

Tackling climate change

Accelerating knowledge and technology transfer

IUTUC report on workers' condition

Heed it
 THE international Trade Union Confederation (IUTUC) has given Bangladesh poor marks in so far as the prevailing condition of workers in Bangladesh is concerned. And the rating has been based on the labour safety standard and access to their rights. One may very well contest the rating Bangladesh has been given, but what cannot be challenged is the fact that labour issue has been a simmering problem that has not been sufficiently addressed as yet, particularly in the RMG sector which happens to be the biggest foreign export earner for the country.

We would hope that the government would not approach the issue in the usual cavalier manner and dismiss the report offhand. The matter demands to be addressed seriously. For the government the ranking is not as important as it is to recognise the gravity of the issue and the damaging consequences if not solved quickly. Although a degree of improvement has been achieved in the labour front, much more needs to be done to bring up the working conditions of our workers to international standard. When other large RMG exporters in the region have been able to meet the universal criterion in this respect, that we should be repeatedly pulled up for our failure to do so is unacceptable.

We are on notice by the ILO whose position on workplace safety is little different from the IUTUC, and we have till November to put things right in this regard before it takes 'harsh' action against us. This coupled with the continued suspension of US preference facility and the EU threat to reconsider its position on preferential access to our RMG if all the aspects of the Sustainability Compact were not met, should not be taken lightly by the government.

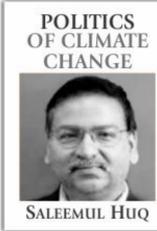
Blatant flouting of traffic laws

End impunity for the powerful

A back page photo in this newspaper published on Thursday highlights how futile traffic laws have become. The picture shows VIP cars, including a minister's car escorted by a police contingent going on the wrong side of the road in the midst of a long tail back near Ruposhi Bangla Motor. This is a mockery to the rule of law. It would take a very brave traffic police to stop a motorcade carrying a lawmaker without facing serious repercussions. In contrast, we find a traffic police officer in Bangalore stopping the president's convoy to make way for an ambulance. If it can be done there, why can't it be so here?

Open flouting of traffic rules by the high-ups has repeatedly been highlighted in this paper but to little avail. Why do not traffic laws apply for government high officials and members of parliament? We staunchly believe that the law is to be obeyed by everyone regardless of their stature in society. Indeed, in October 2014, the High Court sought explanation from the government as to why it should not enforce traffic laws stating "no one should escape from the radar of law with impunity."

The ground reality unfortunately is that the traffic police are in no position except to look the other way when influential people openly violate the traffic laws. It is shocking all the more when those who make laws and those who are meant to protect the law, break it without remorse. Unless something is done about this, it will merely exacerbate the authorities' attempt to bring some order on the streets of Dhaka.



POLITICS OF CLIMATE CHANGE
SALEEMUL HUQ

NOW that the challenge of tackling global climate change has been universally accepted by all countries and people (with the notable exception of Mr Trump and his cronies in the

White House and Federal US government) through the Paris Agreement, it is important for all countries, companies, NGOs, universities and other relevant stakeholders to share knowledge and hard technology for mitigation as well as adaptation across countries both North-to-South, South-to-South, and perhaps even, South-to-North.

I will describe below some of the ways that this can be done most effectively. First let me start with mitigation, or reducing emissions from greenhouse gases, mainly from burning fossil fuels such as coal, petroleum and natural gas, as well as, from methane emissions from livestock and rice paddies. The main technology to be deployed here is green and sustainable energy sources such as solar and wind energy in order to replace dependence on fossil fuels over time.

This kind of transfer of technology is very much a part of the traditional paradigm of North-to-South transfer of hard technologies such as solar panels and wind turbines.

Bangladesh has been at the forefront of rolling out solar home systems to more than four million households, providing mainly lighting to around 20 million people in all parts of the country. The challenge now is to scale up the solar units to provide more electricity for productive uses, such as running irrigation pumps and small scale industries. Current pilots, if successful, can be scaled up rapidly.

Another important area is transportation, which still remains largely dependent on petroleum and natural gas. While using natural gas is better in terms of emissions than petroleum, nevertheless transitioning to electric

vehicles using solar or wind energy would be the goal.

But, when it comes to the topic of adaptation to the adverse impacts of climate change, then the traditional North-to-South and hard technology transfer model does not really apply well at all.

