

Cross Border Illegal Migration and Security Challenges in Nepal

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Abstract

This article is about the cross-border illegal migration in Nepal-India border and aim to show the vulnerabilities of the porous borderlands, cases of Rohingya refugee are chosen for the study. Nepal and India are practicing the open-border system. The open border provides opportunities for illegal migrants to enter and exit easily which become the security concern in country. The free flow of migrated people from India and the third countries through the Southern border of Nepal creates different security challenges. The purpose of this paper is to analyse the trend of illegal migration into Nepal from the Southern border. It accounts that the open border system and its characteristics which enhance the possibilities of infiltration of criminals and terrorist groups into Nepal. The illegal flow of Rohingya Muslims from Myanmar as well as several foreigners through the Southern border of Nepal shows the changing scenario of the security-related challenges. On the other hand, this issue has become an issue of the international concerned as well as the serious

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problem that Nepal has been faced to find out solution. The study is exploratory and descriptive in nature, and it is carried out on both primary and secondary sources. Furthermore, it has utilized governmental and non-governmental reports besides journalistic reports related to the intention of illegal migration of Rohingyas to analyze the ground reality of such activities. The researcher discovers that the open border system between Nepal and India continuously increases the security threat to both countries.

Introduction

Migration invites both problems and opportunities as well as global challenge in the modern world. The same is the case of Nepal-India borderlands. The interdependent borderlands may be opportunities for the migrant workers, footloose, vendors, travellers, and others but challenges emanating from the illegal migration via open borders cannot be ruled out.

People from the different region of South Asia has migrated to Nepal, especially from the Southern and East-South borderlines. Rohingya refugees have entered Nepal as the victims of the internal conflict in Myanmar. They have entered Nepal via India. Although social, political, economic, and environmental compulsions back home, or even personal whims, may affect a person to cross the borders and settle in a new country (Das; 2016, p. 27). In the case of Rohingyas, the leading factors such as political upheaval, religious persecution, and ethnic violence play vital roles in leaving their home country and migrating to the foreign lands.

Interestingly, the illegal migration of Rohingyas from Myanmar through the route of India into Nepal is rarely raised. However, it is a subject of UNHCR's concern regarding refugee issue. The government agencies of Nepal closely monitored the problems rather than any strict intervention to stop the entry of Rohingyas through the route of Indian land into Nepal. The subject of the illegal migration of Rohingyas has triggered the security concerns for Nepal. There are challenges related to ethnic conflict, religious conflict as well as other security related issue due to the entry of Rohingyas in Nepal.

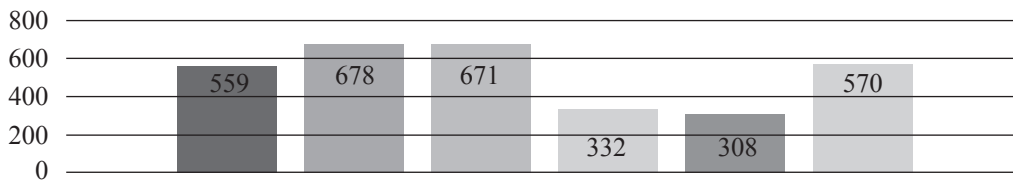
Illegal Migration

Illegal migration is a migration that occurs outside of the legal-institutional

frameworks established by states (Edwards, 2008, p.1449). Illegal migration is the arrival or departure of people from one country into another country without entering via legal methods. Illegal migrants are also referred to as undocumented migrants. Already, illegal migration has emerged as major challenge of the world (Kalita, 2019, p. 2). It is perceived as the same class of problem as all non-legitimised private economic activities occurring across national territorial boundaries. There must be three basic forms for illegal immigration based on the nature of their entry and stay which are: illegally crossing the border, crossing border by using fake documents, and overstayed after expiry of valid documents. According to the data received from immigration office, 3118 foreigners were deported from Nepal in five years due to different causes. They were charged of immigration crime, drug abuse, fraud, sexual offence and overstay.

Figure 1

Number of Deported Forgeiners (2017 to 2022 AD)



Source: Immigration Office

In above mentioned figure, it is seen that the number of foreigners deported was high in the year 2018. People from other countries except SAARC were also deported due to different reason.

