



'Too poor for family life'



ANGER: Activists are calling for the minimum income threshold to be lowered; and (inset below) home secretary Theresa May

MOST BRITONS DON'T QUALIFY TO SPONSOR NON-EU SPOUSE

by NADEEM BADSHAH

CAMPAIGNERS have criticised the government after new figures revealed that nearly half of Britons do not earn enough to meet rules on bringing a spouse over from south Asia.

People in the UK have to earn at least £18,600 to sponsor their partner to enter the country from outside the European Union.

A new report revealed that in 2015, 41 per cent of British citizens earned less than the minimum income threshold.

Fifty-five per cent of women had a salary less than £18,600 compared to 27 per cent of men, the Migration Observatory said. And 53 per cent of 20-29 year-olds would not meet the requirement, compared to 36 per cent of people aged 46 to 60.

Amit Kapadia, executive director of the Highly Skilled Migrant Programme Forum, told *Eastern Eye* families are being broken up by the regulations. It is estimated that 15,000 children in the UK are growing up without a parent as a result of the rules.

"The Migration Observatory report yet again confirm the discriminatory nature of the immigration rules," Kapadia said.

"The impact of the income threshold is disproportionate on ethnic minorities and mostly women, and prohibits them from leading a family life."

The government introduced the Family Migration Rules in July 2012. The threshold is higher for those who are sponsoring children and the income of the British person's overseas partner does not count.

Amjad Malik, a solicitor who is vice-chair of the Association of Pakistani Lawyers, thinks the threshold should be changed to around £12,000 a year.

He told *Eastern Eye*: "Migrants living under meagre circumstances will struggle to get married in their own time here, and those with disabilities will suffer further."

"Money should not be the factor to drive and dictate marriage. Marriage as an institution

on must be respected and the evil of 'forced marriages' must be rooted out by genuine marriages with fair consent.

"We urge the secretary of state to bring the limit to a reasonable salary scale of around £12,000."

The Home Office has estimated that between 13,600 and 17,800 fewer people would be prevented from coming to the UK each year due to the income threshold.

Around 4,000 applications were put on hold due to failure to meet the rules in 2013 and 2014.

Saira Grant, chief executive of the Joint Council for the Welfare of Immigrants charity, said: "You have to choose between remaining with your partner or being exiled from your country."

"Children are being forced to grow up 'in broken homes' with serious consequences for their emotional and mental health."

"If the income of the foreign partner was taken into account, this would greatly help families to meet the rules and be together."

The government sparked outrage after announcing that people who come to work in Britain from outside the EU from April will be deported after five years if they fail to show they are earning more than £35,000.

The argument over whether the rules breach people's human rights will be heard in the supreme court in London on February 22.

Don Flynn, director of the Migrants' Rights Network, said the government was advised by its Migration Advisory Committee that 40 per cent of applications of spouses came from Bangladesh and Pakistan.

He said: "Given the concentration of people from these communities in low-income occupations, it was predictable the requirement would severely damage the prospects many people had for a family life in the UK."

Immigration minister James Brokenshire said: "We firmly believe in creating an immigration system which is fair to those here legally but firm with those who try to break the rules."

Sarwar may be sued by sibling

THE brother of former Labour MP Mohammad Sarwar is seeking legal advice over statements made in the latter's autobiography.

Mohammed Ramzan said he felt "betrayed" by comments in the book about his business record.

Sarwar, who made his money in the cash and carry business, released his memoirs *My Remarkable Journey - The Autobiography Of Britain's First Muslim MP* last month.

Ramzan said: "His book is full of lies. He has made me out to be a 'failure' in our early business life despite the fact that I started the cash and carry business and was the driving force behind our achievements."

A spokesman for Sarwar said: "Mohammad Sarwar stands by the entire contents of his autobiography, which include a recognition of the immense contribution his brother made to their successful business."

Policeman guilty of secret filming

A POLICEMAN is facing jail after secretly filming himself having sex with prostitutes for over two years.

Irshad Kamal, 47, recorded himself with the women between 2010 and 2012 without telling them.

He was arrested when a sex worker posted allegations that she was attacked by him on a website which shames suspected dangerous customers. Kamal was later cleared of assault charges.

Officers found the videos during a search of the house which he shared with his mother and sister in Wandsworth, London.

Kamal admitted three counts of voyeurism at Southwark crown court in London last week.

Khan's plan for skills training

SADIQ KHAN has announced plans to enrol more apprentices in London if he is elected mayor.

The Labour MP said he would set up a Skills For Londoners scheme, which would team up with business, educational institutions and boroughs to train workers.

Khan worked as an 18-year-old sales assistant in the Peter Jones store in the capital. He said the construction of thousands of homes through City Hall would be used to create apprenticeships.

He said: "Londoners are struggling to get high-quality apprenticeships or a first job that is secure and pays a good wage."

"Building more homes in London is a huge opportunity to provide skills and employment for young people living locally."

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