 MARKET EXPLORATION

One of the first tasks that this Ministry undertook with regard to the EBs was to explore markets for creating opportunities for long-term migration. High level delegation headed by the Minister visited countries like Greece and Italy. Due to successful negotiation with the concerned authorities 6,000 Bangladeshi workers were provided legal status in Greece. Negotiation with Association of Ship Owners has paved the way for employment of Bangladeshis in that country. A draft agreement has already been agreed upon by both parties. After formulating anti-desertion law, ensuring social and economic security and life insurance policies recruitment will begin<sup>31</sup>. Currently there are about 10,000 documented Bangladeshis, in Greece. Special steps were taken to intensify the activities of Labour Attache in Greece. Measures were taken to remove the hindrances that existed in the way of remitting money from Greece.

A draft agreement on migration with the Italian Government is also under process. Following negotiations, the Italian Government has legalised 15,000 undocumented Bangladeshi workers.

#### 9.2 WELFARE PROGRAMMES

The report amply demonstrated that some of the major concerns of the EB community were in regard to security of the EBs while they are in Bangladesh, and services by Bangladesh Biman and at the airport. Recently two buses have been put in operation in Dhaka from and to airport to ensure safe arrival and departure of EBs. Through utilising the Wage Earners' Welfare Fund a one-stop service centre cum 500-bed accommodation is under construction in Dhaka to save short-term migrant workers from cheating and harassment. Long term EBs will also be able to use the facilities.

For the EBs a separate channel has been set up at the arrival and departure sections of immigration of Zia International Airport. A new welfare desk for the reception of migrants has been set up at the arrival lounge. A white channel and a separate checking counter for the expatriates are being planned.

Since the inception of the Ministry, it has received many applications for redressing problems of EBs. The Ministry received 9 applications from the EBs of UK requesting for actions to protect the lives of their family members and property in Bangladesh from the local extortionist and terrorists. 21 such letters were received from the US. The Ministry looked into the complaints and did the needful within its capacity.<sup>32</sup>

#### 9.3 INVESTMENT

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<sup>31</sup> Personal interview of Major (retd) Md. Quamrul Islam, State Minister for Ministry of EW&OE, July27, 2003.

<sup>32</sup> Mr. Daliluddin Mondal, Secretary, Ministry of EW&OE at the Inter-ministerial Consultation on Institutionalising Rebonding: Bangladeshi Diaspora in UK and US, organized by Ministry of EW&OE and IOM on 26 June 2003.

In order to encourage the investment of the EBs, various incentive structures have been operationalised. In consultation with concerned authorities steps have been taken to introduce regular remitter card (RRC) to encourage expatriates to remit through the official channel. About 2,945 branches of five nationalised banks of Bangladesh are working to receive and disburse remittances. Moreover, fifteen exchange centres have been set up. Money Laundering Preventive Law 2002 has been introduced to discourage unofficial flow of remittance.

In July 2002 after interministerial negotiations, the National Board of Revenue has approved revised incentives for exemption of tax on remittance. It ensured full tax exemption when the money is remitted through the official channel. Under the new arrangement expatriates will not be required to furnish TIN Certificate to purchase immovable properties in Bangladesh. During the period of 1 July 2002 to 20 June 2006 expatriates can invest any amount of money in commercial and industrial sectors and in these cases the Government will not enquire about the sources of funds. The following incentives will be given to the expatriates who are interested to set up agro-based industries in Bangladesh.

- Interest earned from foreign currency will be tax free.
- Wage Earners Development Bonds purchased will be tax free.
- There is no need to produce income tax paid certificate during departure from Bangladesh by the expatriates and his/her family members holding foreign passports.

In Government housing projects, sufficient number of plots (1,000) have been reserved for expatriates. Opportunities have also been created for expatriates to avail low cost housing. Expatriates will get preference to purchase dollars. Special incentives are also being planned for those expatriates interested in the communication and transport sector.

EBs will enjoy cheaper rates while purchasing denationalised industries. Further incentives offered are:

- 40 percent reduction in the price for expatriates will be given if they pay 100 percent price at a time within thirty days.
- 20 percent reduction of price will be given if 75 percent of the total price is paid at a time within thirty days.
- Extra 5 percent reduction of price will be offered if the payment is made in foreign currency.

The Government has decided to honour Important Non-Resident Bangladeshis (INRB) who will invest in the country. A committee has been formed to frame a policy under the chairmanship of the Minister for EW&OE. Expatriates who invest equivalent of US\$500,000 in foreign currency, expatriates who remit equivalent of US\$750,000 will be honoured as INRB. However, it may be stated that bestowing honours on the EBs should not necessarily be restricted only to those who are investing in Bangladesh. It should be more broad based incorporating all kinds of contributions ranging from role in war of liberation to community development.

#### **9.4 CONCLUSION**

The discussion above shows the importance that this Ministry has accorded to the issue of linking expatriates with the economic development of Bangladesh and in ensuring their welfare. Within a short span of time the Ministry has explored different avenues for institutionalising re-bonding with its diaspora. In the following some

recommendations are made to help the Ministry to further proceed with its activities through a concrete plan of action.

## CHAPTER X

### 10. SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

#### 10.1 SUMMARY

This study is on emigrant Bangladeshi communities in the UK and the US. Bangladeshis have been taking part in long-term migration for quite sometime. It is understood that they are making valuable contribution to the economy of the receiving countries. However, there has been little understanding concerning the contribution of the EBs to the economy of Bangladesh. Recent positive experiences of diaspora linkage of various countries have contributed to the realisation that Bangladeshi expatriates can also be seen as important links to both their receiving countries and Bangladesh. The current Government of Bangladesh set up a new Ministry of Expatriates' Welfare and Overseas Employment. This demonstrate the Government's understanding that EBs can contribute immensely to the socio-economic development of the country. It also believes that Government can help promote EBs' interest in their countries of residence. In order to make the relationship mutually beneficial, the Ministry needs systematic information on the nature of Bangladesh expatriate communities abroad, their needs and concerns. This study is a modest attempt in bridging the lacuna of information for the Ministry to help formulate its future programmes.