There might be different ethnical, social, political, economic and environmental compulsions which could drive a person to cross the borders and settle in a new country. In the case of Rohingyas, a host of political and economic factors, such as political upheaval, religious persecution, ethnic violence has pushed them to leave their homes and migrated to foreign lands.

In case of Nepal, a foreigner may or may not be an illegal migrant is based on the nature of their entry into another geographical setting. In case of Nepal, the status of foreigner is usually determined by the Foreigners Act 1958, The Citizenship Act, and Immigration Rules 1994 and so on. After all an illegal migrant is a person who

illegally crosses the international boundary to live permanently in another country by violating their laws. They may be documented or undocumented.

Review of the Literature

Illegal migration is the grave concern, which has a long-term effect on Nepal's political, social, and economic sectors. The entry of illegal migrants is continuous that has brought several security-related threats. The geographical circumstances and the socio-economic situation attracts illegal migrants entering Nepal intentionally or unintentionally. Kansakar (2010) mentioned that the unrestricted movement across the border has indeed been responsible for all sorts of crime and anti-social activities.

Shrestha (2004) highlighted the negative impacts of the open border system between Nepal and India. The illegal smuggling of goods, trafficking of girls to brothels in Indian cities, trafficking of narcotic drugs, arms and ammunition and movement of criminals and terrorists are the continuous challenges of open border. In principle, both Nepal and India have positively agreed to control such illegal activities along the border, but there is a lack of an effective and practical approach (Kansakar, 2010). Furthermore, the most serious and adverse impact of the open and uncontrolled Nepal-India border has been in the form of growing anti-social and lawless activities.

Regarding the open border system, Singh (2010) argued that any socio-political and economic change in Nepal has a direct bearing on Indian security. Hence, there is of great concern for India from the security points of views. On the other hand, Nepal has faced several security-related long-term threats due to free flow from southern borderlines. Singh (2010) stated that open border is key source of threat to the internal security of Nepal and India. However, KC (2016) argued that the borderline between Nepal and India is no more open because of the presence of the surveillance mechanism in the border. The increasing border posts and the border security forces as well as the tightening of the flow of goods provide evidence on his argument. Despite the surveillance and increasing initiatives towards the border managements, illegal migration still triggers security challenges in Nepal. The cases of the migration of Rohingya from Myanmar to Nepal become one of

the security threats to Nepal. The displaced Rohingyas entered Nepal from the North-East Indian States to Nepal. Also, several terrorist and criminal gang leaders entered Nepal and lived in the guise of fake identities which has been recorded in security-related organizations. Individual migrating from the southern border have been arrested in Nepal and informally extradited. According to the Chief District Officer of Jhapa district, the security force arrested a Nigerian citizen and sent to the immigration office for further actions.

Basnet (2013) explained that the open border between Nepal and India is susceptible to social crimes through illegal migration. Gupte and Bogati (2014, p. 21) outlined that the Indo-Nepal border has remained a security challenge for Nepal. The open border with India significantly contributes to insecurity in Nepal. It has overlooked factors such as social networks, motives of external forces and geo-political interest in cross-border crime, especially illegal migration into Nepal. KC (2013, p. 111) considers the open border as the prime cause of Indo-Nepal cross-border crime. Upreti (2010, p. 255), nevertheless proposes the necessity of border management urging it has to be fully taken into account in the National Security Policy of Nepal. The significance of borderlands is that it is also contributing to a thread of mutual relationship between two nations and is accepted by both the government of Nepal and India.

Baral and Pyakurel (2015) argued that an open border is regarded as a "safety-valve" for Nepal. Furthermore, they stated that the Nepal-India border is not a porous border, but it can be called an open border. To them, open border facilitates migration, both seasonal and permanent, and seems to be the driving force for human movement on the border (Ibid, 2015). They also mentioned that open border has the problem of the heinous crime of human trafficking. However, the researcher highlighted human trafficking from Nepal to India and other countries and overlooked the illegal migration into Nepal.