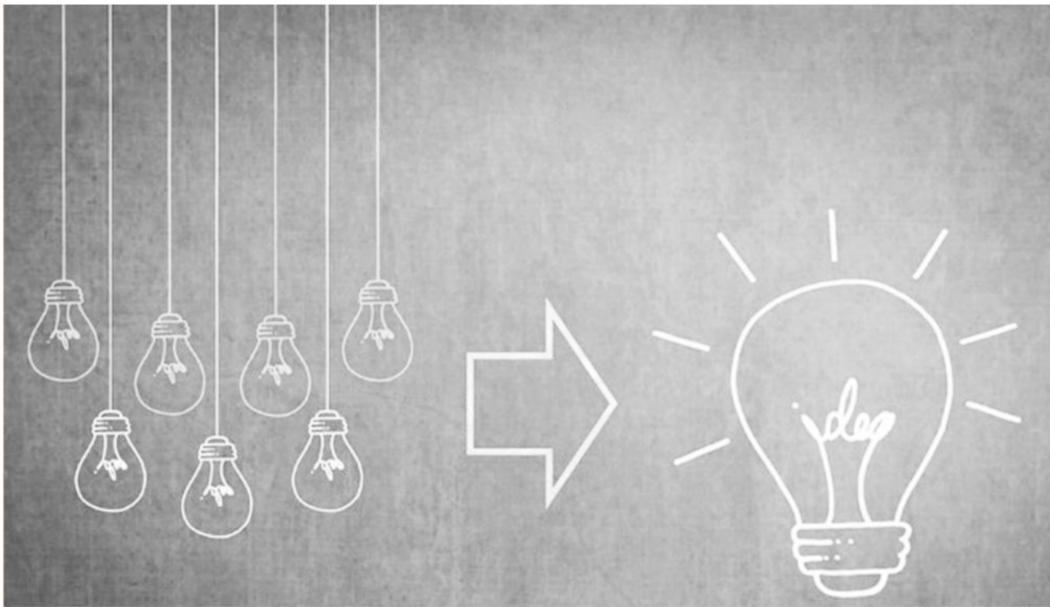
The reason for this is that adaptation to the adverse impacts of climate change vary by location and type of impacts. For example, adapting to droughts is very

those having developed the adaptation knowhow to others who wish to learn, is for the latter to visit and spend time with the adapters and learn from them how they did what they did. In other words, the traditional tools of technology transfer by sending international experts to travel to a country and run workshops will not be very effective.

Rather we need to combine knowledge generation and sharing with longer term capacity building at the national level in

improved water management, as well as, in terms of disaster risk reduction. The university and research sectors have also organised themselves into a platform called Gobeshona where they share knowledge both with each other as well as with other users.

Finally, Bangladesh is also sharing its knowhow on adaptation to climate change with other developing countries through South-South cooperation and is also quite willing to share adaptation



different from adapting to floods or sea level rise. Similarly, the adaptation for the Netherlands will be very different from Bangladesh (even if the climate hazard is similar).

Hence, adaptation is a learning by doing process, in which the knowledge generated is experiential knowledge and not just a simple one-size-fits-all hard technology that can be simply taken from one place or country and transplanted to another.

In such cases, the best way to share knowledge, and thereby transfer it from

each and every country. In this context, the institutions that are supposed to build capacities of a country's citizens are its universities. Until now, they have been utilised very little.

So, when it comes to transferring knowledge on adaptation, it is less about hard technologies and more about sharing experiential knowledge from practitioners to others.

Bangladesh has done relatively well at developing knowhow on adaptation to climate change impacts from salt tolerant varieties of rice and other crops to

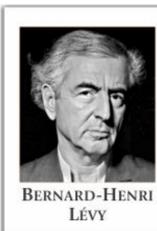
knowhow in a south-to-north direction with the developed countries.

As tackling climate change is a global problem, all citizens and countries need to find ways of tackling it, and when a successful way is found, share that information quickly and effectively with others. Bangladesh is ready to play its part in this global knowledge sharing enterprise.

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PROJECT SYNDICATE

Reinventing the French People



BERNARD-HENRI LÉVY

"It is accomplish ed..." In the years when I listened to music nonstop, the passage marked by those words was for me one of the most intriguing in Bach's St. John Passion.

In a plaintive soprano accompanied by a cello's lament, lingering between song and silence, the memory came back to me on Monday morning, the day after the second round of France's parliamentary election. The event that has been accomplished, of course, is President Emmanuel Macron's plan to

foundations shifted and its traditional points of reference were obscured. We will be told about the inner wisdom of a nation that already knew the outcome and wished, without saying so, to avoid the appearance of an excessive victory. Blame will be placed on the weather, the bridges, the media, the bitterness of spurned leaders, and the unknown quantities represented by the new faces of the president's army of candidates.