The study is divided into ten chapters. The first chapter sets the research questions and introduces the analytical framework and research methodology. It combined the concept of diaspora and multiculturalism to analyze the relationship of EBs with Bangladesh. The second chapter discusses the diaspora experiences of few countries. The third captured the process of Bangladeshi migration to selected two countries. It was seen that Bangladeshis have been migrating to these two countries since the 1920s. Seamen of the British merchant navies from less educated landless background were the pioneer migrants of Bangladesh. The second wave of migration took place in the 1950s and 1960s. Less educated rural migrants still dominated the migration scene of the UK. However, the highly educated professionals took over in the US. Currently, all kinds of migrants are visible in the UK and the US representing professional, skilled, semi-skilled, and unskilled backgrounds. It was found that needs and concerns of the specific migrant groups were different from other although there are certain commonalities. The fourth chapter shows that EBs are being recognised in different fields for their contribution ranging from education, community development, enterprise development, scientific advancement and media. Chapter Five identifies four kinds of associations that have been developed by the EB's. These are associations based on geographical location of countries of origin, based on regional origin, professional and federating bodies. It also describes the role that print and electronic ethnic Bangla media plays in their lives. Chapter Six begins with the presentation of survey findings of a hundred interviewees. It provides basic socio-economic data of the interviewees while Chapter Seven highlights existing levels of linkage of first and second generation EBs with Bangladesh. It was seen that EBs of the UK and US played a glorious role in the liberation war of Bangladesh. They still channel large amounts of remittances to Bangladesh. Their immediate issues of concern regarding Bangladesh was also understood. Chapter Eight highlights investment and skill sharing potential of the EBs. It was also seen that both in the UK

and USA there exist important avenues of EBs through which public policy framework of their host countries can be influenced. The study concludes with the following summary and recommendations section.

## **10.2 RECOMMENDATIONS**

In recent times different countries of the world have developed mutually beneficial relationships with their diaspora. The current size of China's diaspora is over fifty million. Annually the country receives US\$30 billion from those who had left the country and settled in other parts of the world. An amount of US\$5 billion is remitted by the 20 million strong Indian diaspora annually. Bangladeshi diaspora has also played an important role with regard to social, political and economic development of the country. This study mainly highlights diaspora experience of Bangladesh in the UK and US. On the basis of the findings of the study, recommendations have been grouped in three sets, which can be followed up by the Ministry of Expatriates' Welfare and Overseas Employment. The first set of recommendations deal with policy issues. The second set is made to addresses the concerns of the EBs and to build their confidence on commitment of the Government towards them. The third aims at institutionalising the mutually beneficial relationship among EBs and Bangladesh through concrete measures. These include, recognition of the contribution of the EBs through declaration of a *Bangladeshi Abhibashi Dibash* (Bangladesh Migrants' Day), instituting national awards for them, creating conditions for participation of EBs in investment and trade activities, utilising the skills and expertise of the EBs in respect to education, health and others. Taking initiatives for positive linkage building with second generation EBs and devising measures for influencing public policy of the host country through EBs.

### **10.2.1 Policy Issues**

The Government of Bangladesh has undertaken various policy measures to effectively address the problems of the expatriate community in Bangladesh. It responded to the long-term demand of EBs by establishing a separate Ministry. The Government also inducted two EBs in the Cabinet. Both the Minister and State Minister of Education are returnee emigrants. This report recognises all the efforts of the Government in this respect. However, it identifies some areas where specific policy changes are needed to pursue the objective of framing the Ministry. These are discussed below:

EBs in the UK have made significant strides in the UK, particularly in the catering industry. The Sylheti EBs created employment for 70,000 people in this industry. However, among the various ethnic groups in UK the socio-economic conditions of the EBs were found to be one of the weakest. The GoB may also highlight their problems to the British Government in bilateral discussions.

In the recent past Bangladesh has been included in the INS Category 4 countries of the US Immigration Department. EBs who applied for changing their visa status and the undocumented EBs were also required to register with the INS. These groups of EBs may face adverse consequences. To protect them the Government of Bangladesh may immediately consider ratifying the 1990 *Convention on the Rights of Migrant Workers and all Members of their Families*. There is a tendency in the global media to portray a conservative image of the country. This also affects the day to

day life of EBs living in the west. In order to offset this image the Government, opposition and the civil society collectively have to work to create a secular image of Bangladesh. Such image building has to be based on positive achievements made by the people of the country.

The concerned agencies of the Government should explore the possible market opportunities in Europe and North America and other long-term migrant receiving countries. This would require developing capacity. The Ministries of Foreign Affairs and EW&OE may undertake programmes for developing appropriate tools and guidelines for market exploration. This should include development of training module and organising training for officials assigned with the responsibility.

On the basis of the market needs, the Government has to make significant investment towards developing human resource to cater to such markets. Private sector and NGOs should be encouraged to offer such training. Vocational training should be incorporated in mainstream primary and secondary education curricula. Chapters on different kinds of migration should be incorporated in the text books. To increase the communication skills, English should be introduced as a second language from the primary level.

In order to make the globalisation process meaningful Bangladesh Government should take initiatives so that the labour sending countries demand greater liberalisation in accessing labour markets in the developed countries. The sending countries have to convince the developed countries that if space for orderly migration is not created, it will inevitably result in increase in irregular migration.

The western countries have increasingly become inclined towards accepting migration of highly skilled and professional people. Bangladesh along with other sending countries should lobby in international fora so that developed countries accept less skilled migrants under special schemes like the Diversity Visa of the US.

