

Shot for protesting injustice

We condemn the police brutality

WE are shocked and appalled that the police opened fire at protesters in Kalihati upazila of Tangail on Friday, killing at least three locals as a clash ensued between the demonstrators and law enforcers. Another 32, 29 of whom were protesters, were injured during the skirmish; two locals wounded by gunshots are currently fighting for their lives.

The incident occurred when hundreds of people from several villages were marching towards Kalihati police station to demand justice for the brutal torture of a woman and her son by a local man.

Rather than assure the protesters that the abhorrent incident would be investigated and justice served, why did the police charge upon them, first with batons and teargas shells, and then, as demonstrators turned rowdy, fire 60-65 rounds? Even if we are to assume that the protesters were acting in an aggressive manner, such excessive use of force and violence against ordinary citizens cannot, in any way, be justified in a democratic state. Are we to believe there were no other means of crowd control? Human lives cannot be so disposable to those entrusted with the duty to protect us.

The police have denied responsibility for the deaths, claiming that the victims died when the protesters clashed with each other. We demand that a fair and independent investigation be carried out, and exemplary action taken against those found guilty for killing civilians who were exercising their constitutional right to assemble.

Three-wheelers on highways

Why ban not enforced?

AFTER much fanfare, authorities have apparently abandoned the idea of getting slow moving three-wheelers off the highways. This comes at a time when Eid-ul-Azha is around the corner and thousands of people will be rushing to get to their home districts. It is during times like these that the highways see the highest number of casualties as large public transports vie with one another to get to their destinations. It is our apprehension that the prevalence of three-wheelers and other slow moving transports like power tillers and bull carts will inevitably lead to accidents and loss of life in the run up to the annual festival.

Despite claims by law enforcers to the contrary, such unauthorised vehicles have been spotted plying the Kashinathpur-Pabna-Dashuria route in abundance. While we understand the need for people to move around with ease, public safety should be the foremost on our minds. It is not fathomable how accidents can be avoided when both high-speed and low-speed vehicles occupy the same stretch of highway. That said, it is equally understandable that without offering any viable alternative for people and goods to move from one point to another, it will be very difficult for law enforcers to implement the ban that was imposed on August 1.

As the High Court has ruled that unauthorised and slow-moving vehicles have to be taken off the highways, it falls upon the police to implement it. Though we sympathise with the peoples' plight of not availing these vehicles, law enforcers must implement the Court's directive.

COMMENTS

"Human rights get a boost" (September 16, 2015)

Noor Fatima

A historic decision taken by HC. Congratulations to the apex court!

"Discrimination against kids" (September 16, 2015)

Esha Aurora

We're debilitating middle class parents by imposing a cost on education that is essentially saying that learning English is a luxury good. Education shouldn't be considered a luxury commodity even if two general mediums of instruction exist.

Nurul Alam Anik

We need a common medium for everyone. We need a better education system. Having different mediums create social divisions and unnecessary arguments like this.

Rania Ahmed

No one deserves to pay VAT for any sort of education.

Faisal Zakaria

It does not matter what the medium of someone's education is, as long as knowledge is imparted. Education is a basic right that should be provided for free by the government.

Munira Sharmin

If VAT is not payable for higher education, then how on earth can it be payable for basic education?

Rezwanur Rahman

VAT should be exempted from all educational institutions.

RAKIB AVI and ANIKA NOOR

THE global fight against extreme poverty had been declared concurrently with the declaration of the Millennium Development Goals (MDG), when world leaders committed to halve the number of people living below the poverty line. The MDGs were instrumental in mobilising large-scale movements against some of the most pressing problems that marred the world. Extreme poverty was one of them. With close to 40 percent of the world population living below the poverty line in 1990, the base year for MDG data calculation, the target to halve the number was one of the most ambitious goals taken up by the world up until then.

Poverty and all its concepts can be hard to grasp for someone who has never experienced it first-hand. Still, let us try to figure out what we describe as poverty. According to World Bank, people living on or under USD 1.25 per day are considered poor. That is less than the amount of one meal of an average middle class person living in Dhaka city.

The nature of poverty is such that it cannot be measured by numbers alone. Global trends show that we are winning the fight against extreme poverty with flying colours, as the number of people living in extreme poverty has declined by more than half, falling from 1.9 billion in 1990 to 836 million 2015, thereby achieving the MDG target. However, close to a billion people are still living in extreme poverty – some of them in ultra poverty (people who are living as low as under USD 0.80 a day). The hardest thing to grasp here is that extreme poverty is so much more than these numbers; it is a denial of basic freedom and human dignity. People living in extreme poverty have to make impossible choices everyday between food, medicine, education and housing.

What about a solution?

After years of testing different combinations of government programmes and donor support, BRAC started targeting the ultra poor programme in 2002, with a unique solution to tackle ultra poverty. A set of carefully sequenced and tailored series of interventions were designed to build a ladder for the ultra poor. The

services include asset transfer, consumption stipend, healthcare, social integration, livelihood development training and hands-on coaching for 24 months to build confidence and graduate them out of ultra poverty. The results have been astonishing – 96 percent of the people who were into the programme had remained outside the zone of ultra poverty even four years after the programme had ended. Most of them became mainstream microfinance clients, with easier access to finance and very much on the trajectory out of poverty.

A very relevant question can be asked at this point: would this model work anywhere else in the world? This question was raised and tested by the Consultative

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Group for Assisting Poor (CGAP), a World Bank organisation, and Ford Foundation in 2005. CGAP and Ford Foundation ran a series of 10 pilots in eight different countries to test the adaptability of the graduation model. CGAP-Ford Foundation reported that after 18-36 months of running their versions of the programme, 75 to 98 percent participants met the graduation criteria. Programme implementation-wise, these numbers are quite successful. BRAC itself has taken this model elsewhere in the form of providing technical assistance to Haiti, Yemen, India, Pakistan and Afghanistan.

