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Start Rohingya repatriation soonest

Myanmar must stop procrastination

Now that Bangladesh has implemented what Myanmar demanded—a family-wise list of Rohingya returnees—we expect the latter to carry out its part immediately. Instead of further procrastination, Myanmar must now complete the authentication process and start repatriating its nationals fulfilling the conditions set forth by the Annan Commission.

In addition, let us remind, lest Myanmar forget, that repatriating the refugees does not exonerate the crimes committed against them by Myanmar's security forces. Yanghee Lee, the UN Special Rapporteur on Myanmar, has recently said that the violence against Rohingya refugees bears the "hallmarks of genocide."

In light of her comments, we want to emphasise that a grave genocidal act has been committed against the Rohingyas by the state apparatus. A number of high-ranking UN human rights officials—including Ms Lee—openly talked about the possibility of setting up a tribunal to try the key actors behind Myanmar army's brutal campaign against Rohingya. Now, the UN must go beyond utterance and stating facts. Verbal or written uproar, no matter how harsh it sounds, if not matched with real actions, will be interpreted as mere rhetoric, and will also raise serious questions about the global body's credibility.

The UN should immediately launch an inquiry to ascertain the involvement and complicity of Myanmar's military and civilian officials in what the UN human rights chief called "textbook example of ethnic cleansing," and bring them under the prevalent international law. Unless the perpetrators are brought to justice, such killings are likely to be repeated.

Gross dereliction of duty by police

Someone must answer for Raj's death

A report in a leading Bangla daily on February 18 is a shocking example of both illegal and inhuman acts of the police. Reportedly, Raj, a nine-year-old school boy, was hit from behind by a jeep in the city's Doyaganj area. But the police on the spot allowed the vehicle to go. As it turned out, it was being used by a police officer.

Apart from the illegality of the police action, it was a callous disregard for the injured. They could have at least helped the boy get to the nearest hospital. Is it not the police's duty to help people in distress, whatever the cause may be? Had Raj been taken to the nearest hospital by the police, he could have been saved. The two private hospitals that the unfortunate parents went to, refused to admit him, and by the time he got to Dhaka Medical College Hospital it was too late. We would also like to know why the police refused to register the case at the time of the accident, which made it impossible for Raj's parents to admit him to the hospitals they went to.

And it is one thing for parents to lose a child in an accident and quite another for a relative of the deceased lament that there was no point in lodging a case because the perpetrator is high and mighty and it would be pointless to press charges. Are we then living in a land of fear where the law is not applicable for people who are there to uphold the law? This was negligence on every count and someone must answer for the death of Raj.

Why private healthcare is failing



BADIUZZAMAN BAY

There is no mistaking the severity of the crisis faced by our private healthcare. Private hospitals and diagnostic centres, once heralded for their cutting-edge technology and service potential with the public hospitals struggling with the flow of patients, have strayed from the sacred path of service and descended into mayhem.

A new Transparency International Bangladesh (TIB) survey on private healthcare shows how bad the situation is. It shows how private hospitals and diagnostic centres have turned into profit-

may be forgiven for forgetting the fact that access to healthcare is a basic human right, not a privilege.

Unfortunately, the greed that drives this mechanism has also become a part of how public hospitals operate today. These state-funded institutions, which mostly remain stretched to the limit, should ideally have been places where patients, especially the poorer ones, felt welcomed and got treatment at cheaper rates. Instead, scarcity of doctors, nurses, and seats as well as the institutional impediments that exemplify Bangladesh's public sector mean that medical services are not as easily accessible, with patients suffering layers of corruption and mismanagement in the service delivery process. But that's another story for another day.

With 63.3 percent of the households

bureaucratic strictures that typically surround the public sector. In fact, part of the reason why private healthcare was introduced was to take the pressure off public hospitals, bring innovation, and stem the flow of patients going abroad for lack of a better service at home. However, while there has been some progress in terms of access to primary healthcare, nothing much in the way of quality and cost of service has changed.

