

## National Identity, Mode of Networking and Integration of Bangladeshi Community in a Multi-cultural Society: Migrant Bangladeshis in Peninsular Malaysia

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### ABSTRAK

*Bangsa dirujuk sebagai sebuah 'komuniti bayangan' (Anderson, 1991) yang membawa maksud perasaan kesepunyaan yang dikongsi sama dan yang merentasi pelbagai bahagian sesebuah negara. Di sebalik perasaan yang dikongsi sama itu ialah kebudayaan kebangsaan (sesebuah bangsa) yang dikenalpasti sebagai gerak daya yang merangsang pembentukan kesepaduan penduduk. Dalam kalangan pendatang Bangladesh di Malaysia, terkumpulnya pelbagai kumpulan manusia di satu landasan yang sama bukanlah satu realiti yang meluas. Bukannya kehomogenan, tetapi keheterogenan yang merupakan realiti budaya yang paling diamalkan oleh pendatang ini. Keberadaan pemisah intra dan inter yang berasaskan tuntutan dan kepentingan tertentu merupakan satu hakikat sosial dalam kawasan kajian. Untuk perolehi keperluan harian jaringan hubungan dipelihara, terutama di mana nasionalisme bukan merupakan satu tuntutan. Sungguhpun faktor ini boleh berjaya, namun bukan merupakan satu-satunya faktor. Sebaliknya, pemupukan kepentingan kelas/status, nilai dan juga eksploitasi serta kewilayahan dan afiliasi dengan pihak berkuasa tempatan oleh sekumpulan profesional, peniaga dan pekerja adalah sesuatu yang lazim berlaku. Seiringan hal ini ialah satu lagi realiti, iaitu pembentukan identiti yang serba boleh hasil integrasi dan interaksi dengan penduduk pelbagai etnik yang terdapat di Malaysia. Makalah ini merupakan satu tinjauan tentang mode jaringan hubungan yang diamalkan oleh pendatang Bangladesh supaya dapat terus berada di Malaysia. Selain itu, makalah ini juga meninjau kegunaan beberapa konsep seperti nasionalisme, pelbagai budaya, kehomogenan, keheterogenan dan hibridisme yang terdapat di sebalik jaringan hubungan mereka itu.*

### ABSTRACT

*Nation is referred to as 'imagined community' (Anderson 1991) that bears a common sense of belonging across various parts of a country. Behind that feeling of commonality national culture (of that nation) is identified as a stimulating force that binds people together. Across the border, among the migrant*

*Bangladeshis in Malaysia, the accumulation of diverse groups of people in a common platform is not a widespread reality. Instead of homogeneity, heterogeneity is the most practised cultural reality among these migrants. The presence of intra and inter divisions based on respective demand and interest is a social fact in the study area. To accomplish everyday necessity networking is maintained, where nationalism is not an essence. It works, but is not the one and only factor. Rather, the nurturing of class/status interests, values and exploitation as well, regionalism and affiliation with the local authority by a body of professionals, businessmen and workers is very common. Along with this the formation of versatile identities through integration and interaction with multi-ethnic people, present in Malaysia, is another reality. In fact, the article will be an exploration of the mode of networking followed by the community to survive in Malaysia and the applicability of some concepts as, 'nationalism', 'multiculturalism', 'homogeneity', 'heterogeneity' and 'hybridism' behind their networking.*

## INTRODUCTION

Movement of people within and outside the state border is a reality in this period of globalization. At present, there are about 175 million people, 3 percent of world's population living outside their countries of origin (Somasundaram 2005). The causes, consequences and the ways of moving may vary, depending on people's expectations, living conditions and capabilities. Sometimes a person go for permanent settlement and sometimes not. In fact, choosing the option of temporary migration, for two to five years are also not uncommon. Whether temporary or permanent, the writer through his study had identified economy and politics as being the main causes behind people's migration. It has been noticed that each migrant has his own motives for travel and he tries to fulfil this in the host country. Based on the types of aspirations (concerning their travel and settlement in different countries) and circumstances of the foreign society, migrants try to adapt to the new environment. To do this they need to develop different strategies and maintain social, cultural and economic networking within and outside the host country. Normally, this type of networking exists within receiving and sending countries. However, for a better life or to fulfill the aspiration more successfully, for example the migrant Bangladeshis in Malaysia, maintaining or dreaming about third country networking is also frequent. This type of networking is fostered and maintained through travelling, mailing, using phone-fax, internet, sending remittance, developing business channel, intellectual and technological sharing.

Based on their respective demands and interests the migrant community sometimes formulate intra and inter divisions as well as alliances within the community in the host society. To upgrade the economic level, achieve

successful integration and for fulfilling emotional desire they also develop matrimonial, business or any other kind of social relationship outside their ethnic group. The study shows that formation of hybrid culture and versatile identities through multicultural interaction and integration are coming into shape day by day. At the same time, sufferings due to hostile relationship within and outside the community and the consequent strategies are also present. Consequently, these types of strategies and experiences enhance the chances of socio-cultural and economic transformations both in the countries of origin and destination that may lead to disputes among the theoreticians. As a matter of fact, write up on globalization have identified the economic and political splitting up of national boundaries, as well as the development of transnational cultural formations (Featherstone 1990; Robertson 1995). On the one hand, arguments are going on regarding the importance of preserving national unity through nationalism for overall socio-economic benefit, while on the other hand, the positive/negative impact of globalization and the concomitant socio-cultural changes are also the subjects of long debates in conferences, seminars and papers. Discourses on hybridism, multiculturalism, formation of Creole language and identities (Mandal 2003), process of cultural assimilation (Evers, and Solvay 1991), identification of transnational community (Basch, and Szanton 1994) and diaspora (Anthias 1998), - are the areas related to globalization and migration, that academicians are now concentrating on.

Theoretically, nationalist ideology is considered as the way of binding citizens together within the nation states. Through it, a common sense of belonging is fostered among the people from different parts of the country, though they are unknown to each other. National culture, symbol, map of the state, education, media etc are utilized as stimulating forces to create loyalty among the citizens of the territory. This feeling of commonality is identified as self-actuated and so powerful that it motivates people to work for each other or even to die for the sake of the country (if necessary). Anderson (1991) has identified the nation state as 'imagined political community'. He adds, ... Members of a nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion... However, in this era of globalization it is sometimes recommended by the academicians that the feeling of nationalism needs continuous nurturing through education, mass media etc. because movement of capital and people within and outside the state border is a widespread reality. This flow is not only economic, but also has cultural dimensions. Through globalization national culture comes into contact with foreign cultures and being afraid of losing the authenticity of the national culture due to foreign cultural influences, sometimes this type of interaction is considered as a threat to preserve the homogeneity of the nation. Referring to the Japanese approaches, Kunio (2001) suggests allowing market forces to strengthen economic growth, but at the same time to control their negative consequences. He wishes to fortify it by

effectively educating the masses and preserving the country as a national community. In order to prevent the income inequality and social ills in the country he prescribed the following by quoting Japanese example:

... To see how culture links the Japanese, take two Japanese babies to two different countries. When they grow up, although they have Japanese DNA, they will not feel related, because they do not speak the same language and will have few common topics to talk about. Furthermore, they will behave differently. If both grow up in Japan, however, they will feel related when they meet, because both would have been taught Japanese language and culture. From the societal point of view, therefore, it is very important to make them feel that they are related. This sense of belonging is first nurtured in school and then further developed by the mass media.

