

# The Daily Star

FOUNDER EDITOR  
LATE S. M. ALI

DHAKA SUNDAY SEPTEMBER 25, 2016, ASHWIN 10, 1423 BS

## Continued border killings

Must be brought down to zero

TWO Bangladeshi nationals were shot dead on Friday by the Border Security Force of India in another display of its heavy handedness. How such killings can continue unabated, especially given the repeated assurances from the Indian authorities to bring an end to the killing of innocent Bangladeshis remains a mystery. And what is also a mystery is why such killings are happening so frequently.

On September 18 for example, the BSF shot and injured a Bangladeshi young man in Shibganj upazila, Chapainawabganj. A Bangladeshi man was also shot dead by the BSF at Bangerbari border on September 20. Moreover, according to human rights groups, at least 236 Bangladeshis were reportedly killed by the BSF between 2010 and 2015.

In a recent discussion held by *The Daily Star* on Bangladesh-India relations, the Indian envoy had assured of every measures to bring border deaths down to zero. Apparently there is a gap between the Indian policy makers and the BSF personnel on the ground. That BSF members will refrain from using lethal weapons on unarmed Bangladeshis unless their lives were threatened had been mentioned previously on a number of occasions. Yet, in the most recent case, the two Bangladeshis killed were both unarmed and shot in the back suggesting that they had posed no threat to members of the BSF and were, thus, killed, for no good reason.

Such behaviour by the border guards of a country that Bangladesh considers to be its closest neighbour is unwarranted. It is totally incongruous with the state of bilateral relationship between the two countries. Killing of innocent civilians at the border must end immediately.

## Where is the accountability?

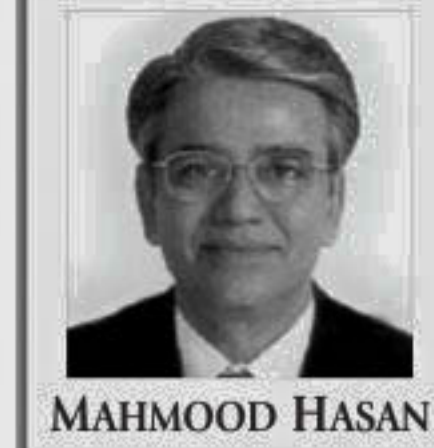
Healthcare in shambles

REPORTS over the last few days of a baby declared dead and later found to be alive in Jahid Memorial Child Hospital in Faridpur town and more recently another person having died in Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH), after allegedly being treated with unauthorised medication by a non-hospital staff are very disturbing. The case in Faridpur sounds like a scene out of a horror movie where a newborn baby was declared dead and the girl child was apparently kept in a carton box on the hospital floor. According to the doctor under whose watch the girl was declared "dead" claimed the child was born prematurely and had no pulse during examination. In the bizarre case of DMCH, the victim was administered a drug by a total outsider who had access to the patient receiving treatment in the neurology department.

What is going on in our healthcare services both in the public and private sectors? How on earth do we justify what happened to Naznin Akter's baby? Should doctors play God and declare someone dead instead of trying to save the patient? We are looking at a steady deterioration of services offered by many of medical institutions around the country. The time has come for an in-depth review of medical institutions nationwide and what goes on in there in the name of treatment. Human lives are not cheap, they are precious and authorities have to be made accountable for their actions, or lack thereof.

# Can Kofi Annan restore Rohingya rights in Myanmar?

FROM A BYSTANDER



MAHMOOD HASAN

THERE seems to be a very thin light of hope that the lot of Rohingya Muslims in Rakhine state of Myanmar may change for the better. Guarded optimism was expressed by some

after former UN Secretary General Kofi Annan was chosen to lead a commission which is supposed to find a lasting solution to the communal conflict in Rakhine state.

