

# A week that may change the world

## POLITICS OF CLIMATE CHANGE



SALEEMUL HUQ

I have just returned from spending an exhilarating and exhausting week in New York where I was one of the thirty-eight representatives from global civil society invited to attend the UN Climate Summit at the invitation of the Secretary General Ban Ki Moon. On Saturday I was invited to spend the afternoon in South Bronx with the South Bronx Unite community of people affected by Hurricane Sandy who are still struggling for environmental justice for the vulnerable communities. Their spirit of community was truly humbling and their music and street theatre was amazing. I was struck by how similar the struggles of the community of the South Bronx were to communities in Bangladesh. The same evening I was invited to speak to the Bangladeshi community in the Jackson Heights part of Queens at an event organised by the Bangladesh Environmental Network who are very active in the New York area.

The next day, Sunday, I joined the Peoples Climate March with the Bangladeshis under the BEN banner who were in turn part of the South Asian groups who were given the privilege by the March organisers of being up at the front of the march among the "Front Line Communities." It was also nice to be joined by a number of alumni of the International Centre for Climate Change and Development who live in the New York area and who

brought an ICCCAD banner to join the march.

It was by far the most exhilarating experience I have had as I marched with the South Asians from Bangladesh, India, Sri Lanka, Nepal, Pakistan and Bhutan who had come not just from New York but from across the USA, including California. We marched together to the fantastic rhythm of the contingent of Sikh drummers (indeed the drums are still ringing in my ears).

On Monday, as the heads of government and their official delegations started to arrive, I donned my suit and tie and went to brief some of the ministers and heads of delegation from the Least Developed Countries (LDC) including the ministers of Bangladesh, the Gambia, Nepal (who chair the LDC Group in the UNFCCC) and Benin (who chair the LDC Group in the SDG negotiations).

Finally, on Tuesday the official Climate Summit started in the United Nations General Assembly hall with an opening ceremony with speeches from the UN Secretary General Ban Ki Moon, the chair of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change Dr. R.K. Pachauri, and the actor and newly appointed UN Special Envoy on climate change Leonardo Di Caprio. However, the entire assembly came to a standing ovation (something that rarely happens in that location) in response to a moving poem delivered by the poet Ms. Kathy Jetlin-Kijiner from the Marshall Islands to her newly born daughter (who also joined her on the podium at the end).

Then the heads of governments from over a hundred countries, including President Obama from the United States of America, Francois Hollande from France and many others, made their individual four-minute speeches each where they

described what they were doing to combat climate change and what more they were prepared to do. Many of the heads of government echoed the demands for action from the Peoples Climate March from two days ago and some of them made some significant promises. Amongst the most important was the commitment from both the USA and China as the two biggest emitters of Greenhouse Gases to take ambitious actions, as well as a pledge from France to provide \$1 billion towards tackling climate change in developing countries.

From my perspective, I was very pleased to see the heads of government from the LDCs, including Bangladesh, Nepal, Ethiopia, the Gambia, Benin and many others, stress the fact that the LDCs, while the most vulnerable and poorest countries are actually leading the world on tackling climate change impacts at home in every country. Thus changing the narrative of the LDCs from passive victims to proactive leaders for actions to tackle climate change.

After the heads of government had given their speeches a number of civil society groups and business leaders also made pledges for actions to tackle climate change. Then there were a number of parallel sessions on different themes, including science, energy, forestry, agriculture, transport, finance and voices from front line vulnerable communities. I attended the sessions on science and voices from the frontline communities.

As I took a taxi to the airport to catch my flight out of JFK airport, I started talking to the taxi driver, Shafiq, who turned out to be from Dhaka, Bangladesh and had been in living in Jackson Heights neighbourhood of New York for eight years. He told me about his experiences during hurricane Sandy and

how the experiences were so similar between Bangladesh and New York in dealing with natural disasters like hurricanes and cyclones.

On reflection, I have three main impressions from the past week in New York.

Firstly, that the citizens from all over the world, with demonstrations in over two hundred cities around the world and with over 300,000 in New York, it was a truly global coming together on the need to take climate change seriously. I was also struck by the similarities between people from both rich and poor countries.

Secondly, the heads of government who gave speeches at the official Climate Summit all recognised this demand for positive actions and responded, at least rhetorically. They will need to channel their rhetoric into the climate change negotiations under the UNFCCC where countries will meet in Lima, Peru in December this year and prepare a new global treaty in Paris, France, in December 2015.

Thirdly the momentum for the global investment community to start the ball rolling on divestment from fossil fuel based companies and invest in clean energy companies has started to roll and will gain momentum in time.

So I think that we may have achieved a turning point this week in New York around the world in accepting the magnitude of the climate change problem and also how to link bottom up efforts from all citizens with top down decisions by heads of government. The proof of the pudding will be seen in Paris in December 2015.

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## Australia's stand on terrorism and foreign fighters

GREG WILCOCK

A column in these pages on September 24 asserted that Australia's proposed counter-terrorism legislation is 'anti-Muslim'.

That is wrong. Let's be clear: the Australian government is acting to disrupt a growing terrorist threat so Australians of all backgrounds remain free to go about their lives in safety.

