

Moral authority and immoral U-turns

Myanmar's military must be tried for genocide

UN mission's findings leave no room for doubt

WE thank the UN for exercising due diligence by issuing the strongest condemnation to date of the Myanmar military. We laud the UN fact-finding mission for holding the leadership of the Myanmar military responsible for the atrocities committed against the Rohingya population and for calling for investigation and prosecution of the security forces for genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes. The mission has also noted that the civilian government allowed hate speech to thrive and oversaw the destruction of evidence.

The complicity of both the Myanmar military and civilian government in the gross human rights violations of Rohingyas is something the world already knew but the genocidal regime has remained unmoved—despite being responsible for creating one of the worst refugee crises in the region. The sham of a repatriation deal is a case in point.

Failure to try the leadership of the Myanmar military in a court of law would mean letting individuals in power get away with unleashing a campaign of rape, arson and indiscriminate killing. The UN mission has urged the UN Security Council to set up an ad hoc tribunal or refer the suspects to the ICC. But the UNSC's track record when it comes to taking action against Myanmar does not give one much hope. We appeal to our friend China, a permanent member of the UNSC, to acknowledge the gravity of the humanitarian crisis and change its stance on Myanmar. We also urge Russia to do the same. The Security Council's consistent failure to pass a single resolution to take action against Myanmar has prevented an entire persecuted population from getting a modicum of justice.

The UN mission's 14-point recommendations must not be ignored by the UNSC, regional organisations such as the EU and ASEAN, and other relevant bodies. International pressure on Myanmar must continue as Bangladesh has stretched its abilities in coping with the Rohingya crisis and needs an early solution.

Killing people with impunity

Arrest bus driver, helper immediately

THE chilling story of Rezaul Karim, the man allegedly pushed off a minibus by the helper and then squashed to death by the driver of the minibus he was riding, sends shivers down the spine! The incident occurred in City Gate area near the port city on August 28. Witnesses on the bus have stated that Karim had had an altercation with the helper and going by what his co-passengers have said, the manner in which the man was literally shoved out of the bus and run over is tantamount to murder. It is simply amazing that in the aftermath of so much protest by school students regarding the lack of road safety that leads to countless deaths, we are still being confronted with such tales of horror. The police, unfortunately, are yet to apprehend the culprits.

There has been no change in the mentality of drivers and their assistants. These people seem to be suffering from the notion that they are above the law and authorities are there to protect their interests and not those of commuters. These accidents are occurring every single day and authorities simply cannot adopt a laidback attitude to such murderous behaviour. Dhaka city was brought to a virtual standstill for a week by schoolgoing students who had been demanding safer roads. Roads cannot be made safer if transport workers are allowed to put commuters to risk. The law is applicable for all and we demand that the driver and the helper, both of whom are equally guilty for this despicable act, be apprehended without delay. They must be made to face justice.



KNOT SO TRUE

RUBANA HUQ

MANY moons ago, the world believed in philosophy, religion and politics. Not wholly true anymore. We see acute reversals on a regular basis. We have more heroes falling from grace every day—more than ever before. A week ago, a television channel in Singapore televised the entire speech of Aung San Suu Kyi, Myanmar's de-facto leader

defending the steps of Myanmar. Amidst huge global criticism, the State Counsellor was summing up her four-day visit to Singapore and urging investors to invest in her land, in which she saw enormous "tourist" potential amidst the ravaged landscape, and was seen confidently delivering that Myanmar has reached great heights in terms of peace and national reconciliation.

In her speech, she also referred to the four million migrant workers from Myanmar working in Thailand and mentioned how closely Thailand and Myanmar were working on resolving the challenges. And finally she said, she hoped to similarly work "with" Bangladesh to ensure a "voluntary", "safe", and "dignified" return of the displaced persons from Northern Rakhine. In her 30-minute speech, she was totally reticent about accepting any critical views and stressed on how dangerous inter-

Stardom does not grant impunity. Stars cannot be untouchable. They may compromise their integrity, deny every inch of the moral nerves in their bodies, in order to justify all that they have done and obfuscate the right, but that still leaves them the dishonour of being ambassadors of abuse.

communal violence could linger on and thus affect other countries in the region. More shock was about to follow.

