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Editor's comment

Defining happy

WHAT does it take to be happy? A report by professors from Harvard Business School last month said paying others to do chores such as cooking or cleaning led to higher levels of feeling satisfied.

A separate survey of 14,000 adults appears to corroborate findings by the Harvard researchers. Indians have outranked Britons when it comes to wellbeing. In certain respects, life in India, Pakistan and the subcontinent can be less taxing than it is in the western world. Hiring people to cook and do the shopping and cleaning for you is not as prohibitively expensive as it can be in Europe or the US.

World class medical facilities are more affordable in Asia than in the West – but the backlog in the courts across India and Pakistan can be a challenge for even the most reformative governments and their long-suffering citizens. Also, safety is not something that can be taken for granted across south Asian cities and towns, especially for women.

Compare the hectic pace of life in western societies with that in Asia, where many work six-day weeks and the findings become more nuanced. Happiness and contentment are subjective, of course, but if outsourcing chores frees up time for family and leisure, why not give it a go?

Pakistan plans

OUSTED Pakistani prime minister Nawaz Sharif stands accused of running “dynastic” politics as it is expected that his brother Shahbaz will eventually take charge of the post that the country’s top court disqualified Sharif from.

Former petroleum minister Shahid Khaqan Abbasi, an ally of Sharif, took over as prime minister this week but he is keeping the seat warm for Shahbaz who will contest an election from the seat vacated by Nawaz. It appears to be a cosy and convenient set-up but will the Pakistani army and intelligence services flex their muscle and keep the Sharif family out of power?

Tell us what you think

Want to say something about the stories in *Eastern Eye* or simply got a viewpoint you think should be heard? We want to hear from you so write to us and we will consider publishing your response, if it is topical. We reserve the right to edit letters. Email editor@easterneye.eu

Modern slavery is an affront to civilisation



by KATE GARBERS,
Managing director
at Unseen

CONSUMER CHOICES ARE A SIGNIFICANT FACTOR

LEGALLY abolished in all countries across the globe, it would be logical to assume that slavery is a thing of the past, relegated to the history books, rather than an issue very much facing our present and potentially our future.

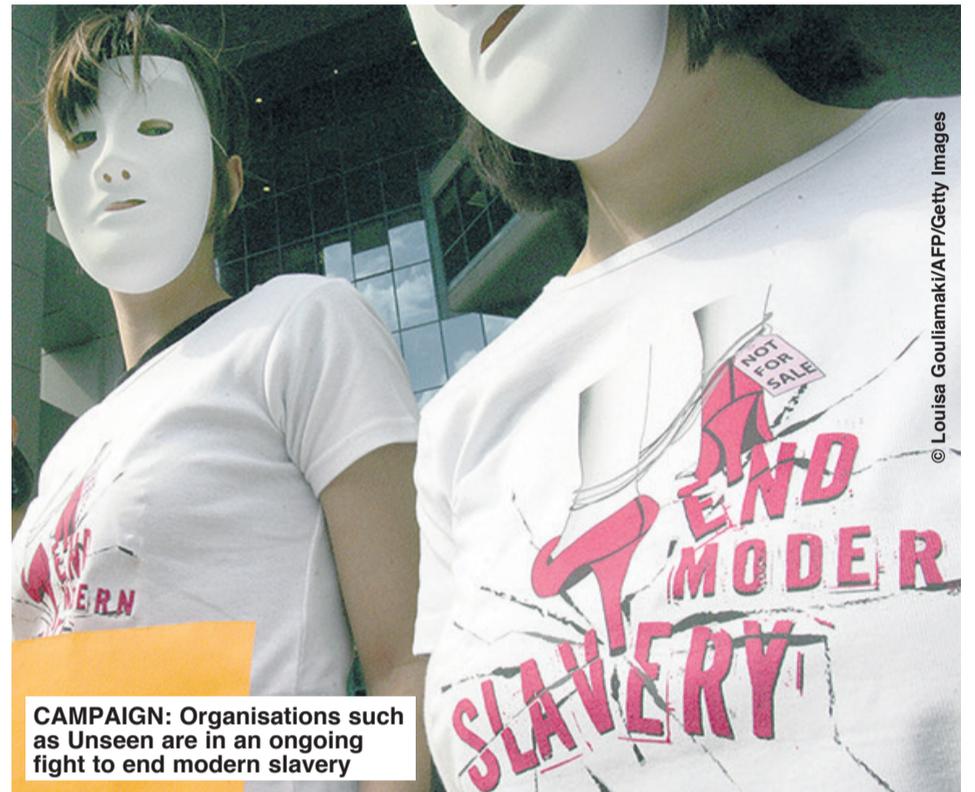
There are, in fact, more slaves in the world today than during the transatlantic slave trade. Modern slavery certainly looks different from its chattel slavery counterpart. It has developed to meet the demands of modern society and our insatiable desire for cheap products, services and labour. While we are no longer exposed to slave ships or slave markets, there is no escaping the fact that across the world people are still recruited, bought and sold, traded and treated as someone else’s property.

It is predicted that some 45.8 million people across the globe are trapped in a situation of modern slavery.