On August 23, 2016, a government notice announced that the Advisory Commission on Rakhine State was established between the office of State Counsellor and Foreign Minister of Myanmar, Aung San Suu Kyi, and Kofi Annan Foundation. The commission will be chaired by Kofi Annan and will include three international and six national members, and will meet all relevant stakeholders and international experts with a view "to finding the best possible solution to prevailing problems". It will have 12 months to "submit its findings and recommendations". This is an unprecedented move, as Myanmar has never allowed foreigners in any government commission.

Annan visited Sittwe from September 5-7 to meet local leaders and see for himself the Thet Ke Pyn Squalid refugee camp, where 140,000 internally displaced Rohingyas are living in dire humanitarian conditions.

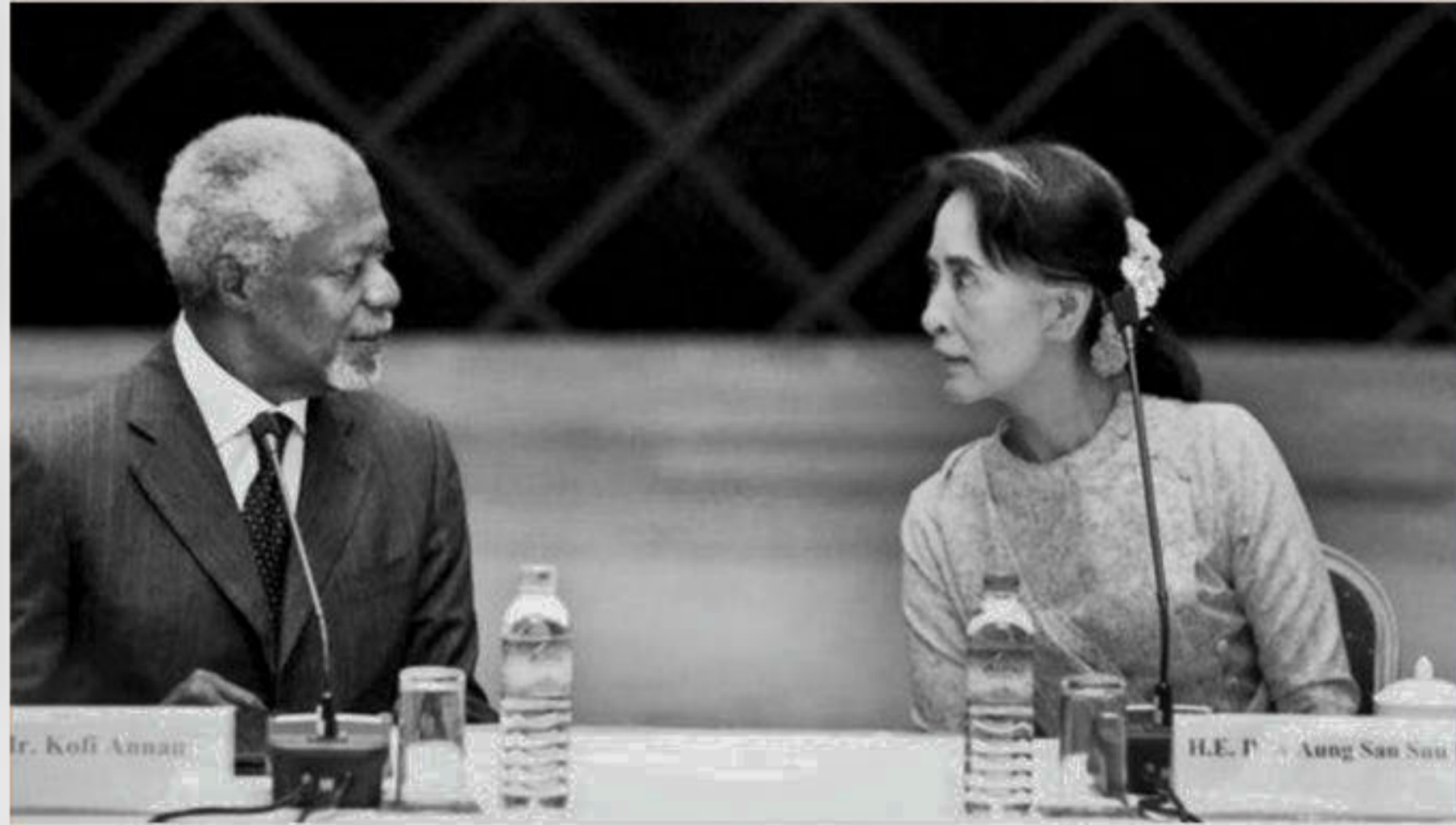
During the visit, Annan met with rowdy protests from angry Buddhists, waving "No outsiders", "No to foreigners" placards. Along with Buddhist bigots, the Arakan National Party (ANP) and the Union Solidarity and Development Party (USDP) were protesting the inclusion of three foreign members in the commission. They argue that the conflict in Rakhine is Myanmar's internal issue and no foreigner should be allowed to engage with it. The commission does not have any representation from the Rohingya community.