He considers that in case of emigration to another country, culture may not work; in fact, here is the point of departure for this article. This paper is an initiative to work on the findings of a research conducted among the migrant Bangladeshis in Malaysia, who came as a response to the industrial demand of the country. Entering as skilled, semi-skilled and unskilled migrant workers they are engaged in different socio-cultural and business networks (for their survival) and develop a specific type of transnational cultural identities. Among these migrant Bangladeshis, the question across the border is,

what are the ways that bind them together? Or do they really work as a homogenous unit? How do they nurture Bangladeshi nationalism in Malaysia? How are they transferring nationalist sentiment to their offsprings who are born in Malaysia as a result of inter-ethnic marriage? Or do they teach them Bangladeshi culture for the development of nationalism? How do they find networking for their survival in an alien society? On what basis is their networking formulated? How often are they in touch with their country of origin? How does the host society incorporate them in its social setting? How do they integrate them with the socio-cultural systems of the sending and receiving countries? Do they keep their national identity intact? What is their future plan for settling abroad/going back or moving to another country? Can the concept of trans-nationalism be applicable for analyzing their situation? 'Nationalism', 'multiculturalism', 'trans-nationalism', 'homogeneity', 'heterogeneity', 'hybridism'- among these concepts which are the most relevant for this migrant community?

Based on these queries three central areas are identified that will be clarified through research findings. These are, (1) - how do the migrant Bangladeshis organize themselves in Malaysia? (2) - What kind of relationship is developed with the other communities in that multi-cultural social setting? (3) - What is the probable theoretical way for framing these empirical findings?

Before continuing the discussion on the above-mentioned points, a brief view will be presented regarding the history of labour migration and the development of its multicultural social system. The narration of that history is important, because the respondents of these studies are now adapting to the multicultural social system of Malaysia, which is an outcome of its industrial development. This economic policy widened the scope for the entrance of

different ethnic communities in the country, some of whom are later assimilated, which then developed a more complex social system. The presence of Bangladeshi migrants in the current multicultural society is also the result of the country's economic development. Based on this introduction the article will begin with a brief presentation of the history of labour migration in Malaysia and followed by a discussion on the labour migration from Bangladesh to Malaysia. 'Bangla Bazar', a case study among the migrant Bangladeshi businessmen of Kuala Lumpur follows thereafter. The presentation of the case study will include looking at 'homogeneity vs. heterogeneity', everyday reality and the networking, and the 'integration into the multi-cultural society', a way towards an introduction of versatile identities

It is necessary to mention that both the secondary and primary data of this research have been collected through an intensive fieldwork among the returned and current migrants in Bangladesh and Malaysia. Out of total sample size 300 respondents, 150 are from the country of origin and 150 from the host country. Among 150 local respondents 100 are from Selangor and Kuala Lumpur. The article is based on the data of Kuala Lumpur and Selangor. Starting from June 2005 (Bangladesh) the study continues to June 2006 (Malaysia). Based on the qualitative research, semi-structured interviews, group discussions and case study methods are followed to get information. Some quantitative surveys are also conducted to get insight of the numerical data and for rapport building with the community. Sources of secondary data are literature reviews, newspapers, magazines, web pages, interview with government and non-government officials, published and unpublished journals, reports, cases, conference papers of several institutions and organizations. Immigration Department of Putrajaya, The High Commission of Bangladesh, Malaysian Institute of Economic Research (MIER), Welfare Association of Repatriated Bangladeshi Employees (WARBE), Malaysian Trade Union Congress (MTUC), Tenaganita, library of public universities are also visited for both the primary and secondary data. This article is formulated based on the findings collected through research in some areas of Peninsular Malaysia<sup>2</sup>

## HISTORY OF LABOUR MIGRATION IN MALAYSIA

As one of the issues of globalization is migration and Bangladeshi respondents have come to Malaysia as temporary migrant workers (skilled, semi-skilled and unskilled), so a brief discussion will be presented here concerning the history of labour migration in Malaysia. In fact, the country's last two decades of economic boom through rapid industrial development has paved the way for labour migration from different countries. By importing workers from 15 different countries (Somasundram 2005) in various employment sectors Malaysia has become one of the destination places for immigrants, especially

from the Asian region. Workers from Indonesia comprise the largest number at 65.9 percent, followed by Nepal (10.9 percent) and India (7.56 percent) with 500,000 more staying in the country illegally (Nation N29. March 17, 2006). Other sending countries are Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Pakistan, Burma, Thailand, Vietnam, China and the Philippines. Migrants from Iran, Cambodia, Singapore, Nigeria, Peru, Taiwan, Congo, and Uzbekistan are also not uncommon here (Somasundram 2005). Similarly, it is found that the highest numbers of foreign workers are in the manufacturing sector (32.4 percent), followed by the plantation sector 22 percent, the domestic workers (17.5 percent) and construction (15.5 percent). At present, the number of registered migrant workers in Malaysia is 1.8 million, an increase from previous years' total (July 2005), which was 1.6 million. The presence of an equivalent number of unregistered workers is mentioned as government estimation in a MFA (July 2006 <http://www.mfsia.org>). According to that statement, out of 10.5 million strong labour forces, 2.6 million are foreign workers.

Mitigating the labour shortage by depending on foreign workforce is an old phenomenon for Malaysia and also a complex issue for centuries. The geographical location (Pillai 1992) has turned the country into an open place for the people from East and West. The country's multi-ethnic composition is formulated by British colonialism. Chinese and Indian migrants (Parmer 1960, Sandhu 1969) they brought in the who later managed to assimilate into the Malaysian society. A kind of 'divide and rule' policy (Shamsul 2001) was introduced among the migrant workers by the colonial authority (AHM Zehadul Karim, Moha Asri Abdullah, Mohd Isa Haji Bakar 1999, Pillai 1992). It is argued in the literatures that the immigrant workers became separated from each other and also from the indigenous population as a result of that policy (Asia Pacific Migration Research Network 2006). This type of differentiation still exists in the country and contributes to the multicultural politics among the population. Pillai's citation can be taken into account in this context, which is,

... it was British colonialism, which brought in Chinese and Indian migrants and moulded Malaysia into the multi-ethnic society that it is today. Multi-ethnicism and ethnic-based politics makes the issue of cross-country labour mobility in Malaysia more complex than in other homogeneous societies in the region...

