

Understaffing at Foreigners Registration Office

SNEHA JHA

Bangalore, Oct 24—The Foreigners Registration Office, located at the Commissioner of Police's office premises, Bangalore is not adequately staffed and is facing severe infrastructural problems.

The Deputy Commissioner of Police (Intelligence) performs the duty of issuing residential permits to foreigners who present their applications for registration. The procedure is lengthy and requires the applicants to present all the requisite documents duly filled and verified. The office sees a steady flow of foreign nationals and immigrants every day. But it is facing various infrastructural problems.

Imrana, an Irani student pursuing medicine at St. John's College said, "The services are not prompt. The office has a shortage of staff. Even if we bring all the documents it takes at least an hour to get the work done. I find the procedure long. Besides the office is so small. They do not have a seating arrangement for an adequate number of people so we have to stand outside sometimes and wait for our turn." She was there to get a residential permit for her mother who was on her maiden trip to India to visit her daughter.

Santra, a native of Ivory Coast has been staying in India for the past one year and

studies management at Baldwin Girls' College said, "The work is very slow and we are made to wait for a long time. Some times the staff has also asked me for bribe to get my work done faster."

Mari Swami Gowda, an inspector at the office said that staff shortage is a case in almost all government offices in India so there's nothing special about it. But the best thing is that our staff is very efficient.

The Deputy Commissioner of Police (Intelligence) who is at the helm of affairs

in the office said, "Most of the work in the office is done manually. There is no computerization as of now. The demand for our

services has increased manifolds. In the past few years Bangalore has progressed at a very swift pace. Being the Silicon Valley of India, the city sees a steady inflow of foreign nationals. It has become difficult for us to

cater to the need of so many people. There is no doubt that we are understaffed but our people are very industrious and equipped with all the required training. Most of

them have been with us for the past seven or eight years. They know their job well and try their best to provide efficient services. As for

the space crunch, we have taken the matter into consideration and a five-floor building is being built behind the present one. One floor of this building will house our office. We are also planning to introduce computerization to make the work faster."

D. Krishna Urs, Asst. Commissioner of Police (Administration) said, "Upgradation plans are in the offing. A new building is being constructed and Internet facilities are being introduced to store databases. We are working very well in the present set-up also. We try to make the most of what we have."

He also went on to add, "Basically state government is not responsible for it. We act only on delegated powers. It is the duty of the Ministry of Home Affairs to look into these matters but they have decentralized some of their powers. So most of the times we have to seek orders from the central government. The channeling of orders takes time. We act with the help of the Center of Immigration. It's also our duty to keep a watch on the foreigners who overstay or indulge in some illegal activities. If such cases are found we prosecute them."

An employee at the office said, "We try to satisfy the needs of people coming to us. But sometimes we face communication problems with the foreigners. Still, we do our best."



Pic by author

Misuse of the Red Cross goes unchecked

J JAGANNATH

Bangalore, Oct 24—The Red Cross emblem is being misused rampantly by government institutions such as hospitals, dispensaries, clinics and blood banks. It is an emblem to be used only by those belonging to the Red Cross Movement. It can also be used by the Army Medical Services (AMS). The AMS is involved in humanitarian work, mainly in times of armed conflicts and natural disasters.

Dr. N.G.Narayana, General Secretary of Indian Red Cross Society, Karnataka said that a discernible change has been brought in the chemists and druggists of Bangalore through workshops and awareness camps. Ravindra Kumar, President of Bangalore City Chemists and Druggists Association, agreed with Dr. Narayana and said that 75% of medical shops have started sporting the emblem specified for pharmacies (green cross). "Even if we catch individuals of using the emblem they can pay a small amount of Rs.500 and get away,"



Pic by author

Dr.Narayana adds.

He further said that only if a government order is passed, will there be a perceptible change in the attitude of those misusing the emblem. "Since the Red Cross Society is constituted under the Parliament Act, a bill regarding the use or misuse of the Red Cross emblem, is under consideration in Parliament," he said. "I have held talks with Sushma Swaraj when she used to be the Health Minister and till date the file is making rounds."

