

Yet another foreign national murdered

Law enforcers must act promptly and decisively

WE are aghast at the killing of yet another foreign development worker on Bangladeshi soil, only five days into the murder of an Italian citizen in Dhaka. The Japanese national, Kunio Hoshi, was shot dead in Mahiganj area of Kawmia Upazila, reportedly in the same manner as Cesare Tavella.

We have no words to condone this dastardly act. Japan has been one of our closest development partners, and one with whom we have cultivated a long and fruitful relationship. This murder casts a dark shadow upon us all.

Although we do not have all the facts at hand, it is reasonable to conclude that this act of violence was carried out to hurt the image of the country. One could draw a link between the murders of Tavella and Hoshi, which is to create panic and convey a negative picture of the law and order in the country to a global audience.

At a time when the US, Canada and some European countries have already issued travel alerts to their citizens regarding Bangladesh, and the Australian cricket team has delayed its tour on grounds of security, the gruesome murders of two foreign nationals in such a short period of time will no doubt have very serious ramifications for Bangladesh.

It is thus crucial that the perpetrators and the motive behind these killings be unearthed immediately to allay any and all apprehensions both in the country and abroad about rising extremism in Bangladesh. This is the time for our intelligence and law enforcement agencies to prove their efficiency. Needless to say, they are now under international spotlight.

Anarchy in city transport fares

Commuters being taken for a ride

DHAKA commuters are in a fix as bus operators, human haulers and other transports have hiked fares arbitrarily. Investigative journalism by a leading Bangla daily reveals that most bus operators have not bothered to put up government-fixed fare charts in their buses and fares are being charged as per the will of owners of privately owned buses. The situation gets more chaotic when one takes into account smaller transports like mini-buses and the so-called "legunas" and "human haulers", which conveniently fall out of the purview of any government oversight. This is a failure of enforcement by Bangladesh Road Transport Authority (BRTA) and something needs to be done about it.

While the government increased fare by Tk 0.10 per kilometre with the increase in CNG prices, we are witnessing increases far greater than what has been decided by authorities. According to the revised fare charge, a trip from Mirpur 1 to Motijheel (via Farmgate), a distance of 13 km, should be Tk 21 per passenger. The interesting thing is that prior to raising of fuel prices, the fare was already Tk 23, which has now been raised to Tk 27 by bus operators.

That privately owned bus operators can and do charge whatever fare they feel like is a direct challenge to the writ of BRTA. So who looks after commuters' interests if not the BRTA? Why should commuters be left in the lurch because the authority responsible for enforcing a government decision fails to live up to its obligations? The situa-

COMMENTS

"Cops beat up protesters"
(October 1, 2015)

Shahnaz Parveen Songita

They can beat up the protesters but don't do anything about stopping the question leakage!

G K Md Nasarullah

On the one hand the authorities said that there was no question paper leakage and on the other hand they have arrested some doctors on the allegation of question paper leaking. What a farce!

"Assad must go' to ensure IS defeat - Obama"
(September 30, 2015)

Asif Mehdi Tonoy

The only way to defeat IS is to prevent US from interfering in the internal matters of the Middle East.

Shuvo Hasan

US should work together with President Assad to destroy the notorious IS.

Reaz AU

Russia declared full scale war against IS.

Asm Fakhruddin

Assad killed thousands of innocent people. So first of all, he should step down.

Cruel D'best

Let Syrian people decide their fate.

MDGs, SDGs and then what?

REZAUL HAQUE

AMIDST much hype and hope, the 193-member United Nations General Assembly formally adopted the 2030 Agenda with a new set of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) on September 25. The hope is that the Global Goals or SDGs will achieve these three things for all people in all countries within the next 15 years.

The 2030 Agenda is ambitious but crucial for making a meaningful leap, and not just a step, to overcome poverty and restore human dignity. If no action is taken, sufferings of majority of the global population will continue unabated and human dignity will be further undermined. For example, three million children will die unnecessarily from malnutrition annually; by 2025 1.8 billion people will live in countries or regions with absolute scarcity of water; 42 percent of African children will drop out of school before finishing their education and so on. The new UN development framework officially titled "Transforming Our World: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development" will swing into action in January 2016 and is expected to end poverty in all its forms everywhere. Ending poverty is the first and foremost goal of the "Transforming our world" Development Agenda.

The predecessor to the SDGs was the historic MDGs or the Millennium Development Goals. The MDGs rallied the global community around a common 15-year development agenda to challenge the indignity of poverty.