Dahal (2010) argues that geography is one of the factors responsible for shaping the social relationship in the borderlands (p. 79). Open border with India seems to be both challenges and opportunities for Nepal as several security challenges have been noticed which are related to both from air and land routes. After the hijacking of a plane of Indian Airlines from Kathmandu on 26 December 1999, the security

threats emanating from Nepal was globally disseminated (EFSAS, 2018). Terrorist groups had entered Nepal and hijacked the plane from Tribhuvan International Airport in Kathmandu. Following the incident the security in Nepal's International Airport was questioned and Nepal has been defamed as the hiding safe land for the terrorists. Similarly, a notorious international criminal Charles Sobraj was arrested in Nepal signalling how he had challenged the security management of Nepal, especially in the international airport.

There are several cases of notorious criminals and terrorists have entered Nepal from the southern border. Whenever India starts its search operation for gangsters, terrorists and separatists, their security organizations show their concerns towards the border-points with Nepal. Regarding the case of Amritpal Singh, leader of the Free Khalistha Movement, India formally wrote a letter to Nepal in assisting India to arrest Singh (Gopal, 2023). Though Nepal showed serious concern toward Indian security interests, Indian co-operation is deficient in maintaining peace and security in Nepal. The Nepalese side has doubts about India for supporting anti-nationalists and those actively involved with their strategy to support the rebellions. During the Maoist insurgency, the Indian side was alleged for their support to the Maoist leaders for providing shelter in their land. Nepal has always supported India in border management and cross-border cooperation. The border security management has both direct and indirect interrelationships with the next side of Nepal's border. Neither the border with India has been fenced nor visa is required for crossing it. Hence, effective border management and maintenance of interdependent borderland security is the responsibility of both countries.

The illegal migration of Rohingyas of Myanmar through the route of India into Nepal is rarely raised issue in national debates and regional deliberations. However, it is a subject of concern of UNHCR in terms of refugee's issue. The government agencies of Nepal closely monitored the issues rather than any strict intervention to stop the entry of Rohingyas through the route of Indian land into Nepal. Regarding the Rohingya issue in Nepal, the shortfalls of literatures highlighted the issue as the rights of the refugees rather than the possibilities of security threat to Nepal in the future. It is very difficult to find such scholarly effort of study about the problem of illegal migration of Rohingyas from Myanmar through the route of India and its

consequences in Nepal's internal security.

Nepal and India have an open border system that the citizens of both countries permit to cross the border without passports or any other identity cards. It has been an extraordinary relationship since a long time. The unique and special relationship is characterized by the open border of Nepal and India based on shared history, geography, culture, close people-to-people ties, mutual security and close economic linkages. The two countries' connectivity is robust and interrelated with people-to-people contact. However, the transnational criminals both organized and unorganized, have misused the open border practice between Nepal and India since a long time ago. The free flow in the Nepal-India borderline has its significance and uniqueness but the illegal migrants entering into Nepal has threatened its national and human security.

Nepal has formulated several policies to maintain its security. In Nepal, the National Security Policy was formulated for the first time in 2016. Its objectives were: to protect and promote national unity, social and cultural solidarity and tolerance in the context of the multi-ethnic, multicultural, multilingual, multi-religious and geographical diversity of Nepal in one and to maintain the freedom, sovereignty, territorial integrity, national unity, independence and dignity of Nepal in another (NSP, 2016). Geographical location and open border, religious, geographical and ethnic issues are mentioned as the elements influencing national security (Sharma, 2023, p. 152). However, there is no clarity on whether the issue of illegal migration has been mentioned or not as the elements of challenges of national security.

The Constitution of Nepal 2015 has provisioned Directive Principles, Policies and Responsibilities of the State for border security and its management. Article 5 of the Constitution of Nepal 2015 has emphasized on the defending political independence, safeguarding of sovereignty and territorial integrity, nationality, autonomy, self-respect, protection of rights and interests of Nepali people, protection of boundaries, and economic progress and prosperity. The Article 51, policies regarding national unity and national security are provisioned that calls for making the Nepal Army, Nepal Police, Armed Police Force, Nepal and other security organs strong, capable, professional, inclusive, and accountable to people based on national security system.