Besides, there are vast differences in the situation of migrant workers of Peninsula, Sabah and Sarawak. According to a country report by the Institute of Strategic and International Studies (ISIS) Malaysia as cited in Kanapathy (2004),

... Not only is the management of migrants under separate administrative authorities, but the social, political, historical and economic factors behind the inflow of migrants vary between the regions. Also the geographical coverage and terrain, particularly in the case of Sabah, make it almost impossible to monitor and control cross-border migration...

Consequently, the overall scenario of the country's labour mobility and settlement need to be understood by considering some aspects, such as, the influence of multi-ethnic politics and social setting, the geographical location as well as diversities and the overall industrial development.

Based on the several development phases of the country, scholars have tried to identify the immigration of migrant workers in Malaysia - the pre-independence colonial period, the post-independence 1957-70 phase, the first decade of the New Economic Policy (NEP) 1971-80, the second decade, 1980-90 and recent developments. It is found (in the literatures) that in the 19<sup>th</sup> century the British colonial Malayan economy developed by importing 'cheap labour' from China and India (Karim et.al. 1999, Rudnick 1996, Pillai 1992, Parmer 1960, Sandhu 1969). They were recruited as workers of tin mines and rubber plantations. At that time a dualistic economy was formulated. For example, a self-sufficient, peasant agricultural sector and a foreign-owned, export-oriented tin and rubber sector (Pillai 1992). From the beginning as peasants Malays were self-supporting and they did not find any necessity to work under a strict employment contract of British rule (AHM Zehadul Karim, Moha Asri Abdullah, Mohd Isa Haji Bakar 1999). Maybe this is the cause why colonial authorities felt urged to depend mostly on immigrant labour. Indonesia, China and India are three densely populated countries identified by Karim (1995) from where the initial recruitment started due to their abundant supply of cheap labour. In fact, for the same reason, among these three groups Indians were in the first position, followed by the Javanese and Chinese workers (Ramachandaran 1994). Scholars also find the impact of this dualistic economy on the development of 'plural society' in Malaysia. It is stated that although after 1970 efforts were made through NEP to bring about massive changes, however some earlier features based on the previous dualistic economy remained constant (Pillai 1992). It is also mentioned that the identification of ethnicity with economic function is the outcome of dualistic economy. For example, Bumiputeras (Malays and other indigenous people) with agriculture and public services, Chinese with trade, industry and tin mining and Indians with plantations. However, before the colonial rule a kind of inter-island migration had emerged that allowed Indonesians to enter Malaysia for employment. It was postulated that based on the ethnic and lingua-cultural similarities these Indonesians were assimilated into the Malay culture and started to settle permanently (AHM Zehadul Karim, Moha Asri Abdullah, Mohd Isa Haji Bakar 1999). Like the Indonesians, a number of Indians too arrived in Malaysia through sea route. Their arrival was traced even before the British colonial rule. They were engaged in small trade with the coastal people in Malaya.

The application of new development strategy that widens the scope of structural changes through globalization and industrialization process (Zainuddin 2005) is a significant feature of post-independence period (1957-70). At that time though there was rapid economic growth, but job-creation was not as

successful. As capital-intensive techniques were given preference in industrial development schemes, the poor level of labour absorption could not be avoided (Pillai 1992). Unemployment rate in West Malaysia was relatively high in the 1960s and in fact reached 7.4 percent in 1970. Some economists also estimated a slightly higher rate of unemployment mainly among the young and urban Malays. Consequently, a kind of dissatisfaction arose out of their jobless situation that led to the inter-ethnic violence of May 1969. Thus, not only can tensions arising from communal politics be identified as the cause of that conflict, but the high unemployment rate of the local people also stimulated the situation.

In 1971 the implementation of the NEP with concomitant export-oriented industrialization and public sector expansion resulted in urban job growth and a mass migration of rural Malaysians to the cities (<http://hrw.org/reports/2004/indonesia0704/4.htm>). At that time fostering growth with equity and to minimize the previous inter-ethnic tensions was given preference (Pillai 1992). Through the influence of this policy, demand for labour in manufacturing and construction sectors started spontaneously. Along with this, by the early 1980s, among an expanding middle class the demand for domestic workers augmented and there was also a necessity for the flow of migrant workers in the agricultural sector felt by Malaysians (<http://hrw.org/reports/2004/indonesia0704/4.htm>). It is quoted in literatures that with the importation of workers from Indonesia and Thailand to the rural and plantation sectors this type of labour shortage was overcome. Later, people from other countries of Asia, the Middle East and the African continent entered Malaysia in clandestine ways following the instances of the Indonesians and Thais. Employers received permission for the recruitment of Bangladeshi workers in 1986. Following this workers from Bangladesh were brought for the plantation sector and from Thailand for the plantation and construction sectors. In 1991 chances were given to private sectors to format agencies for recruiting foreign labour directly from their origin country (<http://www.unesco.org/most/apmrnw9.htm>).

However, the incoming of migrants, especially the illegal workers, are considered as a threat to the stability of the society and they are also accused of different kinds of social problems. For this different policies were inaugurated to regulate the situations. Three principal features can be distinguished among these policies, such as bilateral agreements with major sending countries; work permits; and foreign worker levy. To eliminate irregular migration some measures have been initiated (Kanapathy 2004): registration of migrants working illegally without threat of deportation; ban on the intake of foreign workers; the granting of amnesty to undocumented workers to allow them to return to their country without being prosecuted; enhanced surveillance on unauthorized entry and employment of migrant workers under the security operations code-named *Ops Nyah I* and *Ops Nyah II*; and the imposition of harsher penalties on migrants and all those employing or harbouring illegal migrants.