Addressing the press in Yangon on September 8, Annan sought to dispel concerns over the potential partiality of the commission, saying that his mandate is to take on board concerns of both the state's Buddhist and Muslim communities and not to police human rights. "We are here to help at the request of the government and we see this as a Myanmar Commission that we are participating in, bringing in some international dimensions and you will get an honest report from all of us", said Annan. He also said both Burma and Bangladesh will need to collaborate to resolve the problem.

Rohingyas are sheltered in Bangladesh. The United Nations describes the Rohingyas as "the most persecuted minorities in the world".

Interestingly, the Commission began its work in Yangon in early September between two important events. First, the Panglong Conference convened by Suu Kyi, which ended on September 4, 2016; and second, Suu Kyi's visit to Washington at the invitation of President Obama.

Though the Panglong Conference, which sought to make a peace deal with Myanmar's 18 ethnic groups and three insurgent armies, ended inconclusively, the Annan Commission is seen as a part



Former UN secretary general Kofi Annan and Myanmar's leader Aung San Suu Kyi talk during their meeting in Yangon on September 5. PHOTO: EPA/JPG

Rakhine is home to more than 1.1 million stateless Rohingya Muslims, whom Buddhists call "Kalar" and "Bengalis" - derogatory terms referring them as illegal immigrants from Bangladesh. Rohingyas, denied citizenship, face violent discrimination from the majority of Myanmar that have left them in a pathetic state.

In 2012, waves of deadly riots broke out between the two communities, which left more than 200 Rohingyas brutally killed. The conflict became an international issue when hundreds perished at sea as thousands tried to flee Myanmar by boats to neighbouring countries. Over 300,000 unregistered

of the reconciliation process initiated by Suu Kyi.

In Washington, Suu Kyi was virtually treated as Head of State. She was received by President Obama at the White House on September 14, 2016. To encourage further democratic reforms, President Obama lifted the trade sanctions imposed on Myanmar in 1989 and also restored GSP facilities for Myanmar exports to the US.

Since assuming the onerous role of chief of the NLD-led government, Suu Kyi has been trying to push for democratic reforms and consolidate her position as State Counsellor - euphemism for Prime Minister. Suu Kyi is keen to show to the

generals the economic benefits of a democratic transition. She is also eager to show that democracy can unify the nation by bringing in different armed ethnic minorities, including the Rohingyas, through reconciliation. Indeed, Suu Kyi needs the support of the West, particularly Washington, in her efforts.

Suu Kyi was widely criticised for not condemning the riots of 2012. Her silence had actually encouraged the "Ma Ba Tha" (Protection of Race and Religion) movement led by xenophobic Buddhist monk Ashin Wirathu to instigate communal riots. She formed the Commission with international personalities not only to silence her critics but also to raise her administration's authority and credibility.

Addressing the 71st UN General Assembly in New York, Suu Kyi referred to the Rohingya issue saying, "By standing firm against the forces of prejudice and intolerance, we are reaffirming our faith in fundamental human rights, in the dignity and worth of the human person". Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina met Suu Kyi on September 19 on the sidelines of the UNGA, and welcomed the Kofi Annan Commission. If Kofi Annan needs help, surely Bangladesh will come forward.