Nepal's 2015 Constitution forbids human trafficking and provides for the protection of the fundamental rights of women, labour, and children by criminalizing exploitation and torture (Banjade et al., 2019, p. 13). There are policies to curb illegal migration into Nepal. Immigration is regulated mainly on the basis of Immigration Act 2049 (1992), Immigration Regulations 2051 (1995) and Immigration Procedure 2065 (2010). These laws established the Kathmandu Immigration Department as the only official agency granting non-tourist visas. Emigration is regulated by the Memoranda of Understanding between the Nepalese government and the governments of the receiving countries.

Research Methodology

The researcher has attempted to make this study more empirical by visiting the bordering areas and the temporary habitat of the Rohingyas in Kathmandu and Lalitpur Districts for reliable data. The researcher has also visited Birgunj-Raxaul, Kakabhitta-Panitanki and Biratnagar-Jogbani border areas.

Qualitative research methods have been applied in the paper. Case in-depth case studies are used to explore the illegal migration of Rohingyas into Nepal. Both the primary and secondary data are used in this article. This data includes reports on the Rohingya issued in Nepal. It also includes documents and reports on Nepal-India border management, border security. The interview reports of respondents on the illegal migration and border issues are also examined. Secondary data includes books, newspaper and research articles. Relevant academic works on illegal migration, border management and national security have been consulted. For reliable sources of data, a field visit was made on the month of Chaitra 2080 in border areas and Rohingya camps of Kapan and Sunakothi.

Cross-Border Migration in Nepal

Cross-border migration through Nepal's borders with India has been common whose history goes back centuries. The Nepal-India Peace and Friendship Treaty signed on July 31, 1950, agreed to grant, on a reciprocal basis, to the nationals of one country in the territory of the other the same privileges on matters of residence, ownership of property, participation in trade and commerce, movement and other privileges of a similar nature. Kansakar (2010) argued that the treaty became a major turning

point in the movement of Indians into Nepal and was further reinforced by the Nepal-India open border.

Several cases of cross-border illegal migrations have been noticed in history. After the expulsion of the ethnic Nepalese from Bhutan in 1991, Bhutanese Refugees entered through South-east border of Nepal from India (Ikram, 2005). Nepal has faced multiple challenges related to security, political and social concerns due to the refugee issues. Although the Bhutanese refugee problem has been partially solved with the third country settlement, Nepal still faces security challenges in the name of refugees. The Bhutanese refugee scam, a prominent controversy in Nepal, is a case in a point which is highlighted as symbolic of the prevailing normlessness in Nepalese politics (Sneha, 2023).

Rohingya issues is another refugee problems that Nepal faced. Rohingya refugees entered Nepal through Southern borderlines and the process continues as their number has been increasing. According to Mahat (2020) Rohingya refugee cases seems to be the next security challenges for Nepal. In addition, many people in Terai believe that Nepal's Terai has become a safe haven for fake currency rackets and armed groups in some stances.

Numerous Indian Terrorists, including Yasin Bhatkal, Abdul Karim Tunda were arrested in 2013 in Nepal and were handed over to Indian security force (EFSAS, 2018). They were hiding in Nepal with different identities. Bhatkal migrated through Nepal-India border and hide in the guise of a religious leader. As such the free flow through the open border provides opportunities for criminal groups which in turn brings several challenges to national, international and human security.

Security Management and Challenges

After the Indian Airlines flight was hijacked on 24th December 1999, the possibility of terrorist activities in Nepal were heavily discussed both at the national and regional fronts. The rise in the terrorist activities of Pakistan based, Harkat-Ul-Mujahideen has been accounted for in the region. Ghimire (2019, p. 6) stated, "The new US State Department report says that Nepal has also become a playground for the Indian terrorist group. Furthermore, it is mentioned that Islamic Mujahideen has also expanded its area of operations to Nepal, which is now the biggest hub for

Islamic Mujahideen operations". Furthermore, India has been reproaching Nepal time and again for not adopting strict measures to stop the free movement of ISI agents from Nepalese soil. Also, New Delhi is often heard complaining about the fragile security management of the border (Bogati, 2023, p. 163). An open and porous border with India provides opportunities for the infiltration of criminals and terrorists into Nepal.