In recent times, there has been a lot of talk about excessive fees and questionable services in the private sector, after several prominent hospitals came under scrutiny following allegations by disgruntled patients and relatives. I have no problem with a private facility having a business motive which, in my view, is integral to the nature of these institutions. A privately-

Iftekaruzzaman also expressed a similar concern at an event unveiling the survey report, saying, "The booming private healthcare sector has helped more people have access to medical services, but those who are involved in the private healthcare services are trying to turn the facilities into business outlets," adding that the basic standards are not being maintained. (*The Daily Star*, February 8)

Excessive and often unregulated fees, expensive diagnostic tests, substandard treatment, and lack of properly trained health professionals are just some of the visible manifestations of a medical facility inwardly turning into a commercial organisation. Many of these problems can be solved just by strengthening regulation and enforcing the existing laws. Greater enforcement will lead to greater compliance and performance on the part of the facilities, and will eventually lead to improved services. But to think that regulation alone will change everything that is wrong will be naive and unrealistic.

For example, a lot of what happens in the name of referrals are a matter of ethical—not legal—consideration. A doctor is ethically bound to refer a patient to the right surgeon, the right hospital, the right diagnostic centre, the right drug and equipment supplier, and suggest the right course of action. And for that, all one needs to do is use one's best judgment, without bias. But being a doctor, you can also prescribe the medicine recommended by the pharmaceutical rep that you are on good terms with—you can even suggest as many tests as you want, or set a high price for a surgery, and it will all be "legal." This is where the ethics part comes in. Everything in the health service that is not covered by law is covered by ethics. The Hippocratic Oath has been around for a reason.

There are then certain problems that the private sector had no part in creating—such as the lack of efficient medical and paramedical staff, or the high cost of importing medical equipment—nor is it the only one affected by it.

Which is why we need a holistic approach to solution, one that will encourage ethical practices and improve monitoring and regulation across the medical spectrum, and also remove the barriers that stand in the way of a pro-people health service. The government has a big part to play in all of this but the onus is on the private sector to prove that it is willing to lead the change from within. The question is, is it ready to do so?

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What happens in the private-sector healthcare is of vital importance not only to the vast number of patients dependent on it, but also the policymakers under pressure to handle the country's growing health needs.

driven enterprises devoid of the basic principles that govern the health service universally. It specifically talks about what it calls a "commission-based marketing mechanism," the provision of referrals (for patients) to certain parties in exchange for commission for the referees. It's a win-win strategy that benefits the physicians, owners of private medical facilities, middlemen, and practically everyone involved in the process—except those who matter most, the patients.

Given the price that you have to pay and the sufferings you have to go through to get a medical service, you

currently seeking services from approximately 15,698 private healthcare facilities across the country—a far cry from 1982 when there were only 33—the private sector has emerged as a major player. What happens in this sector is of vital importance not only to the vast number of patients dependent on it, but also the policymakers under pressure to handle the country's growing health needs.

The private sector is in a unique position to bring about the desired technological and service-related changes in our healthcare, unencumbered by the

funded institution can serve better with a growth vision behind it. Profit is a precondition for growth and better service. Both are affected when there is not a steady flow of cash at the end of each month, but lust for profit—the kind that makes you disregard the very basic tenets of medical ethos—is an entirely different thing. No amount of logic can justify that kind of practice. It appears that somewhere along the line, the private sector has forgotten the need to strike a balance between profit-making and the essential provision of medical care.

TIB Executive Director Dr

PROJECT ■ SYNDICATE

The power of dialogue in a disrupted world



KLAUS SCHWAB

Closing the divides in our fractured world will require collaboration among many stakeholders. And, more often than not, it is dialogue that sets cooperation apart from conflict, and progress from painful reversals of fortune. Good-faith dialogue—the ability to see the world through the eyes of other people, especially those with whom we disagree—has never been more important. We are living in an age when the Internet and other information and communications technologies have broken down traditional borders and brought us closer together. But it is also an age in which the drumbeat of nationalism is pushing us further apart. In the absence of calm, constructive, and sometimes uncomfortable conversations about what kind of future we want, intolerance and isolationism threaten to roll back centuries of progress.

The stakes really are that high. The World Economic Forum's 2018 Global Risks Report shows that an overwhelming majority of experts worldwide believe that a catastrophic conflict between major powers could erupt this year. In the meantime, problems within countries will continue to fuel public suspicion that the system is rigged to favour elites. Chief among those problems are rising inequality and declining social mobility. According to the International Monetary Fund, income inequality has increased in 53 percent of all countries over the past 30 years, and particularly in advanced economies.