But I do not believe that these anecdotal responses will hold up for long. I cannot avoid hearing, in the deafening silence of the millions who abstained, the dissonant note one always detects in victorious fanfares. One never knows, at first, whether it is just a false note, the sound of things falling and continuing to roll briefly before finally

idea that suddenly appears phantasmagoric.

Hobbes warned us. "The people" is always an artifact. Given the unsociable sociability of human beings, driven by their appetites and passions, the process by which it is fashioned is both brazen and fragile.

And, in the real world, it is the social contract, with its institutions and procedures, its modes of deliberation, delegation, and mediation, and, in particular, its votes, that stands behind the noble invention of a "people" and accounts for the fact that those who comprise it occasionally take a break from tearing each other limb from limb. I cannot help but wonder, in the aftermath of France's "Abstention Sunday," whether the sound we hear is

1790, and celebrated by the French historian and poet Michelet – is not becoming a thing of the past.

That would seem to leave us to choose between two stances. We can accommodate ourselves to this irreality and Macron's newly installed representatives, so preternaturally smooth and remote as to suggest that they might have been elected while Leviathan was sleeping. Or we can rely on Facebook and Twitter to restore a semblance of will and sovereignty to what used to be called the people, by technical means that enable real-time responses to instant referenda.

But there is another alternative: to detect in the prospect of answers without questions and choices, without deliberation or even thought, a path that will lead eventually only to more inhumanity, owing to the urges that may at any moment take hold of a people that senses itself withering away. In that case, we could gird ourselves with intelligence, reason, and courage; return in force to the political arena; and, inspired by the Enlightenment's legacy, recast in today's language the theorems of representative democracy, a political system that remains (and will long remain) without peer.

We must reassemble what is falling apart and drifting away like icebergs. We must close the wound from which flows the lifeblood of a fragmented society. In short, we the people must refund ourselves on the rubble of a smoldering world that trembles beneath our feet. Such is the true revolution toward which Macron and his parliamentary majority will have to work in France.

The task is immense, historic, and ultimately meta-political. No single individual, nor several, nor even an overwhelming majority can accomplish it. What will be needed is the general will – no longer just individual or collective, but truly general – of the Republic of France. And then, as in Bach's St. John Passion, in which the lamentation that "It is accomplished" is followed by strings of Resurrection, it will become possible once again to discern in France's politics the traces of French history – and the path to France's future.

The writer is one of the founders of the "Nouveau Philosophes" (New Philosophers) movement. His books include *Left in Dark Times: A Stand Against the New Barbarism*, *American Vertigo: Traveling America in the Footsteps of Tocqueville*, and most recently, *The Genius of Judaism*.
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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

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Extra costs for travellers on Eid

Regular commuters are being charged with an additional 100 TK from public transport holders as Eid approaches. Why are these extra charges being imposed on us while there is a fixed rate in place already?

These charges are especially difficult on passengers from low economic backgrounds who travelling to other cities to spend Eid with their families. The concerned authorities must take some strong steps in this regard.

Sumon Paul
 By E-mail

Endless hardships of the haor people

The people of Sunamgoag, HobigonjandNetrokona have been suffering endlessly since the flash flood. Two months have passed since the flash flood that damaged their crops, but they have nowhere to go due to the stagnant water. The relief operation undertaken through the government's social safety net program was but a meagre effort compared to the needs of the affected people. Moreover, only those who are acquainted with influential people received any significant relief. The local government must pay more attention to flash flood-affected victims and distribute government relief to help them rebuild their lives.

Mohammad ZonaeEmran
 Mutual Trust Bank



PHOTO: AFP

obtain a majority in the National Assembly.

But, whether we like it or not, there is more to the event than that. Another accomplishment was the record-high abstention rate: 57% of French voters disdained the rare and precious privilege of voting, a privilege invented several centuries ago by men who believed in deliberation, reason, and enlightenment.

Inevitably, we will hear commentary about an electorate exhausted from a dramatic year in which France's political

coming to a stop, or a real clunker, a more jarring interruption, the herald of a real crisis.

And we cannot rule out that Sunday's most salient statistic (that 57%!) signifies not only the last gasp of the supine corpses that had been yesterday's political apparatus (and that may rise again to become tomorrow's populist parties). It could also reflect a process of dereliction, desertion, and dispersal; one that affects, beyond the vote, the idea that the French hold of themselves, an

not the seizing up of this splendid, subtle machine.

I wonder, too, if we are not nearing the end of a process of dissolution that now threatens to turn the abstraction of "the people" irreversibly into a fiction, one nearly impossible to imagine (let alone put a face to) and even more difficult to believe. I wonder if the satisfaction of being a people – as invented by the first Europeans and Americans, reinvented by the French celebrants of national unity on July 14,