Assuming that the Commission makes recommendations for the restoration of rights of the Rohingyas, it will be difficult for NLD not to implement them. On the other hand, given the widespread racial intolerance, it will test Suu Kyi's efforts towards restoring the rights of the Rohingyas, including citizenship. More importantly, whether the military generals will accept the Commission's proposals remains to be seen.

However, hopes have been raised when Suu Kyi said that there was "persistent opposition from some quarters" to the establishment of the Commission, but her government would persevere in its efforts to achieve peace in Rakhine. Let us hope that Aung San Suu Kyi will firmly handle Buddhist fanaticism and redress the plight of Rohingyas in Rakhine.

The writer is former Ambassador and Secretary.

# Asia: Heading towards a seismic shift



PANA JANVIROJ

operating at its own pace, plotting a new stage of economic development and growth - despite ongoing global economic uncertainty.

In the process of this seismic shift, some countries have chosen to work in partnerships while others are tackling the challenges alone. All of them reflect Asia's unique aspiration to take on global competitive pressure. Some nations aim to get out of the middle-income trap, while others want to secure a higher standard of living for their people.

In Asean, leading the pack are Malaysia and Singapore - the dual trackers - with the much-heralded high-speed train project linking Kuala Lumpur and Singapore, at an estimated cost of USD 17 billion. Once completed, train travel between these two destinations will take just 90 minutes.

This will deepen links between the two high-income Asean members and expand scalability, especially for Singapore, with its limited land and manpower. It could well be that Kuala Lumpur will join Singapore as another world-class city to work in and ease the latter's vulnerability to being priced out as the world's most expensive location.

The other two Asean dual trackers are Thailand and Myanmar. Although more humble, there are plans to bring the 120-million population market closer together. One day, they may even form a single market!

Underway is the construction of special economic zones along the border between the two countries. This would facilitate freer flows of workers, businesses and communications. It would merge the border areas' sub-economic zones, such as Mae Sot in Thailand's Tak province and the Myanmar city of Mawlamyine.

During the decades that Myanmar was shut off from the world, the area was arguably, aside from Yangon, the most high-income generating part of the country, revealing the benefits of being adjacent to a complementary higher-income country.

On a grander scale, some economic

sector mergers between Thailand and Myanmar could be a game changer to help fast-forward the development and income of the latter. Together, they have scalability, complementary economies and strategic geography. And let's not forget the Dawei Special Economic Zone further south, which both countries are determined to make work despite the odds.

Of the other sizeable Asean member nations, Indonesia, the Philippines and Vietnam are on a single track but in equally dynamic mode, with most efforts being spent on 'putting the house in order.'

There is not a day that goes by when Indonesian President Joko 'Jokowi' Widodo doesn't try to energise the bureaucracy, government policies and private investments. With a population of

freedom affects everything from regulatory reforms and business sector liberalisation to infrastructure investment, tourism, and outward investment. In Asia, the country is now the darling of investors. Vietnam is making its regional presence felt, along with Laos, Cambodia and Myanmar.

Cambodia has leaned heavily on China for its economic advancement, which is also the result of economic liberalisation. Many businesses there can be 100 percent foreign-owned. Phnom Penh is full of foreign bank branches enjoying minimal capital and regulatory requirements. Prime Minister Hun Sen's approach appears to acknowledge that the 'loss of some sovereignty' is outweighed by the economic benefits that can be derived from such a loss. He would argue that Asean unity is less important in

terrorism would be a boon to the country. The same could be said of Bangladesh, as the fast-moving garment and textile supply-chain hub of the world.

North Asia, meanwhile, is undergoing more of a reinvention on a global scale. The location plays appear outdated as Japan, for instance, has found its old 'cheque-book diplomacy' to be less effective in the modern era. Japan now pins its hopes on innovation in robotics, medicine, biotechnology, and renewable energy. The reinvention timeline will coincide with Japan's hosting of the 2020 Olympics. Nonetheless, the Abe government has found the globalisation of Japan an ongoing challenge.