So far there is a major gap in keeping information on migration flows both internal and international. It is recommended that population census of Bangladesh should incorporate gender segregated data on internal and international migration of members of the households.

The Bangladesh missions overseas play a major role in looking after the interest of the EBs. No structured and formal orientation training is organised before placement of officials. A good number of them do not have adequate appreciation of the contributions of the immigrant community to the economy of Bangladesh. Therefore, a formal training course has to be organised under the auspices of the Foreign Service Academy.

### **10.2.2 Confidence Building of EBs**

EBs have identified some problems which work as major hindrances in keeping contact with their home country. Examples of some of these are: ill treatment, harassment and demand for illegal gratification by the customs and immigration officials at the point of entry, lack of safety and security of EBs when they visit Bangladesh and insecurity of investment and properties. In their country of residence consular services by Bangladesh missions also have their limitations. Since its establishment, the Ministry of EW&OE has undertaken different measures to reduce

these problems. These include, establishing a separate immigration counter for the migrants at the airport and preparing a baggage declaration form describing taxable and duty free items. These steps to some extent have reduced harassment faced by EBs. While appreciating the steps taken by the new Ministry, the study recommends measures for further improvement.

*Improvement in Airport Management:* The officials managing the immigration and customs counters at the international airports, should be trained and instructed to be pleasant, polite, helpful and courteous. Special in service orientation course should be conducted for the immigration and customs officers<sup>33</sup>. Customs officials should allow the passengers to handle the opening and closing of baggage when checking is required. They should be prepared to offer packing tape, metal banding or twine for repacking the baggage that was opened for checking.

Closed circuit television should be installed at immigration, customs and security areas at the airport and a surveillance should be maintained on the conduct of officials who deal with the EBs.

There should be an easily accessible office within the airport premises for registering complaints of rude behaviour, delay and demands for illegal gratification. The name and allotted number of the immigration and customs officials should be included in the rubber stamp that are sealed on the passport. This will increase their accountability.

Only reliable taxi services should be allowed to operate from the airport. Concerned authorities of India achieved significant success in introducing prepaid taxi services. That could serve as a model in introducing the service in Bangladesh. The rates should be displayed prominently.<sup>34</sup> Shuttle bus services from airport to railway stations and inter-district bus terminals should be introduced.

*Voting Rights:* For quite a while EBs have demanded voting rights. The study recommends that a committee be formed to explore various options in ensuring such rights. There may be some genuine problems in acceding to such demand. The proposed committee should produce a report that will either explain the method of how such rights can be granted or provide convincing reasons against granting the same.

*Right to Contest in Election:* EBs also want to participate in national election as candidates while maintaining their citizenship of the host country. The aforementioned committee should also probe possibilities for the same. It may examine the legal framework under which the Italian Government reserved seats for its expatriates in both the houses<sup>35</sup>.

*Welfare Fund:* In order to look after the EBs in distress situations, a separate welfare fund has to be created. Fund generated through the contribution of short-term migrant workers should not be used in providing assistance to EBs.

*Speedy Legal Redress:* The inadequacy of the administrative and legal systems in ensuring justice in cases of highly publicised murder cases of two EBs, Surat Miah and Mughal Querishi have created major grievances among the EBs. In showing

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<sup>33</sup> In its written comment the Ministry of Youth and Sports thought it to be of great importance (8 June 2003).

<sup>34</sup> At the Inter-ministerial Meeting, Mr. Golam Kibria, Joint Secretary, Ministry of Civil Aviation and Tourism agreed with the idea.

<sup>35</sup> This recommendation has been made by BAIRA, in a written comment on the report (17.6.03).

respect to the demand of the EBs the current Government has brought the Surat Mian case for retrial. It should ensure that missing links in the evidence are established so that justice can be ensured to the family. The Ministry of EW&OE should proactively follow the case and establish its concern to the EB community.<sup>36</sup>

Since its establishment the Ministry of EW&OE has received innumerable complaints on EB properties that were taken over through threat, use of force or deceit. A few cases need to be followed up by the Ministry and speedy trials have to be ensured. These trials should be publicised to work as deterrents for those who commit such acts. This would also help earn the confidence of the EBs.

### *Abhibashi Bangladeshi Dibash*

On the basis of the contribution made by the EBs in the War of Liberation and continuous support through remittances, investment, education and welfare work, the study recommends that these contributions should be recognised through national celebration of a special day for the EBs. The day that will be celebrated as the day of the Bangladeshi emigrants, will be known as *Abhibashi Bangladeshi Dibash*. It should be celebrated both in Bangladesh and abroad.

*Date:* December 18 is celebrated the world over as the International Migrant Workers' Day. This day may be celebrated as *Abhibashi Bangladeshi Dibash*. In December, during Christmas and winter breaks a section of EBs visit Bangladesh. Celebration of EBs can coincide with that. During the month of June as well, EBs visit Bangladesh with children. A suitable day can also be chosen in June, instead of December, to celebrate the *Bangladesh Abhibashi Dibash*. Observance of the day on a fixed date of the year will help the Government and others to chalk out plans well in advance. Celebration of the day will serve two purposes. It will promote the bondage that already exists between the EBs and Bangladesh and will also provide an opportunity to develop linkage between the EBs in different parts of the world and instill in them a sense of belonging and pride.

*Venue:* The place for celebration of the key programme should in most cases be Bangladesh. In that way interested EBs from all over the world will get an opportunity to interact with each other, with relevant Government functionaries and society at large. This will help result in undertaking of collaborative programmes for future. When the event is organised in Bangladesh, the Ministry of EW&OE will be responsible for the logistics and arrangement of the programme. It may enter into partnership with other relevant ministries and civil society organisations.

The venue for every third key celebration can rotate among the countries where the Bangladeshi diaspora has a sizeable presence. When the event is taking place outside Bangladesh, Bangladesh mission in the country concerned will provide leadership and engage into partnership arrangements with associations of EBs.

