

Three years after Ramu

Why the delay in catching the culprits?

IT is disheartening that three years after the horrific attacks on Buddhist homes and places of worship in Ramu, Cox's Bazar, little progress has been made in terms of meting out justice to the perpetrators. The attack left 12 pagodas and 50 houses completely destroyed. The government has promptly restored the destroyed pagodas, which is commendable but that alone cannot restore the confidence of the Buddhist community of the locality.

Despite three probes ordered by the HC following two public interest writ petitions filed by two Supreme Court lawyers, no headway has been made due to technicalities. Meanwhile the reluctance of witnesses to appear in court has prevented the lower courts of Cox's Bazar to start trial proceedings in the cases filed after the vicious attacks.

We acknowledge that bottlenecks in the legal system accounts for the general delay in cases to be disposed of. But the Ramu tragedy is a special case that needs special attention from the authorities as it is related to the security concerns of a minority community and also because it has denigrated our image to the rest of the world.

The three probes have found officials in the local administration, intelligence and law enforcement agencies to be responsible for their failure to prevent the mayhem. No action has yet been taken against them. Law enforcers had arrested 483 people in connection with the incident but almost all of them are out on bail.

We urge the government to step in to make sure that the witnesses are not intimidated into refusing to testify and all those who were responsible, for the atrocious attacks, are brought to book. This is the least that the government can do to ensure the rights of the minorities.

Materialisation of a dream

School for the underprivileged

IT is not every day we get to hear a story like this. Bijoy Rahul Paul, whose father is a bicycle mechanic and mother works in a tea garden, was born into a life of hardship and had to drop out of secondary school due to poverty. Yet a decade on, we witness Paul running a community school for the underprivileged children of tea workers, so that they may never have to interrupt studies because money was in short supply. His journey to finish school was no mean feat. Having had to put in back breaking work for two years just to collect fees for SSC and then wait another four years to save up for HSC, his story is one of resolve and perseverance that stands apart from the norm.

Paul worked two jobs – one in the tea estate where his mother was employed and the other meant putting in hours daily to repair bicycles; this rigorous regime prepped him both physically and mentally to do what needed to be done to fulfil his dream of completing his education. Coming from a family where three square meals were not always guaranteed, we salute this young warrior who is now employed as a Mutation-cum-Certificate Assistant employed by the government.

The Chhota Dhamai Ideal Academy was set up in January, 2011 where some 60 children now study. The operational expenditure of the school comes out of his salary, as do the stipends for meritorious students. We applaud his efforts in achieving the unthinkable and hope that he and his institution will receive some recognition for making "education for all" a reality for the downtrodden in society.

GOALS TO TRANSFORM THE WORLD

BADIUL ALAM MAJUMDAR

ON September 25, 2015, world leaders adopted a resolution entitled 'Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development'. The agenda is a "comprehensive, far-reaching and people-centred set of universal and transformative goals and targets" – now referred to as the Global Goals. It seeks to strengthen universal peace, free humanity from poverty and heal our planet. The agenda's bold and ambitious steps are intended to shift the world to a sustainable and resilient path, causing lives of all to profoundly improve and our world to transform for the better. The agenda will come into effect on January 1, 2016, replacing the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

The 2030 Agenda, which has 17 goals for all people, everywhere, includes: (1) Ending poverty; (2) Ending hunger; (3) Ensuring healthy lives and promote well-being; (4) Ensuring inclusive and equitable quality education and life-long learning; (5) Achieving gender equality and empower all women and girls; (6) Ensuring availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation; (7) Ensuring access to affordable, reliable, sustainable, and modern energy; (8) Promoting sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work; (9) Building resilient infrastructure, inclusive and sustainable industrialisation and innovation; (10) Reducing inequality within and among countries; (11) Making cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable; (12) Ensuring sustainable consumption and production patterns; (13) Taking urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts; (14) Conserving and sustainably using oceans, seas and

marine resources; (15) Protecting, restoring and promoting sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, forests to combat desertification, and halt and reverse land degradation and biodiversity loss; (16) Promoting peaceful and inclusive societies, access to justice and effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels; (17) Strengthening means of implementation and a revitalised global partnership for sustainable development.