In an absolutely calm tone, Suu Kyi said that Myanmar had been ready to receive Rohingya returnees since January 23, adding that the ball was in Bangladesh's court as Bangladesh will now have to decide how quickly the process will be completed. Indeed, Suu Kyi. Ouch. Following her speech, Singapore's Deputy Prime Minister Teo Chee was also seen urging both Bangladesh and Myanmar to concentrate on their "shared commitment." All this time, Suu Kyi looked well settled with a flower tucked behind her ear and a bright red clutch adorning



Nobel Peace Prize winner Aung San Suu Kyi has been stripped of several honours including Freedom of Oxford and Freedom of Dublin. PHOTO: YE AUNG THU/AFP

her dress, almost oblivious of the massacre that had led many including the UN to call it a "genocide." The recent report based on 875 in-depth interviews, satellite imagery, documents, photographs and videos has helped the UN fact-finding mission to conclude that Myanmar's top military generals must be investigated and prosecuted for genocide. UN has also blamed Suu Kyi for not having used her moral authority to "stem or prevent" the atrocities. In reality, she chose silence to remain in power with her "sweet" generals. So far, the Nobel laureate has lost seven honours, the last one being Edinburgh's Freedom of the City award.

In the meantime, the Vatican has just erased a recommendation that Pope Francis made about gay children needing psychiatric help, hinting that homosexuality was a mental illness. That was the second shock in a week, the first being his indifference to sex-abuse allegations against the US Cardinal Theodore McCarrick. The damning Pennsylvania grand jury report covers cases of 300 priests involved in sex-abuse and over a thousand victims, to which the Pope in response refused to comment. The latest call was from Archbishop Carlo Maria Vigano who submitted an 11-page testimony to the Roman Curia accusing the Pope of encouraging the "wolves to tear apart the sheep of Christ's flock." Victims and their families in Ireland are now outraged at the lukewarm apology offered by the Pope. For the people of Ireland, the Pope really needs to address the history of sin, sorrow and shame. It's simple and clear now. Pope Francis has failed to do the right thing...

A superstar professor of New York University, Avital Ronell, a German and Comparative scholar, after an 11-month investigation, has been suspended for a year without pay for sexually harassing Nimrod Reitman, a former graduate student, over a period of several years. Many from the relatively insular world of academia reacted and stood by Ronell, referring to her intellectual generosity and brilliance. To Ronell, all the exchanges were between two consenting adults. And to the rest of the world, it is but a shameless example of blurring boundaries in a system where professors wield a highly disproportionate amount of power over students, dictating terms for young academics stepping into a precarious professional landscape. However, ironically the post-structuralist and linguistics professor, Ronell, has been defended by household names like Judith Butler, Slavoj Zizek and Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak ...

Point is, stardom does not grant impunity. Stars cannot be untouchable. They may compromise their integrity, deny every inch of the moral nerves in their bodies, in order to justify all that they have done and obfuscate the right, but that still leaves them the dishonour of being ambassadors of abuse and nothing beyond. They are still people who are using their position and renown to discredit the tales of agony and abuse of the marginalised. In today's world of new, alternative media and a call-out culture, there's no escape for anyone anymore.

Rubana Huq is the managing director of Mohammadi Group.

Tackling poverty and climate change at the same time

Turning challenges into opportunities

POLITICS OF CLIMATE CHANGE



SALEEMUL HUQ

at first glance the two issues may not seem to be linked, I will argue that we cannot tackle either without also tackling the other at the same time. This is equally true for both the global and the national level, especially for poor countries like Bangladesh.

OVER the coming decades, at the global level as well as in Bangladesh we will be faced with two major challenges: tackling poverty and climate change. Although

countries. At the other end another billion or two at the bottom end are poor or very poor and most of them are living in the poor countries. In the middle are around two billion people, comprising the middle class, who are aspiring to become rich over time.