*Programme Information:* Members of the EBs who would like to participate in the programme, should be invited to register themselves. Information on the programme has to be disseminated well in advance through websites, Bangladesh missions abroad, local Bangladesh ethnic print and electronic media. The celebration committee will offer hospitality to a few selected guests and the rest of the

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<sup>36</sup>At the Inter-ministerial Meeting, Syed Md. Nurul Islam, Joint Secretary, Ministry of EW&OE, suggested that forming of a Council to ensure speedy redress of cases involving members of diaspora community.

participants of the programme would be required to meet full costs of airfare and accommodation.

*Hosting Dinner:* Following the Indian and Taiwanese example in order to demonstrate the importance of the day that the State attaches to EBs the President / Prime Minister and the Leader of the Opposition may be requested to host a tea or dinner in honour of the participants of the event.

*Theme:* A theme may be selected for celebration for each year according to the need of the time. For example business and investment promotion can be the theme for one year, academic exchanges, second generation linkages or cultural interactions may be themes for other years. Film festivals, theatres, joint musical shows involving locals as well as EBs may also be organised.

*Commemorative Stamps:* Commemorative stamps may be issued in observance of the day.

*Media Coverage:* Steps must be taken to ensure media coverage, both in Bangladesh and in ethnic media of the countries of residence of EBs.

*Management:* In order to achieve the goal, a celebration management committee should be formed with the Secretary of EW&OE as the Member-Secretary. Membership from other ministries, civil society organisations and EBs will change on the basis of the theme of the year concerned. A business meeting will be held at the end of each programme where the theme for the next year will be decided and the celebration committee for the same will be formed.

#### *Abhibashi Bangladeshi Award*

Many countries that have benefited from its diaspora, have shown respect by awarding members of the diaspora community. Lebanon has 3.5 million resident population, whereas it has 14 million diaspora population. To Lebanon the contribution of the diaspora population is of immense importance. As way of showing the country's goodwill to this group of population, the State honours distinguished members of diasporic community through awards. 70 percent of the foreign exchange of the Philippines is earned through its diaspora. The Philippines honours its individuals and organisations overseas through presidential awards. The Philippines introduced five types of awards. Italy rewards both foreigners and individuals of Italian origin overseas through distributing five categories of awards to those who made significant contribution to its economy.

This study also highlighted that during different stakeholders meetings and individual interviews, the EBs mentioned that the Bangladesh State needs to recognise the contribution of EBs through providing special awards. On the basis of such demand and experience of other countries, it is recommended that an award scheme for the Bangladeshi diaspora including both EBs and short-term migrants should be introduced. In Bangladesh currently there are two types of national awards, one is *Shawadhinata Padak* and the other is *Ekushey Padak*. *Shwadhinata Padak* is awarded for contribution in the independence of Bangladesh, while *Ekushey Padak* is awarded to those Bangladeshis who have made contribution in literature, arts and music arenas. Some proposed that EBs may be considered for these awards. Considering the efforts of India, Lebanon, Philippines and Italy, this study recommends that a separate award should be introduced for the EBs.

*Title:* The award may be entitled as *Sonar Manush Padak*. For a long time jute was the main foreign currency earning export item, known as the golden fibre of Bangladesh. EBs who made original contributions in education, science and technology and the short-term migrant workers bring both respect and economic benefit to Bangladesh. Therefore they are very precious persons for Bangladesh. Calling them *Sonar Manush* is well suited. Dream of a *Sonar Bangla* was one of the key elements of the country's nationalist movement. And our national anthem also attributes deep emotional attachment with the word 'Sonar'. Considering all these the study suggests this title.<sup>37</sup>

*Awardees:* Although this study is on EBs there remains another type of migrants who also play a very important role in the economy of Bangladesh. Therefore, all kinds of migrants would be taken for consideration for awards. Italy and the Philippines have categorised their awards. The Singhvi Commission of India (2001), however, rejected the 1998 awards scheme for the Indian diaspora which had five categories of awards and recommended one category. This was done to avoid comparison and misunderstanding about the level of contribution of the three types of diaspora population of India (NRI, POI and short term labour migrants). In order to avoid any value judgment about the contribution of short term and long term expatriate of Bangladesh, the study recommends one category of awards.

*Number of Awards:* The minimum number of awards should be two and maximum be six. Even number of award is suggested again to avoid misunderstanding among two types of emigrants.

*Eligibility:* Eligibility to become an awardee will differ according to type of migration. Therefore two sets of criteria, one for the EBs and other for the short-term labour migrant is suggested below.

In case of EBs awards should be given to those

- who made outstanding contribution to Bangladesh's liberation war.
- who contributed immensely towards fostering better understanding of Bangladesh;
- who introduced rich Bangladeshi cultural heritage to the world;
- who advanced the cause of Bangladesh, during crisis period;
- who made significant contribution to the Bangladeshi communities abroad;
- who made basic contribution in science, technology, education, medicine, architecture and other disciplines;
- whose contribution has been recognised by the receiving country's Government.

In case of short term migrants awards should be given to those

- who made outstanding contribution to our liberation war;
- who contributed immensely towards fostering better understanding of Bangladesh;
- who advanced the cause of Bangladesh, during crisis period;

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<sup>37</sup> M K Motahar in the inter Ministerial meeting suggested to use the term Probashi Podok instead of Shonar Manush Podok.

- who made significant contribution to the Bangladeshi communities abroad;
- who created example of effective utilization of remittance, made significant investment which created employment;

*Processing of Nomination:* Nomination for the awards should be processed through different stages. An award committee has to be formed of which Secretary of the Ministry of EW&OE will be the Member-Secretary. Initially, an award committee should review and validate that all papers and documents submitted are genuine. Then a Technical Committee should evaluate their performance. An Executive Committee will prepare a shortlist at the third stage. The office of the Prime Minister will make the final selection.

