

Suu Kyi's delayed realisation

It's a deliberate campaign, not 'mishandling'

IT is intriguing that Aung San Suu Kyi, Myanmar's de facto civilian leader, realises the Rohingya crisis was not handled in a way that it should have been. We wonder whether she also acknowledges that the consequence of her government's so-called mishandling of the crisis, which has come as a cynical afterthought to her, has been extremely painful for nearly a million people. After all, she has been in near-complete denial that fundamental human rights of hundreds of thousands of Rohingya minorities were severely violated in what merits to be called a genocidal military campaign.

Ms Kyi is being too soft on her government and herself. To say that the crisis was "mishandled" is a shameful attempt to play down the severity of the brutality and terror that were inflicted on the Rohingyas.

It was a deliberate brutal campaign against the Rohingya minorities enthusiastically initiated by Myanmar's military, having exploited the ultra-nationalistic hatred inflamed by religious extremists, while her civilian administration watched silently, if not actively partook in it.

Suu Kyi also said that one cannot cherry-pick "who should be protected by rule of law." It is, in fact, the other way around; her government continues to choose to not protect and, even worse, endanger a specific community. Her comment simply echoes the typical nationalistic stereotype justifying the majoritarian rule.

Suu Kyi's apparent "change of heart" should not be taken at face value. It cannot be that you "mistakenly" killed thousands and forcibly expelled hundreds of thousands from their ancestral land. Myanmar's military knows, in retrospect, it has achieved exactly what it intended to do. Thus, it must be taken to task.

Fix barriers to foreign investment

Red-tape mentality isn't helping

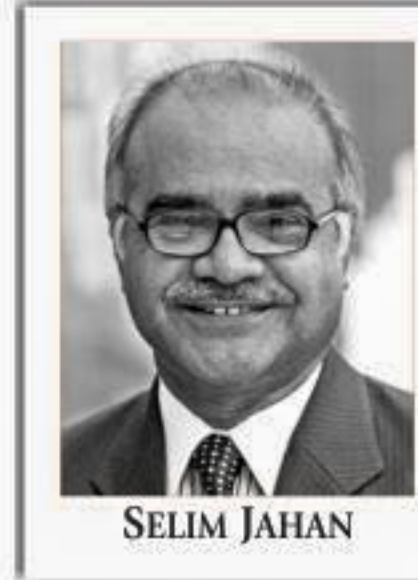
ALTHOUGH Bangladesh has received record multi-billion foreign investments from select countries, its efforts to make the country a foreign investment destination remain hamstrung by infrastructure and bureaucratic bottlenecks. There is no reason why the country should be lagging behind because we have what many countries do not—an abundant pool of surplus labour.

However, as pointed out by the president of Bangladesh-German Chamber of Commerce & Industry (BGCCI) at the event "Emerging Bangladesh" recently, our workforce remains ineffective because of a lack of policy support to develop the vocational education system. Without enough skilled labour, the country simply will not be able to attract enough foreign direct investment (FDI).

We really need to take a hard look at what is happening in the Asian region. The fact that Vietnam is able to attract massive FDI every year is due to the fact that the country is taking giant steps in infrastructure development in record time. Coupled with a well-educated labour force, it is Vietnam that is getting the lion's share of FDI. That country's leadership has moved heaven and earth to make foreign investors welcome, not just by meeting infrastructure needs, but also by lessening the time it takes to get paperwork done.

We are yet to get over our red-tape mentality. Foreign companies interested in Bangladesh read global indices about the ease of doing business where Bangladesh consistently lags behind and we simply can't seem to get our act together on this issue. Until we do something about that, Bangladesh will keep losing out to other competing countries in the region.

A case of laudable progress



SELIM JAHAN

THE 2018 update on the global human development indices and indicators was released on September 14. Covering 189 countries of the world, the update has revealed for these countries the levels of human development in different dimensions, their progress, the inequalities in human development achievements and the extent and nature of deprivations. All these will trigger discussions and debates in many countries, resulting in dialogues, views and positions—which the policymakers may find useful.

In this larger perspective, it may be worthwhile to explore as to how Bangladesh has been doing. What are the aspects where our achievements make us proud? What are the areas which require more attention from us?

Why don't we start with the widely discussed Human Development Index (HDI)? Taking three fundamental

In the ultimate analysis, there are areas of human development where Bangladesh has the scope and opportunity to accelerate the rate of progress. But that should not make us overlook what we have achieved.

dimensions of human well-being—health, education and a decent standard of living—this composite index gives a basic idea of human development in a country. The HDI also ranks the countries in terms of human development achievements.

Among the 189 countries covered in HDI, Bangladesh now ranks 136th. But that does not tell you the whole story—one has to dig deeper. During the last one year, Bangladesh moved up by two ranks—from 138 to 136. In fact, excluding Marshall Islands, included in the HDI league for the first time, the movement of Bangladesh along the HDI ladder would have been three ranks up. Let us take a longer time period. During the last five years, Bangladesh's HDI ranking has moved up by seven ranks.

Why don't we concentrate for a moment on the value of HDI, and not on the HDI rank? Between 1990 and 2017, the HDI value of Bangladesh has gone up by 57 percent—from 0.387 in



PHOTO: STAR

Women, along with their children, wait in a queue at Jhenaidah Sadar Hospital as the number of beds is inadequate. In Bangladesh, there are only six hospital beds per 10,000 people whereas the number is 20 for the developing world.

1990 to 0.606 percent in 2017. This is more than 2.5 times the global HDI progress, as during the same period, the average global HDI has improved by 22 percent. And the HDI for the developing world has gone up by 32 percent. So, Bangladesh is ahead of the race.