The Greek Stoic philosopher Epictetus once said, "We have two ears and one mouth so that we can listen twice as much as we speak." The same principle applies to dialogue, which requires that we listen to different perspectives, and always keep an open mind. In 2018, that means heeding the public's grievances, and working together toward collective solutions. Only joint responses will suffice to tackle the complex problems we face.

The indispensability of multi-stakeholder dialogue to global progress is why it is the cornerstone of the Forum's guiding ethos. Beyond the vital work of organisations such as the United Nations, the Forum has created a space on the world stage where business leaders can rub shoulders with labour activists, and world leaders can talk—but, more important, listen.

Back in 1987, the WEF's annual meeting in Davos played a key role in preventing a war between Greece and Turkey. Turgut Zal, Turkey's prime minister at the time, met with his Greek counterpart, Andreas Papandreu, and the two men formed a bond of trust that helped stave off a military conflict.

In Davos this year, a group of Israeli and Palestinian business leaders met to renew their commitment to a two-state solution, and pledged their support for strengthening the Palestinian economy.

Moreover, Greek Prime Minister Alexis Tsipras and the prime minister of the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (FYROM), Zoran Zaev, held the first prime-ministerial-level meeting between their two countries in seven years. Together, they advanced negotiations to end a lingering dispute that has stymied FYROM's bid for European Union accession. Last but not least, Davos hosted diplomatic talks to bolster ongoing multilateral peacemaking and political reconciliation efforts on the Korean Peninsula, in Venezuela, and in Sub-Saharan Africa and Somalia.

be able to patent human genes that they have isolated? Should AI make battlefield decisions?

None of these questions can be answered without thoughtful, open dialogue between segments of society that rarely interact. Technology companies, start-ups, international organisations, academics, and civil-society leaders need to come together with regulators and policymakers to develop measures that will limit the risks of new technologies without restricting innovation.

The Forum's San Francisco-based Center for the Fourth Industrial Revolution was founded in 2016 to facilitate this type of dialogue. And it has already brought together various stakeholders to formulate policy responses to the challenges posed by AI and

The world needs more of this kind of cooperative dialogue. Many people might hanker for a return to the supposedly simpler world of the past. But withdrawing into our cultures, nations, industries, and organisations is not the answer. In fact, it is part of the problem.



In 2018 and in the years ahead, longstanding geopolitical challenges will persist alongside fresh disruptions from the digital world. The Fourth Industrial Revolution and its attendant technologies—artificial intelligence (AI), bioengineering, and so forth—offer abundant opportunities for material and social progress. But they are also upending established business models and pushing modern warfare in frightening new directions.

The dilemmas confronting us today are profound. Should driverless vehicles value the lives of their passengers over those of pedestrians? Is there still such a thing as privacy in a world of facial recognition software and big-data applications? Should companies

machine learning, the Internet of Things, digital trade and cross-border data flows, civilian drones, and blockchain technology.

The world needs more of this kind of cooperative dialogue. Many people might hanker for a return to the supposedly simpler world of the past. But withdrawing into our cultures, nations, industries, and organisations is not the answer. In fact, it is part of the problem. For the sake of our shared future, we must recognise the power of dialogue.

Klaus Schwab, Founder and Executive Chairman of the World Economic Forum, is the author of *The Fourth Industrial Revolution*.
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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

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Inflicting harm on your loved ones

The number of smokers is increasing day by day. We want to prevent environmental pollution, but what about the pollution that occurs in private quarters—inside our houses? The smoke that comes out of a cigarette badly affects the health of those nearby. It is especially unbearable for those who do not smoke—be it in public spaces or private.

We often talk about how smoking in public, which has been banned, can cause problems, but the effects of smoking in houses are seldom discussed, and even when they are, the discussion tends to revolve more around the smokers, and less around other inhabitants of the house. Babies are especially in danger when there is a smoker in the family. Their lungs can be seriously damaged, and they can grow to be weak and have various health complications as adult.

I think we need to create awareness about this particular issue. A smoker causes harm not only to themselves but also to other people and even their loved ones. It will be pathetic not to keep that in mind.

Sayed Chowdhury, By e-mail