## LABOUR MIGRATION FROM BANGLADESH TO MALAYSIA

The current official figure of the Malaysian Government and Bangladesh High Commission shows that up to April 2006 around 59,611 documented Bangladeshi workers are employed in the different sectors of Malaysia. They comprise about 3.35 percent of 1.8 million of the total workforce. The Government and non-government officials in newspapers and face-to-face interviews also acknowledge the presence of a large number of undocumented workers. Through the study among 100 migrant Bangladeshis of Selangor and Kuala Lumpur it is found that, like the Indonesians and Indians, they had entered the country following different unofficial channels and clandestine ways that developed depending on networking. In fact, the study has found consequential contributions of networking to the migrants for their coming and settling down in the host society and both the national and multinational/multi-ethnic ties are noticed by it. However, the ratio of effectiveness between national and multinational networking, the ways which are followed for developing bonds/networks and the impact of it, need to be evaluated through empirical data. Although some of the official data from the Bangladesh High Commission shows 1986 as the year when Bangladeshi labours were brought in to Malaysia as plantation workers, there are other sources such as the Bureau of Manpower, Employment and Training that had identified the presence of Bangladeshis a slightly earlier than that. Based on an interview with one of the official of Tenaganita, one of the principal causes of this variation may be the bringing of workers as tourist and students or crossing borders illegally through the assistance of personal networks, middlemen and agents. In fact, among the respondents of the study, quite a large number (30 percent) had entered Malaysia through these types of 'illegal channels' where they followed personal networks or were assisted by middlemen and agents to cross the borders by Hazzai road of Thailand. The exact figure may be higher than that given, because being afraid of police harassment or deportation some of them are reluctant to disclose their secret. Also, some had entered the country by sea route. Later, by taking advantage of the Government offer for conversion into legal/documented workers from the illegal/undocumented positions, options of amnesty (going back without any kind of punishment) or starting joint business with local partners (developed by networking), they changed their 'helpless' situations. As such, a proper research is necessary to trace the history of foreign workers' entry and involvement in the development projects of Malaysia. At the same time, the causes behind that illegal entry, the concomitant sufferings of the workers and the 'secret transnational networks' that developed out of that 'push-pull' system, need to be properly investigated. Since the field of this research is Malaysia, so in the next part a brief sketch will be presented concerning the history of labour migration from Bangladesh to Malaysia based on the available

secondary data. In order to realize the current situation of the respondents in Malaysia the understanding of that history is significant.

The migration of people from Bangladesh to other countries, for economic advancement, has been traced to even before the country's independence in 1971 (Abdul Rashid Abdul Aziz 2001). Large-scale migration started in 1976 to the Middle Eastern countries as a result of massive development projects based on the oil price hike in 1973. However, that massive flow dropped and changed towards Southeast and East Asian countries deriving the Persian Gulf War in 1990-1991. Coincidentally, at that time Malaysia was suffering from acute labour shortage due to the structural transformation (ILO, 1998) of the economy arising from the implementation of NEP (1971-1990). Initially, the Indonesians were recruited, but later in 1992, workers from Bangladesh came on a large scale as a result of an agreement with Malaysia (Abdul Rashid Abdul Aziz 2001). Based on the International Labour Migration Database, in 1992, a total of 10,537 Bangladeshi workers were officially recruited into different industrial sectors of Malaysia. However, prior to that, in 1986 a trial was conducted through the recruitment of 530 workers in the plantation service (Bangladesh High Commission). In fact, from the late 1980s to July 1996 Malaysia was the second largest employer of Bangladeshi migrant workers. It is worth mentioning that the presence of Bangladeshi labours in Malaysia is also identified prior to 1986 (see Table 1). In a yearly (up to November 2005) publication of Bangladesh Association of International Recruiting Agencies (BAIRA) the year 1978 was identified as the initial phase when 23 Bangladeshis were sent to Malaysia to work. After 1978 the recruitment continued for the next couple of years. The recruitment froze in July 1996 by the imposition of a ban on the import of workers from Bangladesh (data collected through field research). In 2000 a special approval was given for fresh workers from Bangladesh that was terminated in January 2001 and although there was an agreement in 2003 for the recruitment of workers, it did not work out. The decision to import workers remains frozen for Peninsular Malaysia until 23rd May 2006 (*Star*, May 24 2006). However, according to the unpublished data of Bangladesh High Commission, in Sarawak state, there was demand for 12,595 workers mostly for the manufacturing service. The withdrawal of ban for Peninsular Malaysia was announced on 24<sup>th</sup> May 2006 and the incoming of workers was supposed to start in August through the private sector BAIRA (*Star* July 22 2006). However, the negotiation process was still going on at the time the data and information was collected, that is at the end of August 2006.

It should be noted that the history as well as the causes behind labour migration from Bangladesh to Malaysia could not be directly understood. The path is not simple and it has several pros and cons. The route, which was followed for entry, the inherent causes behind migration and the parties involved as well as the frameworks that regulate the situation all have specific impacts, a series of consequences. In fact, among the respondents of the study there are so many

TABLE 1. Flow of yearly migration to Malaysia, 1976-2005 (up to November)

Year	Bangladeshi migrant workers in Malaysia
1978	23
1979	110
1980	3
1981	1083
1982	331
1983	23
1984	718
1985	792
1986	530
1987	–
1988	2
1989	401
1990	1385
1991	1628
1992	10537
1993	67938
1994	47826
1995	35174
1996	66631
1997	2844
1998	551
1999	1501
2000	17237
2001	4921
2002	85
2003	28
2004	224
2005	1617

*Source:* Adapted from BMET and BAIRA

instances where interviewees have been found to have been staying in Malaysia for more than 13 years after entering as temporary worker on calling visa, or on student visa, social visit visa etc. Brain drain is also not uncommon here. In their long sequence of staying abroad following different kinds of survival strategies some reached the vantage point, while some failed. Their aims and planning for migration are also not homogenous. The question is, how are they organized now in Malaysia? Do they work like a homogeneous body? How do they maintain networking with their home? What is their dream for homeland? Or do they cut all the bonds through a long span of staying abroad? How do they manage to stay for a long time (entering as a temporary worker or as a tourist)? How do they integrate themselves in the multi-cultural society? What is the response of the host society towards them?