The SDGs are, to a large extent, built on the lessons learned from the MDGs. The lessons have been mixed at best. Between 2000 and 2015, the world witnessed amazing progress in achieving many of the MDGs. Poverty has reduced. Countries like India and Bangladesh also witnessed significant poverty reduction. Primary school enrollment, especially

for girl students, increased remarkably; child mortality rates fell from 103 deaths per 1,000 live births a year to 88; maternal and under-five mortality rates reduced. Nepal, for instance, has halved its maternal mortality by doubling health spending. In spite of insignificant income growth, Bangladesh demonstrated significant improvements in infant and maternal mortality. Across the world, Malaria death declined by more than one third, saving millions of lives. Access to quality drinking water and improved sanitation increased.

These positive advances, however, cannot camouflage the harsh conditions in which millions of people continue to live and the abuse of human dignity they endure on a daily basis. The gap between the rich and the poor, as well as the gender gap not only persists but even widens in many countries and regions of the globe. The latest UN Report on MDG suggests that nearly 800 million people are still living below \$ 1.25 a day. Despite progress in child mortality, nearly six million children under-five continue to die annually from malnutrition and preventable diseases. Because of armed conflicts, millions of people are uprooted from their homes and forced to become refugees within or outside their countries.

Also, the progress that has been achieved is not uniform across the world or across the goals. Large scale disparities within and between countries continue. There is greater concentration of poverty-stricken people in the rural areas. The urban-rural divide, in terms of development, has widened in many countries. While most continents of the globe have mixed records in terms of achieving the MDGs, Africa, particularly the Sub-Saharan Africa, has drawn a near-abysmal picture with its continuing food insecurity and a rise of extreme poverty.

Development pundits have worked for more than three years, since the

Conference on Sustainable Development in June 2012 in Rio, to design what is being called the SDGs today. And yet, shielded by the shortcomings of MDGs, sceptics will probably say that the world had gone through MDGs and yet millions continue to be hungry, sick and abused; the current 'prescription' is SDGs and so what? It is, therefore, critical to reassure the world that the SDGs will be achieved. This reassurance calls for a comprehensive, pragmatic and yet aggressive strategy and unflinching commitment from all UN member states and

Let the discourse and debate around SDGs continue, but concrete actions must also be continued by all stakeholders to implement the 2030 Agenda to liberate millions of children, women and men across the globe

international organisations to timely mobilise the required financial resources for implementing the SDGs. Some of the core elements of this Strategy could be as follows:

The UN can enter into a cooperative agreement with each SDGs implementing member state that will outline the country-specific time-bound targets and monitoring and reporting mechanisms, and will indicate the financial contribution both from the respective country's national budget and through official development assistance (ODA).

The UN can also devise a similar agreement with each 'donor' country and organisation where they will make specific and time-bound pledges to provide financial resources and technical assistance for achieving the SDG targets.

Each SDGs implementing country will incorporate its SDG targets into its time-bound national development plans (annual, 5-year, 10-year, etc.) and also synchronise with their overall development strategies and policies.

Public-private partnership (PPP) will have to be further strengthened, and the private sector will have to commit much larger financial resources for the SDGs. They need to acknowledge that a poverty-free world will only help the private sector to flourish.

The civil society, NGOs and CBOs must be involved from the very beginning in all stages of implementation of SDGs. The national governments of the day must create enough meaningful space for the civil society to make its due contribution in achieving the Global Goals.

A greater and more meaningful gender balance and participation will have to be ensured in all stages of implementation of the SDGs.

Let the discourse and debate around SDGs continue, but concrete actions must also be continued by all stakeholders to implement the 2030 Agenda to liberate millions of children, women and men across the globe from the shackles of poverty and indignity. Let the world leaders gather again at the UN in 2030 to celebrate the achievement of the SDGs with much greater hype and hope for mankind.

The writer is a Founder Trustee of Impact Foundation Bangladesh and former Democracy & Governance Team Leader at USAID/Bangladesh. He can be reached at rhaque55@gmail.com.

The Trans-Pacific Free-Trade Charade

JOSEPH E. STIGLITZ and ADAM S. HERSH

AS negotiators and ministers from the United States and 11 other Pacific Rim countries meet in Atlanta in an effort to finalise the details of the sweeping new Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP), some sober analysis is warranted. The biggest regional trade and investment agreement in history is not what it seems.