ISIL and similar terrorist organisations have plainly, violently and repeatedly demonstrated the international danger they pose. Earlier this week ISIL leaders called on supporters to kill people in a number of countries including Australia.

This incitement echoes statements by such groups going back years. It underlines their enduring hostility to our values: values shared by much of the international community, and embraced by millions of migrants to Australia from dozens of countries for generations.

The difference we see in ISIL is the growing threat its foreign fighters pose to their countries of origin. About 80 nations have citizens fighting with ISIL. We assess that about 60 Australians are on the ground fighting in Iraq and Syria and about 100 more are providing funding and facilitation.

We must face this threat squarely, alongside other countries facing the same threat. As the gathering international response of ISIL demonstrates, many countries have come to the judgment that we are in this together. This is certainly Australia's view.

The Australian government's proposed counter-terrorism legislation will better enable us to prevent and disrupt terrorist

threats, by creating a new offence of entering or remaining in, without a legitimate purpose, a declared area overseas where listed terrorist organisations are engaging in hostile activities.

This new measure would not prevent a person from travelling to a declared area for a legitimate purpose. Legitimate purposes include providing humanitarian aid, performing official government of UN duties, visiting family, working as a professional journalist, and appearing before a court.

Nor would this new measure, as some suggest, reverse the onus of proof. Rather, it would create a new offence for a person to intentionally enter a declared area without good reason. Guilt for this offence would not be presumed. It would be for the prosecution to disprove any evidence of legitimate purposes.

This work is not about targeting any one community. It's not about religion, it's not about what people wear -- it's about dealing with a criminal threat.

As we move forward with new legislation, we also recognise that the strongest defence against violent extremism lies within the Australian community itself. The Australian government will do all it can to support leaders in the community play a critical role in turning people away from violent extremism.

The great majority of Australians see themselves as committed members of Australia's successful, forward-looking multicultural society. That being who we are -- and like nations taking a common stand against terrorism -- the great majority of Australians see that we are in this together.

The writer is Australian High Commissioner to Bangladesh.

# Surging crime and rule of corruption

## BITTER TRUTH



MD. ASADULLAH KHAN

Locals nabbed Jacky and handed him over to police but Rana made good his escape.

Extortionists in the past week at Rampura area in the city snatched Tk. 17 lakh from a money exchanger, shooting his son dead on the spot and the father grievously injured close to Rampura thana. It won't be enough to describe the situation in the country as just sickening.

The whole country is being held hostage in the hands of a limited number of criminals. Fed up with increasing incidence of hijacking, extortion, robbery, looting and even raping of minor girls that brought no response from the law enforcement agencies, people at large and

their political masters further tainted the administration.

Disgust, or more appropriately hatred, was probably the overwhelming feeling in the past months because of the sickening news of scams being unearthed with each passing day. Shocking lapses of the concerned agencies and unforgivable bad governance now see Bangladesh sliding into distress zone, causing heavy losses, hitting development targets and resulting in deaths, diseases and lost income.

Rhetoric can't fill the stomach. What the average people care about is governance, the sort of governance that would make a real difference to their life. Successive governments

decay, financial scam, political stagnation, accumulation of wealth in some unscrupulous hands, adulteration of foodstuffs, and politicisation of the administration. The present government, it seems, will walk out not like heroes in the cause of the people, but like one betrayed, not by the people but by its partners and sycophants.

Things could get better if the government understood the importance of good governance, if in their speeches in meetings, and before the media, they had articulated exactly what they had planned to do about the things that went wrong. Instead, what we got were polemics and platitudes and political alliances with parties of diverse ideologies shamefully crafted into a marriage of convenience, regardless of their inglorious records during the Liberation War.

But undeniably true, there was and there is stability in the chair, but there are no stirrings of change in the country. Despite the PM being in permanent national focus, there seems to be hardly any agenda, or any vision and or action other than promises, and if there is any agenda or vision, there is hardly any strong initiative to implement that mission. The only promise or agenda that is being realised is a chance for exploiters, extortionists and corrupt officials and political mastans to have a field day. The PM must be knowing about what is going on but she appears incapable of taking action against officials and the closest associates of the ruling alliance who are so openly insubordinate and brazenly corrupt.

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look at the countries where Lèse-majesté laws still exist. In 2007, a 47 year old man was given a 1 week imprisonment for making sexually derogatory comments on Queen Beatrix of Netherlands.

But the bigger question is about the scope of the law. With nothing to pinpoint what the terms vulgar or defamation mean, we might as well be living in a state with no freedom of speech. If I write a book criticising political figures and post it on the internet, I can be prosecuted under the ICT amendment.

Jyotirmoy Barua, an advocate of the Supreme Court, has been critical of the law since it was passed. His concerns include the ambiguous nature of the law, the unaccountability and scope for abuse, the conflicts the law has with other laws and, of course, the possibility of cyber crimes increasing in the digital world as it is easy to pose as someone else if you want to harm them. He rightly termed the law as subversive to open thought.