PROJECT ■ SYNDICATE

Is 70 too old for the UN?

AWAKENING INDIA



SHASHI THAROOR

AS world leaders prepare to gather next week at the United Nations in New York to ratify the new Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and commemorate the UN's 70th anniversary, for

many a fundamental question has become inescapable. In the face of growing global disorder – including turmoil in the Middle East, waves of migrants flooding into Europe, and China's unilateral moves to enforce its territorial claims – does the UN have a future?

Grounds for pessimism are undeniable. Conflicts rage on, seemingly unaffected by upholders of world order. Despite more than two decades of talk, the Security Council's permanent membership (China, France, Russia, the United Kingdom, and the United States) still reflects the geopolitical realities of 1945, not 2015. Denied accommodation in the Bretton Woods institutions (the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund) commensurate with its economic clout, China has established its own alternatives, which other countries have flocked to join. The G-20 seems more representative than the Security Council – and more imbued with common purpose.

Yet the UN should not be written off. It continues to serve a vital purpose, and its history suggests that it can be revitalised to meet the needs of the 21st century.

The UN began, in 1945, as a vision shared by the leaders of the victorious Allies, who were determined to ensure that the second half of the 20th century did not play out like the first half. After two world wars, countless civil wars, brutal dictatorships, mass expulsions of populations, and the horrors of the Holocaust and Hiroshima, "never again" was not just a slogan: the alternative was too apocalyptic to

contemplate.

To this end, the Allies sought an alternative to the balance-of-power politics that had wreaked such havoc in the preceding five decades. Their idea – now called "global governance" – was to create an institutional architecture that could foster international cooperation, elaborate consensual global norms, and establish predictable, universally applicable rules, to the benefit of all.

The hope that many placed in the UN Charter was soon dashed by the onset of the Cold War. And yet global statesmen made good use of the new organisation as a forum to contain superpower tensions.



Peacekeeping missions, not even mentioned in the Charter, were devised to contain conflicts around the world, and to prevent them from igniting a superpower conflagration. Thanks to the UN, World War III never happened.

Moreover, the UN's contribution to peace during the Cold War is not the whole story. Its decolonisation efforts freed millions from the yoke of imperialist oppression. Economic and social development rose to the top of its agenda.

As global governance has evolved, the UN system has become the port of call for innumerable "problems without

passports": the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, the degradation of our common environment, epidemics, war crimes, and mass migration. Such problems require solutions without passports, because no country or group of countries can solve them alone.

With universality comes legitimacy. Because all countries are members, the UN enjoys a global standing that gives its decisions and actions a degree of authority that no individual government enjoys beyond its own borders.

The binary international order of the Cold War is long gone. Instead, the metaphor for today's globalised world is

diseases, illegal drugs, and weapons of mass destruction, and to promote human rights, democracy, and development.

The UN has not fully succeeded in turning recognition into reality. But at its best and its worst, the UN is a mirror of the world. As the legendary Secretary-General Dag Hammarskjöld famously put it, "The United Nations was not created to take mankind to heaven, but to save humanity from hell."

I believe strongly that the UN needs reform, not because it has failed, but because it has succeeded enough to be worth investing in. As the agreement on the SDGs demonstrates, there is much that can be accomplished with the UN as the lynchpin of our system of global governance.

Moreover, the UN has proved a remarkably adaptable organisation; it would not have survived so long if it was not. While it must be reformed to accommodate today's world, all that is needed is a smidgen of the statesmanship shown seven decades ago, when world leaders subordinated their immediate short-term interests to a long-term vision of the kind of world they wanted their children to inhabit.

The UN remains the source of laws and norms that countries negotiate together and agree to uphold as the "rules of the road." And it remains the pre-eminent forum where sovereign states can come together to share burdens, address shared problems, and seize common opportunities.

In other words, the UN's foundations, laid down in 1945, remain strong. But they must be buttressed if they are to withstand the ongoing shifts in countries' strategic weight. As the UN turns 70, it is time to reaffirm its founders' guiding vision – a vision born of devastation that remains a source of universal hope for a better world.

The writer, a former UN under-secretary-general and former Indian Minister of State for Human Resource Development and Minister of State for External Affairs, is currently an MP for the Indian National Congress and Chairman of the Parliamentary Standing Committee on External Affairs.

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(Exclusive to The Daily Star)

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

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Pay the salary and bonus of RMG workers

Eid-ul-Azha is just around the corner and it's very sad that some garment workers haven't gotten their due salary and bonus. How will they celebrate Eid with an empty pocket? It is unfortunate that they have to toil from dawn to dusk for a mere pittance. The owners of the garment factories are exploiting cheap labour. No one is there to pay heed to the miseries of the RMG workers.

We hope that these factory owners will pay the workers before Eid.

Zabed Wali
Chittagong

Refugee crisis

It is a mistake to think that the migration crisis -- mainly among the people of Iraq, Libya and Syria -- is a result of contemporary wars in these countries. The superpowers who claim that there is a lack of democratic values among these Middle Eastern countries should be held responsible for the violence in these civil wars. All this interference has caused more civil wars, killings, casualties, etc. and forced ordinary people to flee these countries and take refuge in European and North American countries.

76,021 people were killed and 1, 91,000 people were wounded in the civil war in Syria in 2014. The superpowers are talking about world peace but their actions prove otherwise because they are the ones who have been selling arms and colonising others' land for resources. If they had not imposed wars on the people, the Middle East could have been in different shape and people would not have been displaced from their homes.

Subrid Mahmood Pusban
Sunnydale School