The level of wealth of the wealthiest has been achieved, to a very significant level, due to the benefits of modern energy for electricity, transport and industry through burning fossil fuels such as coal, petrol and natural gas. This in turn has led to pollution of the global atmosphere by the emission of greenhouse gases, causing climate change and global warming. This has already caused the global atmospheric

Paris Agreement on Climate Change to not let it rise above two degrees and if possible, to keep it below 1.5 degrees.

Hence if we wish to tackle global poverty and provide the poorest and the middle class with modern energy, then we need to de-couple development from fossil fuel use within one or two decades. In other words, if we want to tackle global poverty we also have to tackle emission of greenhouse gases from the use of fossil fuels.

Fortunately, the solution is now available in the form of a combination of solar, wind and energy storage technologies. Although these technologies are still in their early stages of development, they are already becoming more efficient and cheaper

tackling poverty and climate change is to look at the adverse impacts of climate change which are becoming clearer by the day with heat waves, forest fires, floods, typhoons and droughts proliferating around the globe in the last year alone. The adverse impacts fall most heavily on the poorest citizens in all countries, even in the wealthy ones. Hence all countries need to protect their citizens from the adverse impacts of climate change by helping them to adapt to those impacts. This need for adaptation is particularly important for the poorest people in all countries as they also happen to be the most vulnerable to the impacts of climate change. Hence for poor countries it is imperative that adaptation to climate change is made a priority in order to protect the poorest citizens from becoming even poorer.

I will now address these twin issues of tackling poverty and climate change in the context of Bangladesh and its development pathway over the next decade or two (which is the time window in which these challenges need to be tackled).

Bangladesh is already on track to graduate from the Least Developed Country (LDC) status within a few years (if we can maintain our current rate of progress). However, we are also very vulnerable to the adverse impacts of climate change and hence we need to integrate the issue of adaptation to climate change with poverty alleviation actions across the board. At the same time we should also explore the rapid deployment of renewable energy in place of fossil fuels.

Finally, I will argue that tackling poverty and climate change, although challenging, provides opportunities for companies and countries which can take the lead in demonstrating how to combine efforts to tackle both the issues at the same time, which would be a win-win strategy for the country and the private sector.

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The solution to tackling climate change is now available in the form of a combination of solar, wind and energy storage technologies, which are becoming more efficient and cheaper.

I will start by addressing the global level first. The population of planet Earth is currently well over 7.5 billion, with people living in nearly 200 countries of different sizes and levels of wealth. Around one or two billion of them are rich, mainly living in the rich countries, but many also living in poor

temperature to rise by over one degree centigrade over the last century. If the middle class—the two billion people—aspiring to become rich were to do so with the current means of generating energy then the global temperature will rise above three degrees. We have collectively agreed under the

than some fossil fuels and will soon be cheaper than all fossil fuels. Already companies, cities and even countries, such as Costa Rica, are planning to become 100 percent reliant on renewable energy within a few years and others will surely follow rapidly. A second aspect of the link between

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

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Encouraging reading for pleasure

It gives me pain to see that the habit of reading has been declining among our younger generation. While technology is steadily taking control over individual lives, we must find a way to encourage our children to read. Books are also costly, which is a contributing factor to the situation. Some parents discourage children from reading for pleasure and force them to read textbooks only.

The overuse of technology should be discouraged. The government should set up at least one library in every village. Students should be encouraged to read books besides textbooks by teachers at school, college and university levels and by parents.

Zubair Khaled Huq, by e-mail

For a liveable city

The Chittagong City Corporation has done a commendable job in cleaning up animal waste after Eid-ul-Azha within the shortest possible time. The port city now looks clean. As many people left the city to celebrate Eid at their village homes, the city is now less crowded and seems much more liveable. I think the government should take this as a cue to develop smaller cities and create jobs and healthcare facilities there so that people do not have to rush to Dhaka or Chattogram to earn a livelihood.

Zabed Wali, Chattogram