You will hear much about the importance of the TPP for "free trade." The reality is that this is an agreement to manage its members' trade and investment relations – and to do so on behalf of each country's most powerful business lobbies. Make no mistake: It is evident from the main outstanding issues, over which negotiators are still haggling, that the TPP is not about "free" trade.

New Zealand has threatened to walk away from the agreement over the way Canada and the US manage trade in dairy products. Australia is not happy with how the US and Mexico manage trade in sugar. And the US is not happy with how Japan manages trade in rice. These industries are backed by significant voting blocs in their respective countries. And they represent just the tip of the iceberg in terms of how the TPP would advance an agenda that actually runs counter to free trade.

For starters, consider what the agreement would do to expand intellectual property rights for big pharmaceutical companies, as we learned from leaked versions of the negotiating text. Economic research clearly shows the argument that such intellectual property rights promote research to be weak at best. In fact, there is evidence to the contrary: When the Supreme Court invalidated Myriad's patent on the BRCA gene, it led to a burst of innovation that resulted in better tests at lower costs. Indeed, provisions in the TPP would restrain open competition and raise prices for consumers in the US and around the world – anathema to free trade.

The TPP would manage trade in pharmaceuticals through a variety of seemingly arcane rule changes on issues such as "patent linkage," "data exclusivity," and "biologics." The upshot is that pharmaceutical companies would effectively be allowed to extend – sometimes almost indefinitely – their monopolies

on patented medicines, keep cheaper generics off the market, and block "biosimilar" competitors from introducing new medicines for years. That is how the TPP will manage trade for the pharmaceutical industry if the US gets its way.

Similarly, consider how the US hopes to use the TPP to manage trade for the tobacco industry. For decades, US-based tobacco companies have used foreign investor adjudication mechanisms created by agreements like the TPP to fight

though there is little question about the quality of Europe's legal and judicial systems.

To be sure, investors – wherever they call home – deserve protection from expropriation or discriminatory regulations. But ISDS goes much further: The obligation to compensate investors for losses of expected profits can and has been applied even where rules are non-discriminatory and profits are made from causing public harm.

The corporation formerly known as



regulations intended to curb the public-health scourge of smoking. Under these investor-state dispute settlement (ISDS) systems, foreign investors gain new rights to sue national governments in binding private arbitration for regulations they see as diminishing the expected profitability of their investments.

International corporate interests tout ISDS as necessary to protect property rights where the rule of law and credible courts are lacking. But that argument is nonsense. The US is seeking the same mechanism in a similar mega-deal with the European Union, the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership, even

Philip Morris is currently prosecuting such cases against Australia and Uruguay (not a TPP partner) for requiring cigarettes to carry warning labels. Canada, under threat of a similar suit, backed down from introducing a similarly effective warning label a few years back.

Given the veil of secrecy surrounding the TPP negotiations, it is not clear whether tobacco will be excluded from some aspects of ISDS. Either way, the broader issue remains: Such provisions make it hard for governments to conduct their basic functions – protecting their citizens' health and safety, ensuring economic stability, and safeguarding the environment.

Imagine what would have happened if these provisions had been in place when the lethal effects of asbestos were discovered. Rather than shutting down manufacturers and forcing them to compensate those who had been harmed, under ISDS, governments would have had to pay the manufacturers not to kill their citizens. Taxpayers would have been hit twice – first to pay for the health damage caused by asbestos, and then to compensate manufacturers for their lost profits when the government stepped in

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

letters@thedailystar.net

Dengue outbreak in Dhaka

The recent dengue outbreak in Dhaka is worrisome. Dengue fever is a mosquito-borne tropical disease caused by the dengue virus. It is transmitted by the bite of aedes mosquito. The most common symptoms are high fever, rashes and spots in the body, headache, nausea, sweating or breathing problems.

If anyone has these symptoms, he/she should immediately see a doctor. But prevention is better than cure. So everyone must use mosquito-nets.

Addritha Sumebra Latif, Dhaka



Thanks to Hatikumrul highway police

Hatikumrul highway is one of the most important highways in Bangladesh which connects Bonpara, Sirajganj, Rajshahi, Kushtia and Khulna. Before Eid-ul-Azha, Hatikumrul highway police took a very commendable step. They gave instructions to the passengers and vehicle operators through microphones about crossing the road from selected points, not wasting time in the roundabout and following the traffic rules to have a safe journey.

We would like to thank them for their timely initiative.

Md. Abdul Halim
Project Coordinator, Community Empowerment in Combating Violence Against Women And Girls Project, NDP