Terrorist groups are active in South Asia like Laskar-re-Toyeba, Jai-se Mohammad, Al Qaeda and ISIS who might misuse the open border with India. They could conduct serious terrorist activities throughout the region. According to Ghimire (2019, p. 6), "DHD-J commander in chief Niranjan Hojai was arrested from Baudha, Kathmandu. He had been residing there since a long time back with his Nepalese wife and owned a home in the name of his wife. Lashkar-e-Taiba bomb-maker Adbul Karim Tunda and Yasin Bhatkal, a founder of the terrorist outfit Indian Mujahideen, were arrested on the Indo-Nepal border".

India shows the concern on border points with Nepal which was also seen in the case of search out for Amritpal Singh, the freedom fighter of radical pro-Khalistan separatist and a self-styled Sikh preacher may reveal more. After living in Dubai for a decade, he returned to Punjab in September 2022, having been controversially appointed as the leader of Waris Punjab De (lit. "Heirs of Punjab"), and started a campaign that encouraged youth to refrain from drugs, adopt a traditionalist form of Sikhism, and advocated a sovereign Punjabi Sikh nation-a state called Khalistan. India formally wrote a letter to Nepal to support arresting him if he entered Nepal (Gopal, 2023). Nepal has shown serious concern for Indian security interests and wants same in maintaining peace and security in Nepal. The Nepalese side has doubts about India for supporting anti-nationalists and those actively involved with their strategy to separate the country. During the Moist insurgency, the Indian side was alleged for their support to the Maoist leaders for providing shelter in their land. However, India denied this allegation. According to the news report of Nepali Times (2005), several senior Maoist leaders and many junior-level Maoist cadres have been either arrested or handed over to the Nepal government. But India did not hand over the two senior Maoist leaders, Mohan Baidya Kiran and CP Gajurel to Nepal.

Nepali leaders and bureaucrats said that Nepal has never compromised on addressing

India's security interest without hampering its national interest. Regarding the informal extradition, several most wanted persons in India were nabbed in Nepal and handover to India. Nepal has never contributed to weakening the Indian separatists and terrorists; however, sometimes voices have been raised expressing doubt on Nepal's commitment on action against anti-India activities reflected in the opinion of the Indian leaders, bureaucrats, and intellectuals. The security management and solving problems associated with the border security have direct and indirect interrelationships with the next side of Nepal's border.

Illegal Entry of Rohingya Refugee to Nepal

Political and religious conflict forced Rohingya Muslims of Myanmar to be displaced in several neighbouring countries and others. Thousands of them has fled to Bangladesh, India and Nepal. There were reports that more than three hundred thousand of Rohingya Muslims fled from Myanmar and scattered mostly in Bangladesh, and some of them arrived in Nepal through the route of India. In the field study, it is seen that they have been temporarily settled in Kapan of Kathmandu and Sunakothi of Lalitpur districts.

The entry of the Rohingyas into Nepal is the subject of concern, both from the perspective of national and international security. It has been observed that the open border between Nepal and India has been the main factor for the influx of Rohingyas in Nepal (Bashyal, 2019, p. 17). However, the push and pull factors are also important in the analysis of the illegal Rohingyas migrants, who entered Nepal. Bogati (2023, p. 150) highlighted the stories of Rohingyas migrants who are illegally settled in Nepal. For them, Nepal is safer heaven than Myanmar, but they have faced harsh days in the tarpaulins in Kathmandu and Lalitpur. Still there is no particular data on Rohingyas who have entered into Nepal. Morch (2017) mentioned that only 147 Rohingya refugees are registered with UNHCR. However, informal sources claim that thousands of Rohingyas illegally entered Nepal and are scattered in different districts of Nepal. The cases discussed and described below may divulge more on the same.

Case Study of Lasuntar

Alif (pseudo name), 41 years old, is from Setanakotarab Gram, Mangdujela, Myanmar

where he had a good farm with 12 ropanis of land and owned domesticated cattle. He is temporarily residing in Lasuntar, Budanilkantha Municipality, Kathmandu, Nepal. He arrived in Nepal in January 2015 and settled in the Lasuntar. He has 10 members in his family. He left Myanmar after the eruption of violence in his village. According to him, he felt insecurity from Myanmar's army who tortured him several times. In 2010, he entered Bangladesh and temporarily settled in the refugee camp. He illegally migrated to India in the next year and worked as a Kawadi worker where he was tortured. He was not paid for his work in India and was beaten by the owner of the Kawadi collector business. Then he planned to leave India.