The 2030 Agenda differs from the MDGs significantly. First, the MDGs were designed to move us 'half way' to ending hunger and poverty, whereas the 2030 Agenda is intended to fully solve these problems.

Second, the 2030 Agenda is universal. It applies to people of all countries from both developed and developing nations. The intention is to leave no one behind because of her or his gender, age, disability, income, geography, ethnicity or other status.

Third, the 2030 Agenda promotes integrated development in social, economic and environmental issues. They address, among others, issues relating to democracy, plurality, accountability, violence, peace, equity and climate change.

Fourth, as violence and poverty tend to go hand in hand, peace building and promoting social harmony are critical to the success of ending hunger and poverty. The 2030 Agenda recognises this need, and the "factors which give rise to violence, insecurity and injustice, such as inequality, corruption, poor governance and illicit financial and arms flows, are addressed in the Agenda."

Fifth, the MDGs focused more on numerical targets, such as high enrollment rates in education, while the 2030 Agenda focuses on quality of education and learning, and recognises the role of education in achieving a more humane and peaceful world.

Sixth, one of the most distinguishing features of the new agenda is that it calls for "inclusive societies that provide equal access to justice and that are based on respect for human rights ... rule of law and good governance at all levels and on transparent, effective and accountable institutions." In many countries, good and effective governance, or lack thereof, have now become the most important 'development challenge'. In fact, lack of democratic, accountable and inclusive governance are threatening the status quo and stimulating violent extremism to take deep roots in many societies.

Seventh, unlike the MDGs, the 2030 Agenda calls for close monitoring of results, which will require rigorous and regular reviews of progress at the sub-national, national, regional and global levels. Such reviews are to be inclusive, transparent, gender-sensitive, respectful of human rights and have a particular focus on the poorest and most vulnerable people. The data to be used must be of high quality, accessible, timely, reliable and disaggregated. These reviews are intended to ensure accountability of authorities to the citizens.

Finally, although MDGs were to be largely financed by foreign aid, which did not materialise, each country will have the primary responsibility for mobilising resources through inclusive growth, supported by global partnership in the areas of capacity building, technology transfer and international trade. The global engagement for the 2030 Agenda will also involve "bringing together Governments, the private sector, civil society, the United Nations system and other actors in mobilizing all available resources."

The new Agenda is unique in that it is agreed upon by all stakeholders, while the MDGs were drafted by a group of experts. The 2030 Agenda has been shaped by the most participatory

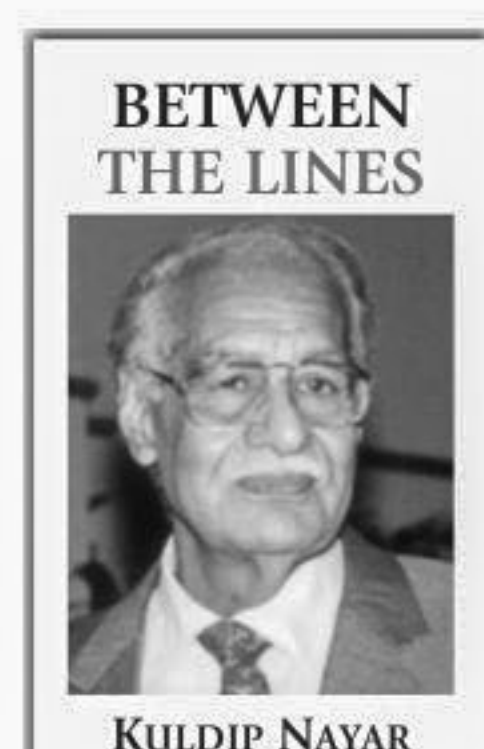
process in UN history, involving millions of global citizens, civil society and member states over a span of three years. Thus, it is not an imposed agenda, rather it is a country-owned global commitment. In fact, it is an agenda of the people, by the people, and for the people. The people will also have to be the primary actors for their implementation. Governments of member states will obviously have to demonstrate political will for catalysing citizen involvement.

