

HANGZHOU G20 SUMMIT

China takes its place on the international stage

Torture of a minor domestic help

Punish the perpetrators

THE way a nine-year-old domestic help was tortured by her employers in Gazipur speaks volumes about the helplessness and vulnerability of those who work in households. The couple, arrested by the police, beat her up with hot kitchen utensils and electric wires whenever she wanted to go home. Anyone with a conscience would be sickened by the image of the torture marks on her body published in this newspaper yesterday. She should go to school and play rather than work for more than 10 hours a day for a paltry 500 Taka a month. But she is not alone. Of the hundreds of thousands of domestic workers—their exact number is unknown—more than 80 percent are underage girls. The conditions they work in are deplorable and disgraceful. They are excluded from the amended Labour Act 2013, there is no mechanism to monitor their protection from abuse and their income is not included in GDP. They have little scope to complain.

A number of measures should be implemented to address their woes. Existing legal frameworks to protect their rights need to be strengthened. The Draft Domestic Workers Protection and Welfare Policy 2010 should be finalised, enacted and implemented without delay. Domestic work needs to be included in the list of Hazardous Work from which children should be spared. The incident is a glaring example of how negligent society is towards these children. As a society, we are obligated to treat every child with compassion and dignity.

Tannery relocation

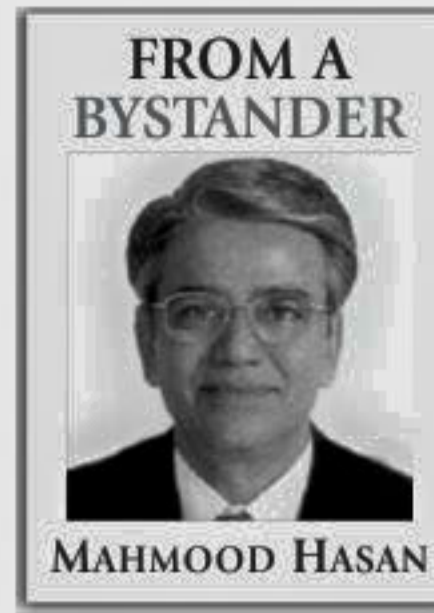
Authorities should enforce HC order

IT is baffling that the relocation of all tannery factories from Hazaribagh to the tannery park in Savar is yet to be completed 13 years after a High Court order was issued in that regard. After missing numerous government deadlines over the years, industry insiders have indicated that it will likely take most factories around six more months to complete their relocation.

Meanwhile, liquid waste mixed with toxic chemicals from tanneries continues to flow into the Buriganga through drainage connections. The government estimates some 21,000 cubic metres of untreated effluent is being released into the Buriganga every day, shattering all hopes of bringing the river back to life. According to Human Rights Watch, the hazardous impact of tannery pollution in the air, water and soil to human health has been massive with residents of Hazaribagh constantly suffering from various illnesses.

Tanners have deposited Tk. 55.9 lakh for polluting the environment in compliance with a Supreme Court order, but who will compensate those whose healths have been affected by pollution emanating from tanneries? Can money collected as fines offset the damage done to the Buriganga and the environment over the years? The apathy shown by tannery owners towards the damage to human health and environment, as evident by their failure to relocate even after all these years is unacceptable, especially given the incentives they have been granted for relocating.

The authorities should compel tannery owners to abide by the High Court order without delay. Lax handling of such a grave situation will not do.



MAHMOOD HASAN

FROM A BYSTANDER
 CHINA hosted the 11th G20 summit from September 4-5, 2016 at Hangzhou for the first time since the group formally started holding summits when the world economy slipped into deep recession in 2008. The theme for the summit was "Towards an innovative, invigorated, interconnected and inclusive world economy". China also invited leaders of eight developing countries and chiefs of international organisations to participate at the conference.

The summit came at a time when the world is facing sluggish economic growth and geopolitical challenges. Ideological differences among member states coupled with individual monetary and fiscal policies, which are at variance with others, are the main reasons for poor economic performance. However, despite political antagonism, these summits offer convenient opportunities to leaders to exchange notes.

China's relation with the US is currently under strain because of China's assertive policy on South China Sea and rejection of the verdict of the Permanent Court of Arbitration, which seems to have jeopardised President Obama's "Pivot to Asia" policy. The "candid" talks between President Obama and President Xi Jinping revealed that the two largest economies of the world have major discords over trade and security issues. Despite all the courtesies and politeness, Xi Jinping appeared in no mood to give any leeway to Obama, who has only a few weeks left in the White House. However, before the meeting, US and China – which together account for 40 percent of the world's carbon emission - announced ratification of the Paris Climate Agreement adopted in December 2015.

President Obama also had a "blunt" 90-minute meeting with President Putin, discussing a ceasefire in Syria. The talks were described as "constructive but not conclusive". Tension is also high between China and Japan - second and third largest economies of the world - related to the unmanned Senkakus Islands in East China Sea. While meeting Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, the Chinese president suggested that Japan should "put aside disruptions" for normal development of relations.