In 2015, he contacted the Nepalese in Jambu who described about the better life in Nepal in comparison to India. He surfed online news to get knowledge about Nepal and the settlement of Rohingyas in Kathmandu. Then, he got information and ideas to enter Nepal. He managed money and illegally entered Nepal with his family members. At first, he entered India and then took a route towards Nepal. He entered through the route of Kakadbhitta border point in Eastern Nepal. The police asked his identity card, but he was unable to show it. Then he returned and entered through the same point after three hours.

Alif has six sons and a daughter from his two wives. His three children were born in Nepal and others were born in Myanmar and Bangladesh. All of his family members are in Nepal, including several relatives who are also settled in Nepal, whereas others are in Bangladesh. Generally, he is in contact with relatives through social networks. He also disclosed that several Rohingyas have been living outside in the rental house. He described several problems associated with the settlement, works and livelihood in Nepal. He has been working as a plumber and earning around NRs. 30 thousand per month. He is also getting a monthly allowance for food from UNHCR. His children go to school, but he is not satisfied with their education. He has not faced security threats but has problems on the movement in different places of Kathmandu. His family members and relatives are in contact through social network, but they have not meet physically since a decade. He feels alienated in Nepal and wants to return to his birthplace. He can neither enter Myanmar nor get a chance to migrate to other countries than Nepal. He is eager to reunite with members and relatives in different countries. However, he is not confident about

going back to Myanmar due to the insecurity and violence in his place. He has also dreamed of settlement in the third countries.

According to Alif, he has got knowledge about Nepal from social networks, news and those Nepalese who were in his contact. He came into contact with them and managed his migration. He entered Nepal and made contact with the influencers in the Rohingya settlement in Lasuntar. After he entered Nepal, he has never left Kathmandu Valley.

The respondent belongs to the Sunni Muslim community and are Rohingyas from Mynamar had illegally migrated to Nepal after he got information about Nepal from social networks and news. They got support from relatives to settle and work outside the camp.

All of them have denied their political affiliation during the days in Myanmar, but Alif disclosed his affiliation as a treasurer in the Rohingya Community, Lasuntar Rammandir. He denied any affiliation to the Muslims Organizations of Nepal. He has good relations with the management committee of the Mosque. However, he said they are not supportive solving their problems.

The open and porous border is one of the causes of the illegal entry of migrants into the country. However, the pull factors are major causes to be accounted that the country with a safe environment for the migrants are facing the problems of massive flow of migrants. On the other hand, there are several national and international institutions actively involved in their rights. Such information is noticed through social networks as well as other types of networks and the attempts of the migrant workers to enter Nepal. Several human trafficking groups have also misused Nepal as a transit point for the trafficking of people in developed countries.

The support of relatives is significant on the illegal migrants of Rohingyas into Nepal as their networks in Bangladesh, India, and Nepal have contributed to the illegal migration in any countries they have access. The Rohingyas in Nepal have been facing several problems related to settlement but they are also working illegally despite no work permit. They have also challenged the job security of the people of Nepal. Stateless, poor, and insecure. As such, for their everyday survival, Rohingyas are vulnerable to being misused by internal and external extremist forces.

Jakir (Pseudo name), 43 years old Rohingya Muslim, is from Sikansari Gram, Mangdugela, Myanmar, close to the Bangladesh border. He is temporarily residing in Lasuntar, Budanilkantha Municipality, Kathmandu, who arrived in Nepal in November 2017. He is a member of a family with 11 persons but currently living alone in Nepal. His three children, wife and mother are in Bangladesh and the rest of the family members are in Myanmar.

He escaped from Myanmar after the security threat and entered Bangladesh in 2012. He lived in Bangladesh for five years before he entered India and moved towards Nepal through the Kakadbhitta border point of Eastern Nepal. He got information about Nepal from his cousin brother Juber who is in Bangladesh. He supported him to make contact with the Rohingyas living in Kathmandu through his cousin brothers and know the better life in Nepal in comparison to Bangladesh. He faced no obstacles at the border point and easily entered Nepal. On his way to Kapan Camp, he entered Kakadbhitta and reached Jame Masjid in Ghantagar, where he stayed for four days. Then he stayed two nights in the hotel and managed to settle in Kapan Camp.

