

UNGA resolution on Rohingya crisis

International community should harden its position

It was long overdue, but we welcome the resolution adopted by the United Nations General Assembly, which condemned the military operations in Myanmar's Rakhine state against the Rohingya minority community.

The overwhelming support to the resolution, drafted by the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), shows the international community's unified position on the Rohingya issue. The world community has sent a clear message to the Myanmar government that ethnic cleansing cannot continue under its nose, that the government must investigate the gross human rights violations, and that Rohingya refugees must return to their homeland with their full citizenship rights guaranteed.

We, however, regrettably note that ten countries including China and Russia opposed the resolution, and 26 others abstained. We are afraid such a position would perpetuate the violence against the very few Rohingyas that are left in Rakhine.

Despite the nearly unanimous position of the international community in opposing the military operations in Rakhine state, Myanmar's military regime shows no sign of heeding the advice that it should refrain from using excessive force. According to multiple media reports, gunfire was still heard and big flames were seen near Bangladesh-Myanmar border area only the day before yesterday.

However, the Myanmar army chief's statement, very soon after the resolution was passed, that they would take only "real citizens" among those who had taken shelters in Bangladesh demonstrates the devious intention of the military. And this is what the international community must take cognisance of. It has raised serious questions over Myanmar's repatriation plans for the displaced Rohingyas.

We urge the international community to go beyond mere resolutions and act more decisively—especially with respect to the military—whose genocidal actions deserve more stringent measures against them.

Plundering trees from public farm

Flagrant misuse of power

It is alarming that a public authority is least bothered about protecting a vast forest farm it owns in Rajshahi and equally hesitant to punish those who are destroying it, in spite of the well-known fact that thousands of trees from the farm have been plundered illegally.

The alleged perpetrator, a ruling party leader from Rajshahi, has cut down the live trees illegally after having won a tender bidding through a questionable process to remove dead and fallen trees.

The *Daily Star* reported on the matter first in August. Yet, the Department of Livestock Services (DLS), which owns the farm, did not only turn a blind eye to the continuous plundering, but also took a very unusual step of transferring the whistle-blowing employees.

Despite the perpetrator's boastful admission as to how he manipulated the tender process by bribing the farm officials, neither the local administration nor DLS has taken any action against the man, apart from suspending his work. No action has been taken against the corrupt officials either, who allowed him to destroy the forest.

It is another instance of using political links to do wrong. We wonder how public officials become complicit in the destruction of public properties—that too, precious natural resource—and get away with it, and how good employees are punished because of their dutifulness.

We urge the authorities concerned to look into the matter. Lack of stringent actions against the perpetrator and corrupt officials will breed further corruption.

PLEASURE IS ALL MINE



SHAH HUSAIN IMAM

We have been picking our brains hard to find a creative solution to the task of shoring up the stagnating tourism sector in Bangladesh. In spite of its location-centred magnetism, how long would Bangladesh languish on the side-line of a relatively peacetime globe-girdling tourism industry when comes its turn?

Currently, of course, we take the centre-spot of international media. The conscientious world is beholden to us for the unending, often prevaricated Rohingya crisis, our benevolent sheltering of the numerous hapless victims of ethnic cleansing and our turning into destination for crisis-management trips.

What bearing all this will have through an enhanced image of Bangladesh only time will unravel.

Back on tourism, we were told by the minister concerned that an increasing domestic appetite for seeing places within the country is being observed and whetted. Very well, from the point of view of patriotism, but how far it works as a prerequisite for injecting an impetus to international travelling into the country remain an open to question.

Foreigner arrivals have been incidental to Dhaka or Chittagong on the side-line of their main business itineraries for cities in South or South-East Asia. In the hard, competitive business world, the

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BETWEEN THE LINES



KULDIP NAYAR

THE press has been able to consolidate its freedom after several struggles. And today it is generally free from government pressure. There are still other forces which do not allow it to be completely free. Yet among all the democracies in the world, the Indian press is considered independent.

The electronic media is to a large extent at the mercy of estate owners who earn money through property dealings and spend it on maintaining a channel or two. This cannot be, however, said about the print media with certainty.

When it comes to films, the pressure of government is relentless and visible. Every film has to have censor's certificate. When freedom of expression has been guaranteed by the Constitution, it has been guaranteed for all modes and methods. The requisite of censor's certificate curbs freedom.

Why filmmakers have never made it an issue is beyond me. It is still not too late to do so. Sanjay Leela Bhansali's film can be the rallying point. Film director Bhansali, has preferred to face the consequences. He was attacked in Rajasthan where he was shooting the film. Yet he has stuck to guns.

The radical Hindus in Rajasthan, who have organised themselves into the krini brigade, have broken furniture and put it to fire in one of the cinema halls in a Rajasthan town. Most of the liberal voices are conspicuous by their silence. Bhansali must be feeling lonely. Whether the film *Padmavati* which he has directed is based on fiction or fact is not the point at issue. It is Bhansali's determination to screen it. He gets full marks for his resoluteness.