**'BANGLA BAZAR': A CASE STUDY AMONG THE MIGRANT  
BANGLADESHI BUSINESSMEN OF KUALA LUMPUR**

30 MAY, 2006: DEATH ANNIVERSARY OF A BANGLADESHI LEADER SPEECH 1

... You see we are living here, but we are taking care of our family and relatives at home. We work here and we send remittances for the well-being of our home town and country. You will not find such a nice building at Maijdi of Noakhali district, where my parents are living with the rest of my brothers, brother-in-laws, nephews and nieces. I am happy to find them living peacefully based on my earnings and they are proud of getting such a son who is a promising businessman in a foreign country. I am rich, but I don't forget you, my fellow brothers, because I know you are making money on your toil, like me. I can't forget my mother, my country, Noakhali district, because they brought me up and sent me here by providing money. I do business here, but I sell Bangladeshi food items, clothes, 'biri' (cigarette), 'sayur' (vegetables), fishes that you can't get abroad. For my country I bring (export) Malaysian suitcase, food items, torchlight and what not. I recruit not only Malaysian workers, but my brothers are also working here, in my shop. You see, here in the stage, some of my friends are sitting, who bring Bangladeshi workers in Malaysia. Some of you came here through our channel. My brothers, please pray as the Malaysian Government withdraws ban on Bangladeshi workers soon. We will bring our brothers then. Please let us know whether you want to bring anybody here. I do take care as you can get Bangladeshi food (preparing food following Bangladeshi cooking style) in my restaurant. My cook is a Bangladeshi man, my friends, don't go without having dinner, my cook has prepared a nice 'daging lembu' (beef curry) for you mixing green chilli, pepper, coriander seed and other spices. These are brought from Bangladesh. You will not find it sweet because no 'santan' (coconut milk) and 'gula' (sugar) is added here, you will eat and you will feel that you are enjoying Bangladeshi dish. Please have 'minum' (drinks) while you are sitting. I know my brothers you have come here after finishing your duties in the factory. I know you work hard since morning until dawn. Some of you have come here by leaving your overtimes. So a cow is slaughtered for you. Please don't go without having 'makan' (food). We will pray in the 'Bangla surau' (a Muslim prayer house named 'Bangla') for the victory of our party in the coming election of Bangladesh and we will pray for our great leader, who formed this party. Today is his death anniversary; I am so sad that he is not with us. He martyred his life for the sake of the country. If he is alive until now, Bangladesh can be more developed than Malaysia, and then we don't need to work here leaving our families behind. Maybe some day some of us will be a great leader like him. After earning a lot, maybe some of us will go back and will take the responsibility of the country...

SPEECH 2

...Bismillah Hir Rahman Ur Rahim. My brothers and sisters, as salamu alaikum. We are here because this is the day when our great leader was killed by few assailants. This is not a celebration; this is a day of mourning for the whole Bangladeshi nation. We are here to make our fortune, but we cannot forget the day. He was such a leader who had no pride on his status. Wearing a torn 'guernsey' (genji Bengali term) and 'pants' he walked

miles after miles and worked with the labours in Bangladesh. We formulated a branch of that party in Malaysia based upon his ideals. Now his wife is in the chair of that party and ruling the country as a Prime Minister of Bangladesh. His son is a national proud. If they win in the next election, I hope Bangladesh can make a good progress. So we pray for the party and also for our great leader. We are here after our whole day working, because we love them. We are here, because we want to make our family happy by earning and sending money. The money that we are sending contributes to our economy. Some of us are making so much progress here that they can move to another country. Last month, one of our Bangladeshi brothers went to Poland, my friends. He spent RM30 thousand for it. The amount that he spent was his own income from here. I brought him here from Bangladesh as a factory worker and now he made this progress. Here some of us are students, technicians, engineers and some also workers. We are engaged in business, but we sell not only local (Malaysian) items, but also Bangladeshi goods. We don't have local partners only, our country brothers also assist us as agents. They bring goods from Bangladesh and take Malaysian goods from here. We keep Bangladeshi 'natok' (drama), music and Hindi movie for your enjoyment. We have gathered here because we are Bangladeshis. We will assist each other if we have any problem in Malaysia. My brothers, a nice meal is prepared for you by slaughtering a cow...

The above speeches were delivered by two Bangladeshi businessmen named Kalim Miah (pseudonym) and Dabir Miah (pseudonym), on 30<sup>th</sup> May 2006 at 'Bangla Bazar' of KL, while they were remembering the death anniversary of a national leader, one of the former Presidents of Bangladesh. Instead of one get together, two meetings were arranged (see Box 1). These gatherings took place in the name of religious prayers ('Milad Mahfil' in Islam), because without registering with the 'Registration of Societies Department' and based on the Societies Act 1966 and the Societies Regulation 1984, any kind of association or gathering organization of seven or more members (social, political and psychological nature) is forbidden in Malaysia. They were speaking as the leaders of two non-registered political branches that developed based on a national political party of Bangladesh. In the study area respondents were divided as members of two branches of a common political party. As the leaders of each branch wanted to be respected by holding posts of the party and found it prestigious for them, so they separated themselves as members of two segments of the same party. In each meeting a stage was prepared for the leaders and for an 'Imam' (religious preacher of Islam), while the other migrants, such as, the workers and students sat below the stage. The leaders who were on the stages were businessmen, manpower agents, lecturers of different private colleges and officials of different organizations. Among the leaders, some are staying in Malaysia as PR holders and some have stayed for more than 13 years by managing business or on spouse visas. They were affluent, they contributed to the expenses of the get together and they got the opportunities to, on the stages (of two separate meetings). They were the speakers, while the general workers and students were the silent listeners. To the listeners they were honorable persons

and they were addressed as 'boro vai' (Bengali word, in English 'elder brother'), 'Sir' or 'boss' (leader).

Based on the above case some questions or confusions may arise. For analytical purpose the questions are separated into two parts;

1- what is the internal relationship among the leaders and members of the same branch? What is the interrelationship among the members and leaders of two the different branches? Why do the general workers and students let themselves be divided into two segments following the interests of the leaders? Is it a kind of 'patron-client' relationship? Or a specific type of exploitation can be found in the bond of speakers and listeners (leaders and general members)? 2- Who are these leaders and workers? How do the leaders advance their economic position? In the following parts the answers to these questions will be sought based the research findings.

#### 1: The event as mentioned in the national daily newspaper of Bangladesh

Niaz Pasha, from Malaysia: The death anniversary of martyred Ziaur Rahman, one of the former Presidents and the founder of multi-party democratic system in Bangladesh, has been maintained competitively in Malaysia by the two segments of BNP. For this two groups arranged different programmes separately in..... Bangla Bazar of Kuala Lumpur. Starting from religious praying ('Milad Mahfil') they slaughtered cows for the feast among the Bangladeshi community. Each group showed its own power by inviting migrant Bangladeshis from different parts of Malaysia. While one gathering was in the 'surau', the other was in the Bangladeshi restaurant of the same area. They prayed for the President and for the peace and well-being of the country. Before prayer and feast, in each meeting leaders delivered a brief speech towards the members of the party.