Although the new agenda is built upon the experiences of the MDGs, its significance is that it goes beyond and seeks to complete the unfinished tasks of the MDGs, while setting out economic, social and environmental goals that are comprehensive, integrated and indivisible.

The indivisibility, inter-linkages and integrated nature of the goals and targets of the new agenda have far-reaching implications, especially for its implementation. The 2030 Agenda cannot be implemented with a segmented or 'siloed' approach. They cannot be achieved by merely implementing projects on education, health and so on, without addressing all the challenges faced by a community, including peace building, state building, human rights and good governance. This will obviously require a holistic, bottom-up 'community-led development' approach, encompassing a sustained process that restores women, men and youth in taking control over their own lives. Such a process will require citizens to be active agents of change, grassroots organisations letting voices be heard, creation of vibrant, inclusive economies, and an effective, accountable local government system playing catalytic roles.

The writer is Global Vice President and Country Director, The Hunger Project-Bangladesh.

Reservations sans development



BETWEEN THE LINES

KULDEEP NAYYAR

LEADERS of different communities had so much confidence in the fairness of the country, when it won freedom, that none of them wanted reservations. The Muslim leaders rejected the then Home Minister Sardar Patel's offer of a 15 percent quota in government jobs and education institutions. Their argument was that reservations fostered a parochial thinking. The country had paid an

enormous price in the shape of partition for the communal electorate introduced by the British.

Law Minister B.R. Ambedkar, himself a Dalit, said that his community did not want to walk with the help of crutches all their lives. After a lot of pressure, Ambedkar was persuaded to accept reservations for the scheduled castes and tribes for 10 years. Little did he know then that reservations would become a permanent feature because of the vote bank it provided.

It is unfortunate that the caste system, even after hundreds of years, remains an integral part of Hindu society. The Dalit (untouchables) are still at the lowest rung of the ladder. This is an open secret that rural areas have separate habitations for the Dalits, at a distance from where the upper castes lived. A debate has started in India on whether reservations needed a relook, not on the discrimination which is still practiced against the Dalits openly and unashamedly.

RSS chief Mohan Bhagwat's suggestion has jolted the status quo so much that the BJP has distanced itself from the proposal of another look at reservations. The vested interests continue to be decisive. Many Dalits have embraced Islam to escape discrimination. But some have found, to their horror, that the tag of discrimination stays with them even in the casteless Islam, once classification is acquired.

True, many pronouncements, some by the law courts, have pointed out that the "creamy layer" should at least be barred from reservations. But they are the most vocal and most influential. This explains why the RSS chief remains a lonely figure in the entire Sangh parivar. His disappointment must have increased after Rajasthan, a BJP-run state, has given quota to the poor in the upper castes. This humanistic gesture reads well but it is against what the constitution makers had in mind. They gave reservations only to the Dalits because the Hindu society, for centuries, had denied them the basic dues. It was a sort of repentance translated into concessions.

There were poor among the upper castes even at that time. But both Jawaharlal Nehru and Sardar Patel were able to persuade the Constituent Assembly that the

upper caste must do the penance for the excesses committed. The state is violating the Supreme Court's directive that reservations should not exceed the limit of 50 percent. Unfortunately, this malady is spreading.

It is comical to see today that the Patels, a well-off business community, demanding reservations. The government in Gujarat, again run by the BJP, is dealing severely with the maverick leader Hardik Patel who is agitating for reservations for an upper caste community like the Patels.