Not many film directors will emulate his example because of the huge money at stake. The financiers will hesitate to invest. They are interested on returns

sure-fire way to fall by the wayside is to be content with consolation prizes! The only thing, we came by, however, to break the monotony and mental barrier was the news last year that at least a dozen global franchise hotels had thrown their hats in the ring to set up branches in Dhaka in near future. It goes without saying unless they were certain of returns they wouldn't have come forward to invest.

At long last, however, a silver bullet

conventions" in Bangladesh marks a sea change. It means a whole lot of things interwoven on four levels: government, private sector event management including sponsorships, tour and travel operators and the citizens.

Of course, the objective conditions would have been far from ideal had law enforcers not prevented some planned terror attacks, busted their dens and seized the caches of weapons. But the gaps in counter-terrorism capabilities

should be priding on.

That "Bangladesh is emerging as a new destination for meetings, incentives, conventions, incentives and exhibitions," acronymed as MICE is an auspicious piece of news.

On the toy-making front our export growth has been 2000 percent in five years. Bangladesh is the fastest toy exporting country after Myanmar, Cambodia, Nepal, Laos Seychelles, Bhutan grossing USD 58.3 million.



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PHOTO: SHEIKH MEHEDI MORSHED

has fallen on our palm, courtesy of the least expected yet very plausible quarters! Two recent news headlines in the print media have helped me grasp the true meaning of the phrase "breaking new grounds". The first one reads almost like a revelation: "Tourism industry thrives on seminars, conventions" (*Dhaka Tribune*; July 16); and the second one under the story line—Another Bangladesh-titled, "Bangladesh-made toys find their way into the hands of European children" (*Prothom Alo*; November 6).

Exactly a year and a fortnight since the Holey Artisan terror attack had set the alarm bell ringing, almost globally, about safety of foreigners in Dhaka, the news of "tourism thriving on seminars and

will have to be bridged keeping in view the new incarnations the cornered global terrorist outfits might try to appear in. A guarded normalcy that has been restored to the streets will have to be maintained with undiminished vigil by effective community policing.

We dare to believe, with the counter-terror units by our side and trial and punishment of those fleeing law, that we have bounced back as a resilient city. We are prepared to redeem on our traditional hospitality duly underpinned by a marked improvement in our tourist infrastructure within expanding special zones beyond the capital city.

But we must strive to uphold the human rights standards at any cost as a marker of a progressive society we

Seven years back the figure was seven thousand dollars only. We have two factories in the EPZ and a few outside its perimeter. In Gazipur, an industry, belonging to a Chinese Multi-tech international group is located. We trade toys with France, Spain and Japan.

With our strong handicraft tradition, we can prosper in the trade manifold. We need to get into high-tech, educational toy manufacture.

At one time, Taiwan, a resource-short country, was heavily reliant on toys. In fact, its graduation to electronics where it is a respected name was helped by it.

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Can *Padmavati* be a rallying point for press freedom?

BETWEEN THE LINES



KULDIP NAYAR

not the principles which Bhansali has pursued caring little about the fallout. At present, a good film has become a victim of chauvinism.

The worst part is that the whole thing has been politicised. The ruling Bhartiya Janata Party (BJP) is backing the anti-Bhansali elements. For them, the film is an attack on Hindutva and must be stopped from screening.

Bhansali has been described as a leader of anti-Hindu group. Nobody is there to explain why he becomes anti-Hindu because of his film and why he would be a proud Hindu if he gives up the

similar situation. His film *Aandhi* was drastically censored when it was screened. It gave, however, a message to the people who were against Prime Minister Indira Gandhi's autocratic rule.

Probably a third force, which is neither communal nor authoritarian, is the answer. It is not yet even on the horizon. Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar is probably the answer to such questions raised. But if he were to leave Bihar, the space comes to be occupied by Laloo Prasad Yadav and his family, not a good choice.

For some reasons, successive governments at the centre have rejected



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radio by the same house or individuals. Even America has some kind of control over cross ownership. But there is no such bar in India where it is like putting up yet another factory.

True, the media has come a long way. Still current annual report of the Press Council of India is helplessly demanding the television channels to come under its purview. The rulers continue to turn a deaf ear to what is asked.

The Council says: "For quite some time an issue has arisen about the need for qualification for entry into the profession of journalism. Since the

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media is a fully developed field and has some influence on the lives of the people, the time has now come when some qualification should be prescribed by law."

I do not agree that there should be any remote control. I would have rather an undisciplined press in a democratic set up than a disciplined press in an orderly society. The polity runs by the elected representative may look like a rule by mob. It is any time preferable to a disciplined autocratic rule.

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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

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Govt must do more to tackle inequality

Recently released Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics data shows that our Gross Domestic Product (GDP) for the fiscal year 2016-2017 has registered a growth of 7.28 percent against the targeted GDP growth of 7.4. Meanwhile, our per capita income also increased to USD 1,610.

All these indicates that our economic is growing well year after year at a firm rate. However, that doesn't mean we should now become complacent as that would definitely affect our progress. The government needs to find ways to reduce unemployment and enhance investment that will lead to more job creation. Moreover, the government should also take steps to tack the rising inequality and bridge the ever-growing gap between the rich and the poor.

Otherwise, all our progress will be in vain.

Mohammad Zonaed Emran, *By email*