Dr.Suryanarayan Joshi, a doctor at Victoria Hospital, says, "This particular government order needs to come out soon because private doctors and hospitals defend themselves by saying that let the government make it mandatory."

Dr.Narayana expressed optimism and said, "By 2010, I hope this order to get passed and people to appreciate the importance of the Red Cross emblem. It should not be misused like this."

Simplified UK visa norms remain unclear

DIELLE D'SOUZA

Bangalore, Oct 24—The United Kingdom (UK) has decided to simplify visa application procedure to encourage tourists, students and "key workers", as per an article in The Hindu newspaper on October 23, 2007.

Key workers, here, refer to professionals working in sectors like information technology, biotechnology, etc. A source who did not wish to be

named said due to security reasons, blasts and consequent restrictions, the number of students had decreased. However, foreign students add to the revenue and the fall in the number obviously had economic repercussions. Hence they decided to ease the visa applications, said the source.

Dhanashekar, an education counselor for South India, British Trade Office, however, only confirmed the date of change in application form, i.e October 29, 2007.

He also affirmed that this was so that more students could come in. Only genuine cases from approved colleges are selected and their financial background is checked.

"There has been no change as far as student visas are concerned," said Dhanashekar. He also said, it was only changes in the application form for the visas.

Referring to the security breaches that have taken place in the United Kingdom this year, he stated, "The United Kingdom has stringent security measures in place. As such, they do not discriminate between religions. It is a fully secular nation."

The decision to simplify the visa application procedure was made because there was a sudden decrease in the number of foreign students and other immigrants. This was attributed to the recent terrorist attacks in the United Kingdom.

Tibetans seek peace and solace in foreign land

Karnataka, in southern India, has three Tibetan settlements. Bylakuppe, the largest of these is home to 14,000 Tibetans.

SUPRIYA KHANDEKAR

The larger than life monastery, the giant Buddha statue, the peace all around and the Tibetan monks make a picture of the spiritual Tibet in India. Bylakuppe, 250 km from Bangalore is a place with a huge Tibetan settlement. The settlement has been in existence since 1961 and has a refugee population of around 14,000. In all there are three Tibetan settlements in Karnataka

After the defeat of the Tibetan army in the military invasion of Tibet, the Chinese government

imposed a treaty on the Tibetan government under the terms of which Tibet was declared to be a part of China, though enjoying a large degree of autonomy. In the White Paper, China claims the Tibetan Government entered this treaty voluntarily, and that the Dalai Lama, the government and the Tibetan people as a whole welcomed it. The facts show a very different story, leading to the conclusion that the so-called "17 Point Agreement for the Peaceful Liberation of Tibet" was never validly concluded and was rejected by Tibetans.

Pema Namgyal, one of the Lamas at the Namdroling Monastery (Golden Pagoda) at Bylakuppe said that most of the monks there, including him, have come from Tibet. There are almost 500 monks every year that come from Tibet, he added.

The Dalai Lama, has not stepped foot in his native land since 1959, but he continues to a non-violent opposition against the Chinese. He says that he only wants a level of autonomy from the Chinese, not full independence.

In 1950, the Chinese troops officially attacked Eastern Tibet's

provincial capital of Chamdo. The Indian government was against the move. Later, the Tibetan government wrote to the UN Secretary General, appealing for the world body's intervention.

A government-in-exile led by the Dalai Lama was established in Dharamsala five years ago, which today continues to govern by-charter the refugee community.

This generation of Tibetans, born of a Tibet where western technology and belief were both unknown and fervently unwanted, has achieved an almost miraculous adaptation to the modern world.

Tibetans are prospering in India and neighboring Nepal, while newer communities are blossoming in Canada, the US, and UK thanks to Tibetan-run resettlement programs. They have been able to preserve the Tibetan language and even the Tibetan cultural identity, and, in the last three decades, increase world attention, knowledge, and sympathy for Tibet almost exponentially. But Tibetans abroad have been unable to do what perhaps they wanted most, to significantly help Tibetans at home and to make any real progress toward the liberation of Tibet