Source: <http://www.dailyinqilab.com/junr3/index.htm>

#### HOMOGENEITY VS HETEROGENEITY: EVERYDAY REALITY AND THE NETWORKING

The Bangladeshi migrants in Malaysia are a heterogeneous body of people on the basis of income (amount, source), education, job, area of origin, length of stay, settlement type, internal (within the community) and cross-cultural networking in the receiving society. The term 'gender' is not mentioned here, since most of the respondents of the study were males. In fact, as written in the contract where the workers need to put his signature prior to joining a job, migrant workers are not allowed by the government (of receiving country) to bring family members to Malaysia. Also, in Bangladesh there are some restrictions concerning certain kinds of female migration, especially the migration of unskilled and semi-skilled women<sup>12</sup>. Consequently, instead of government's initiatives, female migration in Malaysia continued mainly depending on personal network or through private agencies. Until 1996 women

came as migrant workers but they left after their job contract expired. Male workers continue to stay either by renewing the work permit in the same company or working in another company (converting into an undocumented worker), while waiting for a chance provided by the host government to change their status from an undocumented to a documented one. Though both the male and female workers came on short-term basis, the males could not go back as they are the principal bread-earners of the family.<sup>13</sup> After earning, they need to remit money to their families and parents (at home) to maintain their livelihood. Besides, according to the respondents, after January 2001, male workers had entered Malaysia following clandestine ways, but the females could not because of the Bangladesh patriarchal social system. Whether a woman could travel to another country would depend on the male elders of the family. Subsequently, women were not permitted or encouraged by their male guardians to work abroad. Reason being that the recruitment of Bangladeshi workers was frozen until May 2006. Considering women as the 'weaker sex' (Moore 1995), and therefore incapable of taking risks like travelling and working on tourist visa, the male dominated society of Bangladesh prohibited them from earning abroad. Also, being afraid of losing honour in the eye of society has made some people reluctant to provide data concerning their female relatives' involvement in any kind of unskilled and semi-skilled jobs in a foreign country. As a matter of fact, among the 100 interviewees in the study area (Kuala Lumpur and Selangor state) only one female is found working as an assistant to her husband Dabir Miah's business organization. However, her status is not as a worker. She is staying on spouse visa. The rest of the interviewees were staying in Malaysia as professionals (15 percent), businessmen (20 percent) and workers (65 percent). Their educational qualification is also not the same. Although professionals came either as experts in respective fields or had changed their positions after having achieved higher studies from Malaysian universities, but circumstances of workers and businessmen are quite opposite. Some had completed their higher secondary or secondary exams before entering Malaysia while others lack any kind of educational attainment at their home country. The businessmen, who are now demanding honourable positions to their fellow country mates, have changed their fortune after coming on calling and tourist visas. However, 25 percent of the businessmen started business from the beginning that is they came on business visa. The rest managed to do business either by engaging in joint business with the locals or by staying on spouse visa. It is found that the local regulation is that the foreigners can do business, but they need to take local partners. The study show that the local partners will be the owner with 51 percent ownership and the rest will be owned by the foreign investors. Some of the professionals are also found to be doing 'side business' (coined by the interviewees) along with the 20 percent full time businessmen. They try to make extra income by opening restaurant business ('mamu restaurant' is coined by Tamil Muslims and Bangladeshis, mainly all kind of 'halal' food including

cooked rice, noodle, juice, teh-tarik/ tea and curries are sold here), selling phone cards at call booths (it is a very familiar and popular business in the study area. Mainly workers come to the call shop either for making long distance phone call to home country or to buy international calling/IDD cards for handphones), running shops (where different kind of goods are sold, ranging from food items to DVD, CD etc) or travel agencies. As they are busy in their official jobs, so they recruit part-time workers. They recruited both locals (people from different ethnic communities) and Bangladeshis. For business purposes these professionals need to visit 'Bangla Bazar' almost regularly. The jobs that the professionals are engaged in are not same, ranging from teaching to working in IT sector, where they provide the services. Among the workers there are also variations based on the types of works, education, documented/undocumented status, affiliations with the locals, length of stay and working areas. Table 2 shows the diversity of respondents' status and Table 3 shows the causes and types of networking.

Table 2 shows that there exist wide varieties among the interviewees concerning their working conditions, professional status, earning sources, educational qualifications, ways of settlement and area of origin. There are similarities among the workers and businessmen concerning their area of origin, although few similarities are found among the professionals. In fact, Kalim Miah is the habitant of Noakhali and Dabir Miah comes from Barishal. Both are engaged in manpower business and they assisted their village mates to come here as workers. There are also other workers from Noakhali and Barishal who came to Malaysia on calling visa, but their fellow village mates (who came either by Kalim's or by Dabir's channels) helped them by providing information of job vacancy or introducing them to potential employers. After reaching a foreign country they assisted each other regarding finding a house, understanding local language, way of working, interaction with the locals as well as by providing information about local rules, customs and norms. Almost all of the workers got the opportunity to go abroad for the first time through that channel and they depended on their friends, relatives and village mates to help them adapt to local situation. Thus, the two groups were formulated based on the way they arrived in Malaysia. The other workers and businessmen also joined either Kalim's group or Dabir's group depending on their political interests, types of business/work or area of settlement in Malaysia. Such as, a worker may come from Gazipur, but he can be a member of Kalim's or Dabir's group depending on his demand and scope of fulfillment. Consequently, either for renewing work permits or for sending money or to counter the threats from the locals they try to achieve trusts of the influential Bangladeshis. Or a businessman from Dhaka can try to make friends with the businessmen of Barishal or Noakhali. Because all are foreigners they need to cope with the environment to ensure their luck. Among the workers, businessmen and professionals there are some who have achieved a better position compared to others. He may possess Permanent



TABLE 2. Heterogeneous body of respondents

Gender Class		Status	Education	Settlement Type	Area of Origin	
Male (99 %)	Worker (65 %)	*Documented	*Higher studies (0 %)	*Temporary (calling visa)	*Noakhali (31 %)	
		*Undocumented				
Female (1 %)		*Engaged in side business (restaurant business, selling phone card, running shops, selling vegetables etc)	*H.S.C (31 %) *S.S.C (23%) *High School (15 %) *Primary School (23 %)	*Married with local *Side business with local partner *Others	*Barishal (38 %) *Chandpur (15 %) *Comilla (7 %)	
		*Supervisor/line leader	*No Schooling (8 %)		*Gazipur (6 %)	
		*General worker			*Dhaka (1.5 %) *Others (1.5 %)	
	Businessmen (20 %)	*Started business from the beginning *Came as worker, then started business	*Higher studies (25 %) *H.S.C (25 %) *S.S.C (50 %)	*Business visa *Married to local *PR holder	*Noakhali (25 %) *Barishal (35 %) *Chandpur (20 %) *Comilla (10 %) *Gazipur (5 %) *Dhaka (5 %) *Others	
	Professionals (15 %)	*Came as professionals *Came as student, then professional *Engaged in side business	*Higher Studies (100 %) *Other (0 %)	*Professional vis *PR holder *Married to locals	*Dhaka (33 %) *Comilla (26 %) *Chittagong (20 %) *Rajshahi (7 %) *Khulna (7 %) *Others (7 %)	