Prime Minister Modi, during his talks with President Xi, raised thorny issues like terrorism, China's economic corridor that runs through Pakistan and India's membership in the Nuclear Suppliers Group, which Beijing opposed recently. While India is apprehensive about China's militarisation of South China Sea, China is also concerned over the recently signed Logistics Exchange Memorandum of Agreement (LEMOA) signed between US and India. Xi Jinping said, "China is willing to work with India to maintain their hard-won sound relations and further advance their cooperation".

Britain's decision to quit the European Union has put it in an economically uncertain position and Theresa May is looking for economic partners beyond Europe. At the bilateral meeting, Xi Jinping assured Theresa May



that China would be willing to have closer economic and trading relations with Britain. Other leaders, however, told Theresa May that Brexit would be damaging for the global economy.

Brazil is in double trouble because of the impeachment of President Dilma Rousseff and negative economic growth (-3.8 percent in 2015). Turkey, host of the 10th G20 summit, is still reeling from the recent coup attempt on President Erdogan's presidency. Germany's Angela Merkel is facing political challenges at home because of her liberal immigration policy.

The two-day summit ended issuing a 48-paragraph Communiqué, which drew liberally from the decisions taken by the G20 finance ministers and central bank governors meeting held in July 2016 at Chengdu, China. The Communiqué covers four major areas – strengthening G20 growth agenda; pursuing innovative growth concepts and policies; building an open world economy; and ensuring that economic growth benefits all countries and people.

On the world economic situation, the leaders were concerned that "Downside risks remain due to potential volatility in the financial markets, fluctuations of commodity prices, sluggish trade and investment, and slow productivity and employment growth in some countries". The summit decided to "use all policy tools – monetary, fiscal and structural – individually and collectively to achieve our goal of strong, sustainable, balanced and inclusive growth". Actually, implementing a harmonised monetary and fiscal policy by all stakeholders is the key to quicker growth of the global economy.

As a protectionist tendency is raising its head around the world, G20 leaders were determined to ensure

globalisation through "open and inclusive multilateral trading system". The communiqué strongly condemned terrorism and were committed to strengthening the Sustainable Development Goals set by the UN.

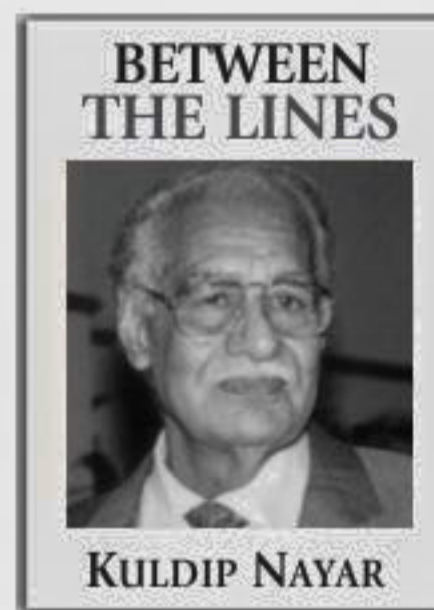
China has been asserting its economic prowess through the Asian Infrastructure and Investment Bank (AIIB) and its \$1.4 trillion "One Belt One Road" (OBOR) plan. Recognising China's strong macroeconomic indicators, the World Bank has sold 500 million SDR Bonds on August 31, 2016. IMF has decided to add Chinese Renminbi (RMB) for the first time to the SDR basket from October 1, 2016, which will make it easily convertible and boost Chinese capital market. These developments will give China a bigger say in the global market.

For Xi Jinping, the biggest worry was that the summit may descend into a forum of acrimonious geopolitical debate, particularly over the South China Sea. The agenda for the summit was therefore kept focused on global growth, green financing, sustainable infrastructure, development of poorest countries, etc. Contentious geopolitical issues were left to the leaders meeting on the sidelines of the summit. The media focused more on these bilateral meetings and less on the substantive discussions that went inside the conference room.

However, President Xi Jinping has demonstrated his skillfulness in handling so many world leaders simultaneously. The summit concluded without any major faux pas, though some Western media termed it inconclusive. As the leader of G20, China has rightfully taken its place on the international stage.

The writer is former Ambassador and Secretary.

Scene of linguistic chauvinism



KULDEEP NAYYAR

BETWEEN THE LINES
 HORRORS of Partition came to my mind when I saw television channels beaming pictures of rioting and killing in Bengaluru. I felt the same when Partition took place and we, the people living in the newly-constituted state of Pakistan, had to leave our home and hearth to migrate to India.

I never imagined that a cosmopolitan city like Bengaluru could be the scene of linguistic chauvinism, which would go to the extent of killing Tamils by Kannadas. Leading IT firms preferred to open their offices because they considered the city liberal and peaceful. If someone had asked me at that time whether such a scene could be repeated in a place like Bengaluru, I would have said: No, never.

Yet this has happened because the people known to be liberal were swept off their feet over appeals in the name of parochialism. Fortunately, Tamil Nadu Chief Minister J. Jayalalithaa's determination not to allow similar incidents happening in the state prevented any reprisals. She rightly deserves kudos for handling the problem before it could assume massive proportions, leading to indiscriminate violence.