*Distribution of Awards:* The award should be distributed on the *Abhibashi Bangladeshi Dibash*.

*Management Committee:* The Ministry of EW&OE, in collaboration with Ministries of Education and Culture, Youth, and Tourism and Civil Aviation can jointly develop the programme under the subcommittee described at the end. A colourful and glossy brochure should be prepared describing the purpose of the programme, activities of each day, and the cost. Information on the programme should be made available through websites, Bangladeshi missions abroad and local ethnic Bangladeshi media in the countries concerned.

### **10.2.3 Positive Linkage Building with Second Generation**

The first generation EBs demonstrated deep feelings for their homeland in many ways. Out of own emotional need they went a long way and pursued such relationship with Bangladesh, through creating demand for Bangladeshi food and dresses, organising cultural programmes, raising funds for relief activities during natural disasters, visiting Bangladesh, sending resources home and engaging themselves in charitable and welfare activities. The first generation also tried their best to introduce their country, its people and culture, to their second generation. The study appreciates the moves taken by EBs in this respect and recommends different steps to provide institutional support to strengthen the former's effort and turn that into mutually beneficial diaspora linkage.<sup>38</sup>

#### Reserved Seats

In order to create opportunities for young EBs to interact with Bangladeshi students of similar age group, the study recommends reserving a few seats for the wards of EBs in the medical colleges, engineering universities and selected departments of public universities.<sup>39</sup> Access to these reserved seats should be determined on the basis of competitiveness. The candidates have to meet certain minimum standards. The fees for the reserved seats should be calculated on the actual cost basis without allowing any subsidy that the local students receive. A brochure has to be prepared which will detail the system of education, courses offered, faculty strength and examination procedures.

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<sup>38</sup> At the Inter-ministerial Consultation Mr. Abul Kalam Azad, Joint Director (Foreign Exchange, Policy Department) Bangladesh Bank recommended further research on the second-generation immigrants.

<sup>39</sup> At the Inter-ministerial Consultation Maj (Rtd.) Md. Quamrul Islam stated this recommendation can be taken up for immediate implementation.

### Bangladesh Study Programme

In the UK it was found that EBs were concentrated in greater London, particularly in the East End area. In the US, one half of the EBs live in New York and surrounding areas. Again their major concentration is in few areas of the New York city. The study recommends that two universities in those two localities may be approached to introduce Bangladesh study programmes.

Under the auspices of the Cell in mission offices, sub-committees may be formed. University EB teachers and senior representatives of the Bangladesh missions will be the members of the sub-committee. The sub-committee will facilitate introduction of courses on Bangladesh in the programmes of the university that offer courses on South Asia. The committees will identify two local educational institutions, one each in the UK and US, to provide support in this respect. Two Bangladesh Chairs may be created in the hosting institutions with Government and private sponsorship. The holders of Bangladesh Chairs will be responsible for steering through the Bangladesh study programmes.

The sub-committees will be preparing the outline for the course through a needs assessment process. The history of Bangladeshi migration to the UK and US and their contribution to the economy of Bangladesh should be an important part of the course. It will also look for sponsors or convince the university authority to incorporate that in their curricula.

Such Government intervention will go a long way to demonstrate the commitment of the Government. The study programmes will enable the young EBs and others to generate interest in Bangladesh. They will also help the universities to serve communities where they are located. At the same time it will also result in development of an informed group of people who will be able to help explain Bangladesh's position to the policy makers and people of those countries. The Singhvi Report on the Indian diaspora time and again highlighted the role of intellectuals and university students in explaining Indian Government's position during crisis situations like Kargil conflict and in the aftermath of Pokhran nuclear test.

### Diaspora Research Centre

An interdisciplinary research centre may be developed in one of the public universities to specialise in diaspora and migration studies. Given the importance of remittance for the Bangladesh economy and the need for maintaining link with second generation EBs, the University Grants Commission may be requested to generate necessary resources for such centre. Close linkage should be established between the Ministry of EW&OE and the Centre to chart out the research and policy agenda. Young professional EBs should be the target for involvement in research.

### Student Exchange Programme

It was seen that a very large segment of EBs brings their children to Bangladesh to generate an interest with their roots and develop bondage. These trips are highly valued by the young EBs that help them in getting to know the Bangladeshi culture and tradition. However, such individual interaction at family level needs to be supplemented through institutional efforts to provide a wider cultural identity to the EBs. Both developed and developing countries treat student exchange programmes as an important avenue to generate cross-cultural knowledge. The current study also

recommends undertaking of student exchange programmes both at school and tertiary levels.

The Ministry of EW&OE in collaboration with the Ministry of Education can negotiate with the concerned agencies, such as the British Council and the USIA, for co-sponsoring such student exchange programmes.

In order to make the exchange programme meaningful to the EBs, schools for running the exchange programme have to be identified carefully. The medium of instruction has to be English and their curricula should be compatible with those of UK and USA. At the university level exchange programmes may be organised both at public and private universities.

### Study Travel Programme

Different countries organise travel and study programmes for the second or third generation who are permanently settled overseas. Japan, the Philippines and Singapore have set good examples in this respect. On the basis of appreciation of the outcome and desired express by the EBs of both UK and US, the study recommends that a travel study programme may be envisaged.<sup>40</sup>

*Aim:* The aim of the study travel programme will be to provide young EBs the opportunity to trace their roots and discover their identity as Bangladeshi. Through experiencing life in Bangladesh, the participants are expected to gain a better understanding of the country, its people and also of its rich historical, cultural and social heritage. The experience will hopefully enable the participants to take pride in their country of origin. It may also provide opportunity to the young generation to differentiate between the conservative culture sometimes portrayed by the older generation as Bangladeshi with the existing reality. This, in the long run, will help the young generation bridge the gap between the British or US identity and Bangladeshi identity and result in development of Brit-Bangladeshi or American Bangladeshi identity.<sup>41</sup>

*Title:* The travel study programme may be named *Shikorer Shondhane* (In Search of Roots).