South Korea has come on strong with its determination to build wealth around cultural exports. South Korean embassies around the world place cultural diplomacy above all else in their external engagements. The Korean conglomerates have also started early on the 'Internet of Things' to stay ahead in the global consumer electronics market.

Likewise, Taiwan is working on its niche competitiveness, focusing on its outstanding skills in machinery and mechanisation. It never loses sight of any opportunity to own or create a global brand, as seen with the takeover of Sharp Corp.

China stands unique as a multi-tracker targeting rail networks and other infrastructure investments, the One Belt One Road initiative, e-commerce and financial technology, overseas takeovers, outward tourism and long-tail businesses that can ride the threat of a deflationary economy.

In many ways, China's foreign policy has propelled many strategic changes among Asian nations - alongside the forces of technology and global consumerism.

When Chinese Premier Li Keqiang told editors of Asia News Network in Beijing that China's status is still that of a developing country and not a mighty economic superpower, he was quite right. But together with its state-led strategy, nationalistic ideals, embedded 5,000 years of history and huge business-minded population, China's economic thrust is fuelled by its prowess and evokes awe from onlookers.

The writer is Executive Director of Asia News Network, an alliance of 21 leading media in 19 Asian countries.

The Asian Editors Circle is a series of columns on global affairs written by top editors from members of the ANN and published in newspapers across the region.

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

letters@thedailystar.net

### A torch bearer for women empowerment

On behalf of the students of IUB, I congratulate Shougat Nazbin Khan for being selected as one of the 17 UN Young Leaders for the Sustainable Development Goals. She has in fact paid heed to the call by our honourable Prime Minister for promoting women empowerment and should carry on being the torch bearer.

Syed Raiyan  
Independent University Bangladesh

### Upward trend of BD stock market

Bangladesh stock markets have been on an upward trend for the past 12 days closing at 4,665 on Thursday. But can it cross the loop of 4,300 to 4,700?

Our investment stock and MF portfolios now look richer. Some dividends (RIU) have already reached our accounts and cash dividends will arrive shortly. It looks as if many of the MFs may pay out 4 to 6 times more than acquiring price in about 4 years when the MFs will mature. Most of our recently bought bank stocks already shows good annual dividends, with the possibility of substantial long term capital growth.

I would like to request the BSEC to approve the rules formulated for MFs in respect of cash dividend and pay out without deduction of capital gain tax on maturity. The MF prospectus does show tax free dividend up to BDT 25,000 and free from any capital gain tax. If it is otherwise, investors need to be informed so that they can take informed decisions on their investments.

Luthfe Ali, On email



200 million, Indonesia is a huge market. We can't say that Jokowi is not doing his best to put Indonesia back where it belongs. He has repeatedly called on his government coalition partners to back him.

Likewise, new Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte wants to carry on where his predecessor left off in ending the impact of the last couple of decades following the Marcos era, especially in raising business confidence and pursuing massive infrastructure investments that will link Manila with other cities and reduce income disparities.

Vietnam presents an interesting forward-looking approach as a single-tracker. As a state-led economy, the country's stakeholders are able to move as a pack and can fire on all cylinders. This

delivering wealth to his country than Cambodia's tango with China.

South Asia's economic future is still shaped by India. The Modi government is determined to wrest control and realign fragmented Indian economic regulations in different states under a unified directive from Delhi. India will also see innovation from the long-tail technology business. Aviation reform and infrastructure spending is gathering pace. Real advancement will become more visible if Prime Minister Modi wins a second term in office.

Not to be outdone is Pakistan, with support from China's One Belt One Road initiative, which provides a port and highway to the Arabian Sea. The Pakistani army is mulling over speeding up the work based on its engineering skills. Anything that can bring peace and tame

ILLUSTRATION: LAU KA-KUEN