He faced several problems of hatred and torture in Bangladesh. Also, moving outside the Refugee Camp was a life threat. He got relief goods in Bangladesh, but the life was harsh. Hence, he decided to leave the place and move towards Nepal. He has not bribed anyone to migrate towards Nepal. According to him, India-Bangladesh cargo vehicle trafficked the people to India whom he paid IRs. 300 to enter India from Bangladesh. The police in the India-Bangladesh border were bribed IRs. 100 and the driver was paid IRs. 200. However, he denied any bribe at the Nepal-India border and claimed he only paid the fare of the bus.

He has fertile land in Myanmar where his family members cultivated rice and wheat. He left Myanmar after he had no citizenship to study further after grade 10. He described the torture, and violence by the Burmese Army, which displaced thousands of youths from Myanmar. He is earning money by working in WOREC but is not satisfied with his life in Nepal. He is feeling physically secure in Nepal but feeling have a dark future in his own country.

He was working as a helper in a local NGO and supporting his family living in

Bangladesh. He is also getting a monthly allowance for food from UNHCR and has good contact with NGOs and INGOs. According to him, he has a good relationship with the Nepal Muslim Association, and Nepal Development Society which are supporting the Rohingyas migrants in Nepal. He also disclosed that Nepal Jama Masjid also supported them in their difficulties. It had also provided jobs to two persons but the involvement in the stealing of those persons hampered the perspectives towards Rohingyas in Nepal.

He believes that Nepal is a safe country for the Rohingya people. He also has information about the people living outside the camp. He has made contact with them and meets them regularly. He has also contacted his relatives and friends in Myanmar and Bangladesh through social media but has not been able to meet them yet. He doesn't have any intention of going back to Myanmar and has a dream of settling in third countries. He wants to go to a country where he can have a bright future. He doesn't want to take his family members with him to Nepal due to language issues and the education of children who are educated in Bangladesh and Myanmar.

The respondents like him entered Nepal through the route of Kakadvitta without any obstacles from the security force at the border point. Neither is he checked in his route while travelling to his destination. His family networks in Nepal encouraged him to enter the country and settle in Kathmandu. He is also working in Nepal despite having no work permit. Further, he has good contacts with NGOs/INGOs and Muslim organizations.

Security Threats

Illegal migrants who enter in a particular country also establish strong bonds and networks for their rights as well as to promote their vested interests. They also encourage members of their community for illegal migration into safe places. The strong bonds and networks of the illegal migrants may create security threat to the destined country. Illegal migrants with their networks have chances of misused by organized and criminal groups. Further, they may also create multiple conflicts in the country where they are settled as migrants/refugees.

The Rohingyas have made good networks in Nepal and their relatives and friends are

attracted to come here. The young male Rohingyas have been illegally migrating to the countries with job opportunities. They have good networks in South Asia and are also inhabiting in better places. However, the Rohingyas in Nepal are facing several problems related to the settlement and their vulnerability may be the serious issues which may also bring the threat to the country and the host society where they are settled in. On the other hand, their contact with the national and international organizations may be the future challenges in regard to the domain of security threats.

During the field visits and interviews, Rohingya people said that they are safe and secure in Nepal that they are recognized as refugees by the UNHCR. They are also getting adequate assistance for their normal livelihood in Nepal. Moreover, they also feel secure in the country where the locals have not disturbed their settlements, like in Kapan. The Rohingyas are physically protected and safe in Nepal, but their presence has brought various security-related challenges. The dispersion of Rohingyas in the different parts of Nepal is still unaccounted and their illegal and extremist activities are not investigated seriously. The presence of Rohingyas in Nepal has concerned issue to Nepal's neighbouring countries and the international organizations. Myanmar, Bangladesh, and India have serious concern about the Rohingyas issue. On the other hand, UNHCR, the Muslim countries and their organizations have expressed their concerns related to the security of the Rohingyas in Nepal.