*Content:* History with focus on the War of Liberation, geo-politics, cultural heritage and development challenges may form the main contents of the course. Lectures by experts, study tours of important historical sites, interaction with social and political leaders and local Bangladeshi students, Government functionaries and renowned development practitioners, women's activist groups may be used as methods of disseminating knowledge. Such programmes may be organised coinciding with national events such as observance of Ekushey February, Independence Day or Pahela Baishakh to give them opportunity to participate in those events and festivals.

*Age Group:* The target population for this programme should be EBs belonging to the age group of 15-25 years. However, it would be better if the participants are divided

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<sup>40</sup> Recommendation on study travel programme was made by Md. Shahidul Haque, Regional Representative of IOM at a personal interview. The name *Shikorer Shondhane* was also suggested by him.

<sup>41</sup> At the Inter-Ministerial Meeting, Golam Kibria, Joint Secretary, Ministry of Civil Aviation and Tourism and Luthfar Rahamn, Vice Principal, Academy of Planning and Development expressed that tourism strategy may be geared to the diaspora community.

into two sub-groups, one 15-20 and the other 20-25 years. In this way the course organisers will be able to provide information according to level of maturity.

*Brochure:* Nice, colourful and attractive brochures have to be prepared containing all kinds of information. It should be made available to the target population through high commissions, association of Bangladeshis, travel agents and websites. Advertisements of the programme should be made on EB run print and electronic media operational at the receiving ends.

*Cost:* The programme fees should be determined on the basis of actual costs to be incurred.

*Organisational Set-Up:* The US Government runs a student exposure programme. Bangladesh is one of the countries that is included in the programme. The Bangladesh USIA office and a local Bangladesh partner organisation run the programme. In the Philippines, a similar programme named Lakbaya Arial, is run by the Commission of the Filipino Overseas, an agency attached to the Department of Foreign Affairs of the Philippines. In Bangladesh, this can be undertaken jointly, by the Ministry of EW&OE, Ministry of Tourism and Civil Aviation under the subcommittee on *Rights and Welfare*. The implementation of the programme may be assigned to specialised educational institution or an NGO.

#### Young EBs and Young Bangladeshi Joint Project

The study team found that young EBs in London were engaged in producing stage dramas, CDs and magazines in collaboration with groups involved in art and culture in Bangladesh. The young EBs in US are also involved in similar initiatives. They showed a lot enthusiasm and expressed their interest in furthering such collaborative efforts. The study recommends development of a programme that will create opportunity for young EB and Bangladeshi students to interact and jointly produce theatre, drama, cultural shows and music CDs. Such initiatives will be able to create a positive exposure to a larger group of young EBs about Bangladesh and boost their Bangladeshi identity through encouragement of their creative potentials.

To institutionalise this project, a sub-committee has to be formed under the leadership of the Ministry of EW&OE. The members of the sub-committee should include representatives from the Ministry of Cultural Affairs, cultural bodies such as Nazrul Academy, Bangla Academy, Shilpakala Academy and other cultural organisations. The sub-committee will be responsible for developing themes on which such collaborative projects may be undertaken. Every year the sub-committee should fund at least four such collaborative projects.

*Brochure:* A brochure needs to be prepared. It should describe the project concept and seek proposals in a format laid out in the brochure. The proposal should include the message to be conveyed, medium to be used and budget.

*Selection Process:* The application for the project should be sought through advertisement in the ethnic media overseas as well as in Bangladesh.

*Support:* The Ministry of EW&OE may seek support from Department for International Development, UK and US Agency for International Development in implementing such projects.

#### Material Development for Bangla Schools

By taking community level assistance from the US and UK Governments and also through personal contribution, the EBs have established schools to teach Bangla to the young EBs. These schools often find it difficult to procure necessary material to teach easy Bangla. The study recommends preparation of easy Bangla curricula, reflecting the realities of life of EBs abroad, for teaching the young EBs.

*Curricula and Support Material:* A step by step curricula, teaching guide and print and audio visual material may be developed to make learning Bangla an interesting and easy exercise for the young EBs.

*Publication of Books:* In order to make imparting of such language learning interesting, books may be published describing the glory of war of independence, life of men and women of letters, and should also reflect the life of Bangladeshi expatriates abroad. In this way young EBs get to know about history, geography and culture of Bangladesh and their own experiences as migrants, along with learning Bangla.

The subcommittee on rights and welfare, will be entrusted for implementation of the programme. Representatives from the Ministry of Education, Institute of Education Research and Institute of Modern Languages of the University of Dhaka may be included in the implementing committee. Efforts must be made to receive maximum input from EBs who are involved in imparting such education.

#### **10.2.4 Encouraging Investment of EBs**

It was seen that the Government has introduced different schemes to encourage investment from its diaspora. All the information however are not available to the targeted population. This report also demonstrated that a section of EBs is interested to invest in Bangladesh for different reasons. These include: low rate of interest, great potential of profit margin, cheap operating cost, alternative option for falling back if need arises and maintaining links with home country. The study showed that a large number of EBs have already made different types of investments most of which is through personal initiatives. The majority investment however was made in real estate, housing and in financial instruments. A few large-scale investments were also made. All groups of EB investors face certain problems. In order to reduce those problems and widen the investment the following recommendations are made.

*Information:* In order to attract the EBs to invest in Bangladesh under the leadership of the Ministry of EW&OE, a sub-committee has to be formed. Ministries of Commerce and Planning, Chambers of Commerce and Industry and the Privatisation Board will be represented in the sub-committee. The sub-committee will commission a report covering information on the current industrial policy, investment guidelines, future investment opportunities particularly for the EBs and the list of industries that are being disinvested. The report will also offer information on infrastructure development initiatives that are likely to materialise in the foreseeable future. The report should be updated every three months.