There is a long-standing dispute between Karnataka and Tamil Nadu on sharing of the Cauvery water. This is not the first time that Karnataka has refused to abide by the Supreme Court verdict on the amount of water to be released to Tamil Nadu. Earlier, whenever such a situation had arisen, the people of both states had been at each other's throat. So, what is happening in Bengaluru today is a mere repetition.

But what is the way out? Nobody can challenge the Supreme Court's decision, but the problem can be solved by sitting across the table and arriving at a solution, particularly when people's emotions are involved. Since the river water dispute between Karnataka and Tamil Nadu is a sensitive issue, I recall former Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee's idea of evolving a consensus to handle the issue.

Knowledgeable circles have been warning the nation against the dangerous consequences of letting the river water dispute linger. Karnataka's unilateral decision to abrogate all the inter-state river water agreements has created a situation, the likes of which the nation has never experienced. And to cap it all, all chief ministers of the states have been indulging in a mudslinging match, which does not go well with the idea of a federal structure that the Indian Constitution demands.

Needless to say, it is more difficult to find a consensus on the sharing of river waters than on any other subject. The protracted war of nerves between the two states on the sharing of Cauvery waters is a case in

point. Consensus can be evolved only when political parties rise above their parochial interests to use their vision to make water into a factor that unites our country. They need to have the necessary will to achieve this noble goal. It is not impossible to find a formula protecting the interests of both Karnataka and Tamil Nadu.

I had always thought our real problem was population. I did mention this to an American Nobel Prize winner who contradicted me and said: "Your problem is going to be water." We were discussing the ordeals that India would face in the years to come. Our views did not tally even after a long discussion. What happened at Latur in Maharashtra some time ago has renewed the American's warning to me. He had also given me an optimistic side: There is an ocean of water under the Yamuna-Gangetic plan waiting to be tapped. I wonder if this is true. Had it been so, the government would have done a scientific study by this time to estimate the collected water. I have not heard of any such plan so far.

India has seven major rivers - the Ganges, Brahmaputra, Indus, Narmada, Krishna, Godavari and Cauveri - and numerous tributaries. New Delhi has set up the Central Water and Power Commission to have a systematic plan to harness not only water but also generate power. This has worked to a large extent but in certain parts of India, the fallout has been a series of disputes which, even after decades, remain unsolved. Nearer home, Haryana, then part of Punjab, has refused to release water to Rajasthan and Delhi. This goes

contrary to the stand New Delhi had taken when the Indus Water Treaty was signed. At that time, we argued that we wanted more water because we had to irrigate Rajasthan, which has a large part of desert land.

Unfortunately, several incongruities are responsible for inter-state water disputes. Even after 70 years of independence, the disputes are far from settled. When the Congress ruled both at the Centre and in the states, the problems never assumed an ugly shape. The Bhartiya



Janata Party (BJP), which then only commanded a few Lok Sabha members, did not count much. It is a different scenario today. Now that it has a majority in Parliament, the party sees to it that the states run by it get the maximum benefit, rules or no rules.

However, the situation is different in the south. Both Karnataka and Tamil Nadu are ruled by parties other than the BJP. New Delhi should have stepped in long ago. Prime Minister Narendra Modi, who claims to have united different parts of the country into one unit, seems distant regarding the problem that Karnataka and Tamil Nadu face. His statements have been general. What is needed is tackling the country's problem arising out of language, border or water.

Hindus and Muslims who were living together for hundreds of years became strangers soon after Partition. They were facing, on a large scale, the situation which Karnataka and Tamil Nadu are encountering on a small scale today. Sometimes, I shudder at the thought that the disputes among the states may take the shape of some kind of Partition. When friends and neighbours could suddenly become strangers because they pursued a different religion, what the Kannadas did on the streets of Bengaluru could well be a page from the history of Partition.

The writer is an eminent Indian columnist.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

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Women's growing role in the economy

Today, women are playing a vital role in all spheres of life. They are no longer confined within the four walls. They have come out of the kitchen and are working hard hand in hand with men in all the development programmes of the government. They are becoming pilots, doctors, engineers, teachers and so on by receiving higher education. We have recently seen the successful performance of our women's football team in AFC U-16 championship.

Women have been able to prove their worth. They are contributing much to the economy of the country. The true development of the country is never possible by keeping half of the population idle at home.

S. A. Murad Sarkar
 Rajshbari, Ranigaon, Habiganj

Street children's decision to leave homes

Recently I read an article in *The Daily Star* about street children which I found factual and interesting. But there were some basic points that were not correct. The article noted that most of the children living in streets are either orphans or being left out by their parents.

I have been involved with very young as well as older children living in the streets for over 25 years. While there are a very few who do have little information of their parents or their birthplace, I have found out from my personal experience and from talking to others that almost all of them do have families and that they have run away from home and want to go back to their families. Many of them have left home after being subjected to physical or emotional abuse at home or at school. Here at APON, we have many children like them who learn how to overcome anger and resentment and look forward to being reunited with their families.

Brother Ronald Drahozal CSC
 Executive Director, APON