Other states are keenly watching whether both Rajasthan and Gujarat gets away with the quota because they have the same thing in mind. The Narendra Modi government should have taken the BJP-run state, particularly Rajasthan, to task because the entire federal structure faces the danger of a collapse. The Modi government has a strange kind of confidence that when the chips are down, all states, with a predominant Hindu majority population, will not go

than a Dalit. What about the Muslims? The Sachar Committee pointed out that their condition has been worse than that of the Dalits. With soft-Hindutva embracing the country, the future of minorities is becoming more and more questionable.

If there was a survey, it would underline the fact that unemployment among the Muslims is growing. Since they cannot afford good schools, they figure less in jobs through competitive examinations. They are not even a fraction of some 18 percent of population in the country. Their backwardness should be a matter of concern. Idle hands take to desperate methods.

What is more important than anything else is the need to foster social relations between Hindus and Muslims. The togetherness witnessed during Diwali or Eid is missing. Mixed localities have become fewer. I find Muslims taking less interest in national heroes who were inspirations to the country.



PHOTO: BLOG.AAQBITHAR.COM

to the brink.

Probably, Modi will use the whip of discipline after the assembly election in Bihar. Any kind of action at this time, when the state is only a few weeks away from polling, can boomerang and harm the BJP's fortunes.

However, time has come when all political parties should sit together to ponder over reservations on the basis of caste and creed. A constitutional position for only 10 years has become permanent. All parties support the continuation whenever such a constitutional amendment comes before parliament.

A country which has the word 'secularism' in its preamble of the constitution, should break the shackles of caste. Secularism requires the demolition of caste barriers. The ruling BJP should initiate a legislation to lay down the criteria on the basis of economic status. A poor Brahmin is no less deserving

Take, for instance, the debate over the files of Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose. It unnecessarily became an emotional issue. For days, the entire nation was engrossed in discussing whether the files should be made public or not. The nation suddenly became oblivious to the basic issue of development. It must keep uppermost in its mind that one-third of Indians go to bed with just one meal in 24 hours.

The Modi government has ruled the country for more than one and a half years. Its promise to provide livelihood to all remains as distant as it was on the day the PM took oath to assume power. Except for the usual rhetoric, there is nothing on the ground to indicate that his promise of *sab ka saath, sab ka vikas* is near implementation. The nation is still waiting.

The writer is an eminent Indian columnist.

COMMENTS

"PM receives top UN award"

(September 29, 2015)

↓

Matin

We are so proud of our PM.

↓

Md Sohal Mahmud

Congratulations, Honourable Prime Minister.

↓

Md Shameem Ahmed

We need positive result.

"TIB for probe into medical question

leak as protests continue"

(September 28, 2015)

↓

Abu Elias Sarker

The whole nation should rally behind these protesters. The reason is very simple: we need doctors, not licensed killers.

↓

Alam

We want proper investigation. Only meritorious students should be doctors, not those who managed to get the questions before the test exam.

↓

Akkas Ali

Those who hurriedly published the admission test results might be involved in this. So, the relevant authorities should interrogate them.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

letters@thedailystar.net

Shell stops Arctic drilling!

The oil and gas giant Shell has announced that they are abandoning their plans to drill for oil in the Arctic! Millions of people around the globe through their logical protests have finally succeeded in making Shell realise the dangerous effect of Arctic drilling on environment and overall

earth climate. But unfortunately, another company Exxon Mobil is now publicly promoting Arctic drilling. We would sincerely request the US President Barack Obama to protect the Arctic from drilling.
Professor M Zahidul Haque
 Department of Agricultural Extension & Information System,
 SAU, Dhaka

Hajj stampede

Two fatal accidents took place during this year's Hajj. The first one took place at Mecca on September 11 when a construction site crane collapsed on Hajj pilgrims, leaving some 111 Hajj pilgrims dead. The second incident took place at Mina where some 770 hajj pilgrims died from a

stampede. We have learnt that 25 Bangladeshis were among the dead. Obviously, these incidents happened due to the negligence of the Saudi authorities. We demand proper investigation into the incidents. Also, legal action must be taken against the authorities responsible for this.
SM Zakaria
 Dhanmondi, Dhaka