*Dissemination of Information:* The report has to be made easily accessible to the potential investor EBs through following methods. It should be made available at the Ministry of EW&OE. Adequate copies of the report should also be made available at the Bangladesh missions in the UK and USA. Under the guidance of the Mission head, the trade commissioner or any other person responsible should organise meetings on a bimonthly basis with the EBs, business bodies and brief them about

the changes in the industrial policies or on future privatisation schemes. To facilitate EBs access to the information, the Ministry of EW&OE will create a website and all information pertaining to investment should be made available on the website. The press wing will publicise information about investment opportunities and the web address through ethnic print and electronic media.

*Encouraging Other Bodies:* The inter-ministerial committee needs to encourage the business organisations of Bangladesh, such as the FBCCI, BGMEA, Bangla-American Chamber of Commerce, to set up committees or cells within their respective organisations for promoting business with EBs.

*One Window Service:* Under the guidance of the sub-committee, one window set up should be created which would provide consultancy services to the EB investors and be a liaison point for getting various clearances. From the receiving end, cells proposed in high commissions of York and London will provide necessary support. Procedural problems identified by EBs have to be eased by this body.

*Organising Talks and Workshops:* Successful and renowned EB business persons, industrialists and entrepreneurs make personal visits to Bangladesh every now and then. The trade wing of the missions should keep track of such visits and inform the sub-committee about their visits. The subcommittee with the help of concerned business bodies and research centers will organise talks and workshops where interested Bangladeshi businessmen, industrialists and entrepreneurs may be invited. Similarly during their private visits to Bangladesh, the members of Bangladeshi associations of the UK and US, chambers and business forums should be invited for intensive interaction with trade and investment promotion bodies in Bangladesh.

*Improvement in Law and Order:* To attract investment from the diaspora, the overall law and order situation of the country has to improve.<sup>42</sup>

### **10.2.5 Utilisation of Skills and Expertise of EBs**

EBs have achieved considerable success as academics, doctors, engineers, IT experts and other professionals. They have earned names for themselves. Some EB academics hold senior faculty positions, surgeons have made significant contributions in medical sciences, engineers and architects were involved in large-scale infrastructure projects and young professionals have also made their mark in business management. It is obvious that these groups of scholars and experts are extraordinary assets for Bangladesh. Bangladesh can gain a lot from the experiences of these expatriate professionals. If Bangladesh wanted to attain such trained human resource it would have required a lot of investments. Along with its own trained manpower, if Bangladesh links the expatriates in its development process, a considerable brain gain can be achieved. EBs have also shown their keen interest to take part in the development processes of their home country in their own areas of specialisation. Under the auspices of private universities and medical colleges they are sharing their expertise through imparting knowledge. Many doctors have conducted operations by participating in eye camps on their own initiative. This study strongly recommends that the initiative of private universities and individuals should

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<sup>42</sup> At the Inter-ministerial meeting Abdus Sobhan Sikder, Deputy Secretary, Ministry of EW&OE underscored the importance of improvement in law and order. BAIRA also highlighted the issue in its written comment of 17.6.03.

be replicated at a larger scale in different sectors. The following steps are recommended to reach the target:

*Website:* A website should be developed that may be accessed by EBs from different academic and professional background who show interest and volunteer their time and service in Bangladesh. They will be requested to post their particulars on the site. Different ministries of the Government, private and public academic institutions, business sector will be able to easily access information on such expertise according to their own needs. The data bank can also be of immense help to Bangladeshi academics who are interested to pursue higher studies and research abroad. In some parts of the world such data bank has resulted in facilitating collaborative research and projects. Data bank can also be a source of information exchange between the EBs living in different parts of the world.

*Education Project:* Since 1990s due to proactive policies of successive Governments of Bangladesh enrollment of students in primary and secondary schools have increased significantly. Now the Government and donors are looking deeply into the issue of increasing the quality of primary and secondary education. The Ministry of EW&OE in collaboration with Ministry of Education can design a project where qualified school teachers from abroad can come for a stipulated period and teach in Bangladesh. The current study has demonstrated that many Bangladeshis have made their mark in the education sector of the countries of their residence. A section of this group of scholars is willing to render their services to Bangladesh educational institutions and share their expertise. Participation of EBs rather than foreign experts not only will create an opportunity for the latter to re-bond with their home country, it will also reduce the cost of the programme<sup>43</sup>.

The current Minister for Education himself was an expatriate Bangladeshi. Therefore he is likely to be favourably disposed in pursuing such innovative projects. The Ministry of EW&OE and the Ministry of Education can jointly seek fund from international financial institutions and other donors for funding such projects. NGOs who are involved in non-formal education can also develop projects in similar lines. EBs can be involved in conceptualising and preparing the project and also pursuing donors in their respective countries of immigration.

*Health Project:* The Ministry of EW&OE, in collaboration with the Ministry of Health, can also envisage developing programmes to facilitate voluntary work of medical and professional EBs through organising health camps in different parts of the country. Both the Ministries can jointly request affiliated health NGOs to look after the organisation of such programmes.

*Training on Catering:* A joint project may be developed in collaboration with Bangladeshi catering associations of UK and BMET for training of chefs. Members of catering associations should be involved in designing the project and providing training of the trainers. Instead of administering the project on its own, the Ministry may situate itself in the role of matchmaker between catering industry of the UK and interested private sector partners.