Laws such as the ICT Amendment are traps ready to clamp down upon any form of free thought. The youth in question is just one example -- a government which cannot bear criticism and clamps down on satires and parodies cannot in any way call itself democratic and open to free speech. The dangers of free speech will always be there, and the laws need to be able to address what is libel and what constitutes freedom of thought. But at its current form, the ICT Amendment is no more than a device for the government to subvert and control information. Freedom of speech can rest in peace as our leaders attempt to choke criticism and maintain a pure, regal persona.

The writer is an online-journalist of The Daily Star.

# Off with their heads

MOYUKH MAHTAB

UNDER the Lèse-majesté laws, any form of derogatory comment or libel against monarchs or states was considered treason. As absolute monarchies gave way to modern states, this came to be gradually considered as less of a crime. Though certain forms of Lèse-majesté exist now in some countries, it is applied only in serious libel cases. It is inconceivable to imagine the US judiciary system prosecuting viral YouTube channels for making fun of President Obama before elections. The internet swarms with parodies, satires, creative criticism in the form of memes about heads of states from Putin to Obama.

Not so in Bangladesh though. Last Wednesday, a youth from Khulna was awarded a 7 year jail sentence for writing a satirical song on Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. With no Lèse-majesté law available in Bangladesh, the authorities nailed him with the new ICT law. With all the talk of freedom of speech and democracy while at the same time cracking down on something as trivial as this, one wonders what comes next. Are newspapers going to be clamped down because they publish cartoons satirising political situations?

The ICT Amendment Law was passed in 2013, a law which allows the police to arrest without a warrant anyone who violates the law. These include defamation and posting and sharing of vulgar data, according to Article 57 (1), both of which are very broad, ambiguous terms. Was there something vulgar about the satirised song? And if there was, is that reason enough to hand out a 7 year jail penalty?

In comparison, we can take a

The whole country is being held hostage in the hands of a limited number of criminals. Fed up with increasing incidence of hijacking, extortion, robbery, looting and even raping of minor girls that brought no response from the law enforcement agencies, people at large and in some cases, victims themselves, out of pent up anger took law into their own hands.

There is no denying that the present crisis and disorder in the society stem from lack of political leadership and a moral vacuum. If the highest executives in the government, the secretaries in the ministries, can resort to fraudulent means for taking freedom fighter's certificates for getting extension in service without ever participating in the freedom struggle, what ethical standard and morality can we expect from the common man? The prolonged inaction of the executive on all such issues by treating the enforcement agencies as poodles of

QUOTABLE Quote

Everything we see hides another thing, we always want to see what is hidden by what we see.

Rene Magritte

CROSSWORD by Thomas Joseph

ACROSS

1 Stroked

7 Cote cries

11 Sigh, say

12 Pay to play

13 Like flypaper

14 Enthralled

15 Arduous journeys

16 Sire

17 Clumsy ones

18 Ranch pen

19 Ibsen's home

21 Great serve

22 "I have no idea!"

25 Orchestra's place

26 Wild about

27 Copter parts

29 Risqué

33 Golf bag group

34 Paris subway

35 Newborn's need

36 Got on the horn

37 Fed

38 Decorative

39 Dune makeup

40 Fez feature

DOWN

1 Trattoria sauce

2 Superfluous

3 Shoplifter, e.g.

4 Appends

5 Fraternal group

6 Susan of "L.A. Law"

7 Wearing less

8 Servant for taverns, e.g.

9 Tranquil

10 Reach an agreement

16 Increase

18 Big families

20 Roils

22 Museum display

23 Footrest

24 Seoul brothers?

25 Darkroom output

28 Without letup

30 Travel aid

31 Minotaur's home

32 Alpine trill

34 Sorvino of "Mimic"

36 Period

CRYPTOQUOTE

UZMH QN QH UMD JMHD ..... UZB QSLPSHPA HPJZSBCBXV?..... UBTC A HZPV ZMLP HL DZBUD DHMYQXSX YTWWPY DKTPME HBVD? -ABTXCMD JBTOCMSA

Yesterday's CRYPTOQUOTE: THERE IS NO FUTURE IN ANY JOB. THE FUTURE LIES IN THE MAN WHO HOLDS THE JOB. -GEORGE CRANE

Yesterday's answer

P	E	S	T	S	S	E	R	B	S
I	N	P	U	T	A	V	A	I	L
S	T	A	G	E	M	A	D	G	E
T	I	C	E	B	B	I	C	E	
O	R	E	P	E	A	O	A	T	
L	E	S	S	E	N	S	S	T	S
T	O	N	I	G	H	T			
D	R	A	T	C	R	E	A	S	E
R	A	T	V	I	E	T	E	L	
A	M	I	O	N	I	D	A		
W	O	O	D	S	A	B	O	U	T
E	N	N	U	I	D	A	N	C	E
R	E	S	E	T	E	A	S	E	D

A XYDLBAAXR is LONGFELLOW

One letter stands for another. In this sample, A is used for the three L's, X for the two O's, etc. Single letters, apostrophes, the length and formation of the words are all hints. Each day the code letters are different.

BEETLE BAILEY by Mort Walker

HENRY by Don Trachte