Rohingyas problems are directly related to the conflict in Myanmar, but it has affected other countries, especially Bangladesh and India. Consequently, the illegal migration of Rohingyas also entered into Nepal through the Indian Territory. In Nepal, about 250 Rohingyas have settled in a slum of shacks in Northern Kathmandu (Shrestha, 2019, p. 14). However, as the data is not clear about the Rohingyas living in different parts of Nepal, the threats and challenges emanating from the illegal migration of Rohingyas may be diverse and numerous which can be systematically discussed.

There are several illegal activities recorded and reported inside the Rohingya camp in Kapan, Kathmandu, and Sunakothi, Lalitpur. According to the local police, crimes like domestic violence and fighting are reported in the camp (Interview with

Police Chief of Kapan, 21st May 2024). Still the Rohingyas in Nepal maintain their secrecy that their activities are hardly known by the security agencies and other organizations. They do not want to disclose any form of incident outside of the premises of the camp. They do not allow outsiders to take their picture and also the picture of the camps (Interview with Member of Rohingya Committee in Kapan, 16th December 2023). The police have never been to the camps to conduct investigation into their illegal activities. In the same contexts, chance that illegal activities by the Rohingyas cannot be ruled out, which may affect the national security of the country. When you know very less about some communities, then generation of suspicion and fear becomes obvious, particularly to the host communities, even in regards to the issue of sanitation, health, culture, civility among others.

Alcoholism and fighting inside the camp are everyday problems. It also plays a role in increasing the cases and episodes of domestic violence. The alcoholism of the migrated people creates a security threat to the people in the local community. The local women and girls feel insecurity due to the alcoholism and night movement of the people from other communities. On the other hand, the possibility of spreading terrorism in the name of different organizations cannot be ruled out. The illegal migrants are vulnerable to terrorism and may be easily misused by terrorist organizations.

Ethnic conflict is a serious concern in Nepal due to the rise of extremist groups. The political parties use the ethnic issues as their tactics to mobilize youth for electoral and political gain in the country. Several ethnic groups and religious groups are formed with their fundamentalist, conservatist and extremist agendas. As such the possibilities of conflict in the Rohingyas' settlement in Kathmandu cannot be ruled out during the time of social, cultural, and religious tensions. Social conflict between the local people and Rohingyas in Kapan have been reported several times. Rohingya migrants are being a threat to the local community because they have shown their engagements in the controversial activities which are of the serious concern to local people (Interview with Local Resident of Kapan, 4th January 2024). The local government of the Budanilkantha Municipality ward no. 11 has raised the issue of the settlement of the Rohingyas in its area in Kapan (Interview with Chair Person of Budhanilkantha Ward No. 11, 7th February 2024). Local people have

blamed that there are social disputes with the local landlords who have provided the land to the Rohingyas as rent. Local people have been blaming the landlords as the actors of creating all kinds of social problems associated with the Rohingyas in Kapan. As a result, the social relationship and community harmony existing among the community members have been deteriorated. A representative of the ward said that the issue is internationalized, and the local government has been unable to remove the Rohingya camps (Interview with Chair Person of Budhanilkantha Ward No. 11, 7th February 2024).

Conclusion

Although migration is global phenomenon, illegal migration has the potential to invite numerous security threats. In the same contest, illegal migration of Rohingyas through the open border with India has created new types of challenges for the country.

The security of the border is of utmost importance for the security of the border countries. The Nepal and India border management ensures the free flow of people within the borders of the two countries. The informal collaboration between Nepal and India for the mutual security interest of the two countries should continue. The open borders of Nepal and India provide easy access for people to come and go freely. The Rohingya people entered Kathmandu through the Nepal-India border from Myanmar. People from different communities are vulnerable and endangered in the local environment characterised by suspicion, doubts, social tensions, and cultural and religious differences. Afterall, the Rohingya are not considered refugees but illegal immigrants. The settlement of illegal immigrants is a difficult task for the nation. Employment, education for children, and other problems are faced by Rohingya people. In such a hostile environment, there may be different measures to regulate borders. Fixed entry and exit points are effective regulating measures in open borders that has triggered security threats for both countries. Besides applying the system of an identity card for the people crossing border, the border regulating system should be strong to stop the illegal movement of people.

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