### **10.2.6 Influencing Public Policies in the Host Country**

Diaspora population is increasingly playing an important role in mobilising political support for their country of origin in the country of their residence. The Singhvi Report

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<sup>43</sup>Cabinet division in its written comment on the report suggested different ministry should follow up this (27.5.03).

on the Indian diaspora highlighted that the academics, intellectuals and professionals of Indian origin had an important role in promoting India's bilateral relations with countries like United States, Canada and the UK. It also noted that during the Kargil conflict and after math of Pokhran nuclear tests, they played a crucial role in explaining the Indian perspective to the opinion makers of their countries of residence. There is a sizeable number of people of Bangladeshi origin in London and New York. In order to mobilise political support in favour of Bangladesh's interest following steps are suggested:

The Ministry of EW&OE needs to develop a database of EBs who are involved in mainstream politics in their country of residence. A database of associations and professional groups also need to be created. Regular interaction with these organisations will help the Ministry understand what needs to be done in respect of helping these groups in successfully lobbying. Steps must be taken to help broaden the membership of Bangladesh caucus in the US Congress.

The study noted that the Bangladeshi community organisations in the UK and US are divided along partisan lines. This hinders the process of effective political participation of the community. The inter-ministerial committee headed by the Ministry of EW&OE should devise ways and means to minimise the conflict that exist between the groups and highlight the need for upholding national interests.

### **10.2.7 Organisational Setup**

It was evident from the recommendations that using diaspora in national development involved major institutional efforts. In doing so the line ministry, the Ministry of EW&OE's functions and responsibilities should be divided into two separate divisions, one for expatriates' welfare, and, the other, for short-term labour migrants. While a single authority may conduct policy, research and planning activities and financial and administrative management, each Division should have separate sections for managing programmes. Accordingly, in order to manage the programme Expatriates' Welfare Division should have at least three sections. These are: Programme Management, Information Management and Welfare. The officials of the Ministry should be imparted adequate training that would include familiarisation of the diaspora needs and management matters. Their tasks should be made time bound and target oriented. Periodic evaluation of their performance should be conducted and best performers should be rewarded.

#### Inter-ministerial Coordination Committee

The report underscored that activities for participation of EBs in the development process of Bangladesh and their welfare cannot be ensured by the Ministry of EW&OE alone. It requires the co-operation of different ministries at every step. At the same time, the Ministry needs to collaborate with different public and private agencies. In addition, civil society organisations, including research bodies and NGOs, also have to be taken on board. Therefore the role of an inter-ministerial coordination body is essential.<sup>44</sup> Under the leadership of the Ministry of EW&OE an inter-ministerial coordination committee already exists. Given the wider scope of work the study recommends that the following other ministries should be included in the inter-ministerial coordination committee: Ministries of Foreign Affairs, Home Affairs,

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<sup>44</sup> Dr C R Abrar, moderator of the Inter-Ministerial Consultation stressed the need for immediate framing of the inter-ministerial committee.

Finance and Planning, Commerce, Education, Culture and Sports, Civil Aviation and Tourism and Women and Children's Affairs.

#### Cells in Bangladesh Missions

The Ministry of EW&OE in collaboration with the MoFA should consider forming two Cells at the Bangladesh missions, one at New York and the other in London. The Cells will help planning and implementation of different collaborative programmes targeted towards ensuring the welfare of the expatriates, encouraging investment, providing exposure to second generation EBs and materialising sharing of skills and expertise. The Cells may be headed by the head of the Mission concerned and include academics currently holding administrative positions in the universities, successful entrepreneurs, persons involved in mainstream politics of countries of immigration, migration experts and head of broad based EBs associations along with labour, trade and press officials of the Missions.

#### Sub-Committees under the Ministry of EW&OE

The inter-ministerial committee suggested earlier includes all the concerned ministries. Implementation of specific programme may not require participation of the full committee. Therefore five sub-committees have been suggested on the basis of the type of activities proposed. The *Sub-committee on Rights and Welfare* among other things may consider voting rights in Bangladesh, address problems of EBs in the host country, ensure safety and security of the EBs visiting Bangladesh and ensure security of their property in Bangladesh. Linkage building with the second generation EBs will also be another important function of this sub-committee. The *Sub-committee on Harnessing Investment, Skills and Influence* may provide guideline for one-stop service to expatriate investors and monitor collection and dissemination of investment opportunities. It will also manage programmes targeted towards linking skills and expertise of EBs with the development process of Bangladesh. The sub-committee will provide support to those expatriates who are involved in the mainstream political process of the host country for influencing their public policy in favour of Bangladesh. The *Sub committee on Abhibashi Dibash and Padak* will be responsible for implementing these two activities. The *Sub-committee on Media* will ensure that all programmes and activities undertaken by the Ministry of EW&OE reach their target audience by using various forms of media, print and electronic. It will also monitor the quality of production of various brochures, leaflets and advertisements.

#### Capacity Building of the Ministry

The Ministry of EW&OE is a newly created ministry. The Ministry is currently charting its programme in respect to ensure the welfare of the EBs. Linking the EBs with the country's development process is another important challenge for the Ministry. Linking diaspora to the economy of the country of origin is itself a newly emerging area. In this context, the study recommends that major staff development programme should be undertaken to increase the institutional capacity of the Ministry.

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## Comments on Draft Report on “Institutionalising Rebonding: The Bangladeshi Diaspora in UK and US”

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June 18, 2003	Mr. Parimal Chandra Bose	Assistant Chef, Ministry of Labour and Employment Ministry
May 28, 2003	Mr. Md. Mahbobur Rahman	Deputy Secretary Law Justice and Parliamentary Affairs.
May 28, 2003	Gazi Makbul Hossain	Assistant Secretary, Law Justice and Parliamentary Affairs.
May 28, 2003	Mr. Ali Ashraf Khan Lodi	Joint Secretary Law Justice and Parliamentary Affairs.
June 5, 2003	Mr. Syed Md. Nurul Islam	Director General, BMET
June 8, 2003	Mr. Md. Faizur Rahman Faruqui	Senior Assistant Secretary, Youth and Sports Ministry
June 17, 2003	Mr. Momtaz Uddin Ahmed	Secretary BAIRA

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43) Sheikh Selim	Member, Jalaabad Association		
44) Mr. Mahboob	Member, Jalaabad Association		
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