Resident (PR) status or own a big business, can be affiliated with locals through marriage or any other kind of involvement or he may have become a wealthy person and therefore can be helpful to others in time of emergency. Thus, different kinds of alliances are formed depending on necessity, peoples' world

views and influential persons' networking in order to survive abroad and to earn a living in a more endurable way. The question is why do wealthy/influential persons want to have followers either in political parties or in their everyday lives? This study has identified two causes. Firstly, it is a business strategy for them. By bringing in workers they get service charges. Considering that they are 'powerful'/'influential'/'well-connected' people, workers visit them either for renewal of work permit and passport or to find a better job. For each type of service they take money from the workers. They (workers) also come to their shops as customers. Secondly, having more followers in the political party is a prestige issue for them. After reaching the higher position of the ladder, they expect acknowledgement from others. They had been dreaming to become a leader since their early childhood. Though abroad, they would still hope to fulfill that desire. Thus 'economic rationalities' and 'status/ prestige issue' influence them for grouping and lobbying. Consequently, instead of considering the ties between workers/students and businessmen/professionals as instances of 'patron-client' relationship in a foreign country, the specific motivations of the migrants of each status need to be understood properly.

The Table 3 shows that every network is the outcome of some necessities. It is not likely that all the Bangladeshis belong to a same group. That means it is neither automatic nor spontaneous. A network has specific causes and consequences that may help migrants to maintain life in an alien society. These networks include not only Bangladeshis but also friends from local communities. Some have ever managed to find their life partner (wife, girlfriends) as well as business partners from the local people. In fact, among the respondents those who have affiliation with locals, become more successful in settling down in Malaysia compared to other country mates who lack this type of networking. Along with this a kind of hostile relationship has also developed between Kalim and Dabir and their concomitant members of the parties. That means, although the members are assisting each other within the group in time of emergency, there exist a kind of competition between the members of each group. It is not like there is a kind of class struggle rather the competition can take place in the same class of two opposite groups. Sometimes, this type of tension takes such a severe form that they dare to do harm to their Bangladeshi brothers by seeking assistance of the local power. As a result some migrant Bangladeshis try to avoid their country mates and instead develop friendship with the locals. They also say

... Sister, life abroad is very difficult, money, money and money; - all will want money from you. Here nobody is your brother, sister or uncle. We suckle our brothers' blood for survival. My own relative, brother-in-law cheated me by taking a huge amount of money in time of coming (Interview with Afsar, my second interviewee, January 2006)."

Two types of questions arise from this discussion. First, how do these Bangladeshi migrants integrate into the multi-cultural society? Does this integration (either through business or by marital relationship) results in the

TABLE 3. Causes and types of networking

Class	Types of Networking	Causes of Networking
Worker	1- Village mates 2- House mates 3- Bangladeshi coworkers 4- Bangladeshi neighbours 5- Bangladeshi businessmen (not all, either Kalim Miah or Dabir Miah) 6- Local people (if he is married here or he has local business partner or friends from the factory or housemates or neighbours whom he finds as friends in time of danger)	1- To adapt to the foreign society 2- Feelings of loneliness 3- Feeling afraid of local people 4- In case of emergency (police raid, borrowing money, sending money, in time of sickness) 5- Renewal of passport and work permit 6- As a previous member of the same political party in Bangladesh 7- For celebrating national days and festivals 8- For information of a better job 9- In order to avoid any kind of threats or disturbance by others friendship with locals are maintained. Mainly, Malays, Indian Muslims, Indonesians and Pakistani networks are entertained 10-For permanent settlement
Businessmen	1- Businessmen of the same group 2- Village mates 3- Professionals 4- Workers who come to him 5- Local friends (if he is married with a local lady then wife and offspring, business partner)	1- For business 2- As country mates 3- Celebration of national days and festivals 4- In case of emergency (sickness or any other kind of unwanted troubles) 5- For settling down in a better way
Professionals	1- Professionals 2- Some of the businessmen 3- Some of the country mates (friends) 4- Family 5-Some local friends	1- As Bangladeshi 2- Professional sharing 3- Family helps him to be free from loneliness 4- For business dealings 5- Supporter of a specific political party in Bangladesh 5- For long time staying managed to make friends with locals.

formation of any kind of hybrid identity? Second, can the differentiations among the Bangladeshi migrants indicate the inappropriateness of the concept of 'distant nationalism' for explaining migrant situation? The following part of the paper will discuss these questions.

#### INTEGRATION INTO THE MULTI-CULTURAL SOCIETY: A WAY TOWARDS AN INTRODUCTION OF VERSATILE IDENTITIES

... As soon as Aneu was brought to her husband's place in Kota Bangun she became a Muslim and married him according to Muslim custom. She is quite amused about the fact that after undergoing the religious ceremony, which had probably no deeper sense for her, she was accepted as a Kutai. This process of "masuk Melayu" is a standard practice of assimilating into other ethnic groups. Wee (1984) has described this process of assimilating sea nomads (orang laut) to Malay society in the Riau Archipelago. There are three aspects of this process, namely accepting Islam, Malay custom and Malay language (See Nagata 1974), (Evers, H.D and Gerke, S. 1991).

Kalim Miah of 'Bangla Bazar' is now staying in Malaysia by marrying a Malay lady. They have two children, one son (age five years) and one daughter (age three years). Although in Bangladesh there is no system of affixing father's name and title with the offspring's name, but in the case of his children's names two words have been added. For example, his son's name is Foysal bin Md. Kalim Miah and the daughter's name is Ayesha binti Md. Kalim Miah. Here 'bin' means 'son of' and 'binti' means 'daughter of'. Attaching these two words it states that they are the son and daughter of Kalim Miah. This is the Malay style of naming and followed by Kalim Miah as an outcome of interethnic marriage with a Malay lady.

Among the three aspects of assimilating into the Malay ethnic group he got one advantage from the beginning, and that is he is a Muslim. He had to achieve the other two components, Malay language and custom. Through his staying and working in a factory in KL he managed to learn Malay language even before his marriage. In fact, their matrimonial bond was the outcome of an affair. It developed while both of them were working in the same factory. As his wife is a native Malay speaker, he needs to follow that language for conversation. The ceremony took place in Malaysia according to the Malay custom. As they share the same religious background, the marriage customs were more or less similar. According to him,

... still a few dissimilarity exists. We could not get married before obtaining a certificate from a marriage course. I had to provide her full part of 'dower' (property/money that the bride receives from the bridegroom in time of marriage as she will be subjugated totally under the authority of her husband.) immediately when the marriage is solemnized. Before marriage, representatives from my side, my village mates and brothers went to her parents with 'hantaran' (odd number of gift boxes for fixing the date of ceremony). A local 'Qadi' (local Qadi means a religious person to conduct marriage) conducts the

ceremony... I know my children will be bumiputera, as they contain the blood of a bumiputera, my wife. We are bringing them up following Malay social system. My son speaks Malay and when Ayesha grows up, we will give her 'hejab' (peace of cloth used to cover the head) ... not like ours...