Recent statistics released by the National Crime Agency show that last year 3,805 potential victims of slavery from 108 different countries were identified in the UK. This represents a 17 per cent increase on the numbers identified in 2015 and these figures are thought to be the tip of the iceberg. The British government has stated that there may be as many as 13,000 victims of slavery and trafficking in the UK. The top three countries that victims originated from were Albania, the UK and Vietnam. It is not just an issue impacting foreign nationals, nor is it always linked to issues surrounding immigration. The high number of UK nationals identified show that common misconceptions don’t stack up when we look at the figures.

Modern slavery is a crime. In its simplest form, it is the illicit trade in human beings. People being turned into commodities to be bought, sold, traded and ultimately exploited for vast profit and financial gain for those doing the trading. Victims often feel trapped in the situation, which they were deceived or coerced into, and feel they cannot leave. Often a lack of local knowledge, language and a fear of law enforcement play into the hands of the exploiters and leave victims trapped.

Poverty, limited opportunities at home, lack of education, unstable social and political condi-



CAMPAIGN: Organisations such as Unseen are in an ongoing fight to end modern slavery

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tions, economic imbalances and war are some of the key drivers that contribute to people becoming victims. It is a crime that does not discriminate based upon gender, age, faith or nationality. There is no typical victim of slavery.

Modern slavery is harder to identify than its precursor, chattel slavery; the perpetrators a far cry from the slave owners of the 18th century. Every one of us and our habits, knowingly or otherwise, create the perfect environment for slavery to continue to exist in our society today.

Modern slavery encapsulates many different types of exploitation. These include but are not limited to sexual exploitation, domestic servitude, forced labour, criminal exploitation and organ removal.

Victims of slavery in the UK have been found “working” in a variety of sectors including those that historically have been under regulated; car washes, nail bars, farms, restaurants, factories, brothels, hospitality, food, care and construction industries. This is far from an exhaustive list, nor is it fair to say that every business in these sectors will be exploiting people.

Common experiences reported by victims include poor working conditions, a lack of appropriate equipment, working in an unregulated industry, incomplete payment for hours worked, failure to provide a contract, having no choice over accommodation and no control over times or type of work, threats to themselves or family members, physical abuse and psychological harm.

People who are trafficked and enslaved experience a violation of their right to freedom and their right to choice. We profit from their exploitation. The choices we make as members of the general public present us with the harsh reality that if we continue to demand cheap labour, cheap goods and cheap services we are in fact promoting the existence of slavery and exploitation within our communities. If we didn’t provide the demand, the supply would diminish dramatically, it would no longer be profitable to exploit people.

This is what we want to see across our cities, our countries and ultimately the world – a society that is aware of the impact of our consumer choices and business decisions and as a result, is selective about where and how it spends its money. It will not be an easy task and will require collaboration between law enforcement, the NGO sector, businesses, local communities and the media – but it is achievable.

If you are worried about a potential victim of modern slavery, know of a property that raises suspicion or a business you think might be using forced labour, call the Modern Slavery Helpline on 08000 121 700 to report your concerns.

The UN’s World Day Against Trafficking in Persons was marked last Sunday (30).

Unseen is a charity that works to tackle modern slavery; it offers a resettlement and outreach service for survivors of slavery and also operates the UK’s Modern Slavery Helpline. www.unseen.org/modern-slavery-is-real.

Supermarket works with charity to help victims of people trafficking

STACKING shelves or working on a factory production line may seem like ordinary jobs to some, but for trafficking victims newly hired at Co-op supermarket, just being paid a decent wage to work has been a life-changing experience.

“I have a new life now, a better one. I’ve got good managers, good colleagues, a very good working environment,” said Victor, who was trafficked from Romania.

In the first employment programme of its kind, Co-op and anti-trafficking charity CityHearts launched “Bright Future” in March, and have plans to offer work to 30 trafficking victims this year. So far, nine men and women have ac-

cepted jobs at the supermarket’s stores or warehouses.

Victor, who declined to give his full name or say how he had been trafficked and exploited, has worked at a factory with Co-op for five months.

“I love the UK, I would like to live and work here. I want to keep this job,” he said in a telephone interview through an interpreter.

In Britain, there are an estimated 13,000 victims of forced labour, sexual exploitation and domestic servitude, most of them from Albania, Nigeria, Poland and Vietnam.

Nearly 46 million people are enslaved globally, according to the 2016 Global Slavery Index.

In 2015, Britain passed tough anti-

slavery legislation introducing life sentences for traffickers and forcing companies to disclose what they are doing to ensure their supply chains are free from slavery.

Britain’s Anti-Slavery Commissioner Kevin Hyland (*right*) said more businesses should follow the supermarket’s lead and offer “the dignity of work” to trafficking victims across the country.

“Good work opportunities give them dignity and allow them to be part of the

community again. It prevents them from being re-trafficked, it prevents them from being homeless,” said Hyland.

“If we don’t improve the victims’ support, it will hinder the whole fight against modern slavery.”

Paul Gerard, Co-op’s policy and campaigns director, said British

companies had a moral obligation to help victims beyond what’s legally required under the Modern Slavery Act.

“If we could offer these people work, it will allow them to reclaim their lives and that’s the important thing,” he added.

“This should be about UK businesses stepping up and doing more to help victims of modern slavery.”

CityHeart support worker Kirsty Hart said ordinary, paid work was transformative for many of the people she helped.

“It’s just amazing to see the transformation of clients before and after, and for them to take control of their lives. It’s very powerful,” she said. (*Thomson Reuters Foundation*)