The statement indicates that Kalim Miah tries his best to accustom into the Malay custom as he can be accepted by the society. His children are native Malay speakers and with his wife he speaks in Malay. At home, he is totally a Malay speaker and follower of Malay custom. Outside of the home, in 'Bangla Bazar', among the Bangladeshi friends and brothers he speaks in Bengali. His restaurant's name is in Bengali 'Prabashi kedai makanan' (foreign restaurant) and the place where they go for prayers is also named as 'Bangla Surau'. However, a type of hybrid language can be found among the names, though he is unaware about that. Though he attempts to use Bengali vocabulary, Malay words were added there. For instance, the words 'kedai makanan' and 'surau' are collected from 'Bahasa Melayu' (Malay language). The word 'kedai makanan' means restaurant and 'surau' means Muslim prayer house. Even, when he was delivering the speech on 30<sup>th</sup> May in front of Bangladeshi brothers, along with Bengali he was also mentioning Malay words, such as, 'makan', 'minum', 'daging lembu' *etc.* He feels proud to bring up his children following Malay social system. While at the same time, he does not cut any bond or contact with his relatives in the origin country. Nurturing Bangladeshi nationalism by a get together among the country mates in a national day of Bangladesh may be a proof of his 'distant nationalism'. However, the instance of spending money for get together can also be explained as a business strategy to find customers for his manpower business. This argument can be made based on the fact that he is not providing services for free. Besides, only his followers who support him in his competition with the members of other group and not all Bangladeshis can get his assistance in time of emergency, though they are Bangladeshis too. Moreover, the term 'long distant nationalism' can also be ignored, as he is a follower of Malay custom when he is with his family. In fact, for his integration into the host society, he is trying to assimilate with the Malay society, while for business purpose the nurtured Bangladeshi nationalism. All the instances may be regarded as strategies to find a better way to survive in the host society. Does it mean that a kind of 'hybridism' is going to be formulated following his adaptation process?

## CONCLUSION

Dabir Miah and Kalim Miah are the representatives of Bangladeshi migrant businessmen of 'Bangla Bazar' in Malaysia who have succeeded in obtaining permanent settlement. They came as temporary workers for the quick economic prosperity. Later, through inter-ethnic marriage with a 'bumiputera lady' (Kalim)

and developing friendship with an Indian Muslim (Dabir) they started business. Within a short time span they reached their vantage points, became successful in upgrading their fortune. After it, instead of cutting contacts with the homeland, they brought their fellow village mates, family members and relatives and kept the relationship alive by sending remittances as well as maintaining regular correspondences.

'Bangla Bazar' is a place in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, where the Bangladeshis have developed a type of 'transnational business system'. It is an area where the presence of Bangladeshis, from workers to professionals, at any time of the day, for economic, social or recreational purpose, is very common. The migrants have framed the phrase 'Bangla Bazar'. It indicates the market place of Bangladeshis. In Malaysia, the local term for the Bangladeshi migrants is 'Bangla' and in Bangladesh the word 'bazar' means a hotspot where the flow of people, goods and money is very regular. People visit this place for necessary shopping and also to say 'hello' to their friends whom may not be found or met in any other place. Outside the state border of Bangladesh, in a busy place of Kuala Lumpur, where the local transport and any other kind of communication system is very habitual, the Bangladeshi migrants have opened their business center. Starting from collecting Bangladeshi newspaper (after each 2/3 days newspapers are brought) to the probability of the withdrawal of ban on the recruitment of Bangladeshi workers, all kind of information can be gathered from here. The display of Bangladeshi music video, cinemas, drama, in the Bangladeshi shops, is very common. A kind of restaurant business has been developed, targeting the Bangladeshi workers and students. It is also a place of celebration for Bangladeshi national day, other religious and cultural festivals. Migrant Bangladeshis flock together here to be free from loneliness and also to find a better job, renew work permits, find a scope for bringing relatives and friends (as workers) through the assistance of their country brothers (businessmen). It is transnational because the migrant Bangladeshis have created a social field outside the geographic, cultural and political borders of Bangladesh. Though it is outside of national boundary, the immigrants have formulated a kind of business network and social relationship that binds together both the countries of origin and the host. This process of two-way relationship is sustained by the regular flow of remittances, goods (through business), people (either as migrant workers or through short visiting), communication channels (through phone, letters, internet, newspapers etc.) and cultural practices (celebration of Bangladeshi national days like death anniversary of national leader, Independence Day, cultural festivals like the first day of Bengali new year etc.). In fact, Basch, Glick Schiller and Blanc Szanton are the pioneers who have tried to identify this process theoretically. According to them, ... We define 'trans-nationalism' as the processes by which immigrants forge and sustain multi-stranded social relations that link together their societies of origin and settlement. We call these processes transnationalism to emphasize that many

immigrants today build social fields that crosses geographic, cultural, and political borders.... An essential element is the multiplicity of involvements that trans-migrants sustain in both home and host societies. We are still groping for a language to describe these social locations... (Basch, L.; Schiller, N.G.; and Blanc, S. 1994).

However, in their transnational networking system a kind of nationalism can be seen in disguise with the accompanying business entrepreneurship. A strand of long distance nationalism may be found in their ideological attachment as well as social, political and economic involvement to the home country. Though they are affiliated to the host country through business partnership with the local, interethnic marriage and the concomitant family bindings, still they are appealing for the welfare of their country of origin. They do not have any right for casting votes in Bangladesh, but they are worried about the forthcoming national election of their home. In my opinion, by paying heed to Weber's study of the ethnic origins of nationalism this type of 'emotions' can be defined. In his definition of ethnic group, Weber argued, ... Those human groups that entertain a subjective belief in their common descent because of similarities of physical type or of customs or of both, or because of memories of colonization or migration (Weber 1922). It is stated that a combination of shared customs; similarities of physical type and actual memories of migration can lead to 'group formation' even in a new country.

The problem lies in the fact that the Bangladeshi migrants in Malaysia are not a homogenous body. At least two groups have been found in the study area that developed out of their diversified realities and interests. A kind of combative and collaborative liaison has been developed between and within the groups. Moreover, by showing their eagerness for the well being of the home country as well as nationalism through selling Bangladeshi goods, they are enriching their business. They are the speakers and their followers are the listeners from whom they are taking charges for any kind of service. Crossing the border of community cohesion, networking opened out towards the incorporation of multiethnic people of that particular social setting. Plausibility has been noticed for the introduction of versatile identities among the migrants and their next generation.

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