Should we turn to other composite indices of human development? If we account for inequalities in the three dimensions of human development, then the overall HDI of Bangladesh drops by 24 percent, as against 27 percent for India and 31 percent for Pakistan. In Bangladesh, the female HDI is 88 percent of the male HDI; in South Asia, it is 83 percent.

Let us now move to the specifics of various human development indicators from the composite indices. A child born today in Bangladesh can expect to live up to 73 years, compared to 66 years both in South Asia and India. The infant and child mortality rates in Bangladesh are 24 and 34 per 1,000 live births respectively. In the developing world, the corresponding figures are 33 and 43 per 1,000 live births. The literacy rate among young Bangladeshi women is 94 percent—higher than the literacy rate of 91 percent among the country's young men. Bangladesh today enjoys a per-capita income growth rate of 6.2 percent, while for India, the relevant figure is 5.4 percent. About 97 percent of the people of Bangladesh have access to improved drinking water, while 86 percent of the people in the developing world have such access.

In different dimensions of human development, Bangladesh has progressed well in areas of gender equality and women's empowerment. Girls surpass boys in school enrolment, not only at the primary level, but also at the secondary level. The maternal mortality ratio in Bangladesh is 176 per 100,000 live births, while in the developing

world, such ratio is 232 per 100,000 live births. About 62 percent of Bangladeshi women in the child-bearing age use some form of contraception, as against 53 percent in the developing world.

Bangladesh has achieved all these things with a much lower per-capita income. While the average per-capita income in the developing world is USD 10,000 (in PPP\$), the average per-capita income in India is USD 6,000 (PPP\$), and that of Bangladesh is only USD 3,500 (PPP\$). It implies that Bangladesh has been more successful in using its income more effectively for social development. All these are definitely praiseworthy.

But what are the human development areas where Bangladesh should pay more attention? Let us start with birth registration. Birth registration is not only a human right but also a socio-economic necessity. In Bangladesh, only 20 percent of births are registered, as opposed to 68 percent in the developing world and 80 percent in India.

There should be higher social investment in Bangladesh. Not only do physical investments create assets, but human investment also produces critical assets. In Bangladesh, the total expenditure on health is less than three percent of GDP. But in the developing world, the average is more than five percent. Now we all know that to increase health expenditure, one has to mobilise resources. How can we mobilise resources if the tax/GDP ratio in Bangladesh is less than nine percent, while in the developing world the ratio is more than 11 percent?

One of the driving forces of the growth process of Bangladesh is remittances sent by Bangladeshi labourers working abroad. Such remittances account for more than five percent of the country's GDP. But the problem is that such a significant

dependence also creates vulnerabilities in the system. If for some reason, the Middle Eastern economy faces a recession, it would have an adverse impact on Bangladesh's human development.

Bangladesh must do more with regard to gender equality and women's empowerment. The female non-agricultural employment in Bangladesh is only 18 percent, half of that of the developing world which is 36 percent. More than 58 percent of women in the developing world have access to services from financial institutions that provide internet-based financial services. The corresponding figure for Bangladesh is only 36 percent. About 59 percent of women in the age group of 20 to 24 years get married before reaching 18-plus, while the relevant number in the developing world is much less.

If we want to ensure sustainable human development, it is not enough to look only at quantitative achievements of human development, but it is also necessary to assess such achievements from a qualitative perspective. In the developing world, there are 14 physicians and 20 hospital beds per 10,000 people. In Bangladesh, there are only five doctors and six hospital beds per 10,000 people. At the primary level, there are 34 pupils per teacher in Bangladesh, as against 29 in the developing world.

In the ultimate analysis, there are areas of human development where Bangladesh has the scope and opportunity to accelerate the rate of progress. But that should not make us overlook what we have achieved. The achievements that we have made are our pride, building on which we shall move forward with confident steps to achieve even higher goals in the coming days.

Dr Selim Jahan is Director and Lead Author, Human Development Report, UNDP, New York.

How Britain is striving to end the Rohingya crisis



ALISTAIR BURT

WE know that strong foundations matter. Whether it is a nation or a new home. With the right foundations in place, we can build safely and securely. We can build with confidence for the future.

Nowhere is this truer than with the Rohingya people. UK aid, in partnership with the government of Bangladesh and the international community, is now helping Rohingya families in the Cox's Bazar camps to build shelters which are offering enhanced and sturdier protection to the Rohingya people during the rainy season.

But while UK aid and Bangladeshi generosity are helping address the immediate needs of the million displaced Rohingya people, we must start laying the foundations for the future and their eventual return to Burma. To ensure their return is safe, voluntary and dignified requires three key actions.

First, the Burmese authorities must immediately step up their efforts to create the right conditions in northern Rakhine State for the Rohingya to return. The British government believes this can only happen if Burma implements the recommendations of the late Kofi Annan's Rakhine Advisory Commission. This means addressing the causes of the crisis and permitting direct and unrestricted access for UN agencies, as well as dealing with issues such as citizenship rights for Rohingya and guaranteeing their freedom of movement now and in the future.

Second, the international community must increase its contributions and commitment to the long-term safety and wellbeing of the Rohingya people. The UN's Joint Response Plan for the crisis called for USD 950m from the international community in March. Only a third of that target has been achieved so far.

The UK has led the international humanitarian response, committing 129m pound to meet the urgent needs of Rohingya refugees in Cox's Bazar including food, shelter, clean water, health and sanitation. But we need other governments and international donors to step up and provide more support. We cannot allow the burden to fall on Bangladesh and local communities,



PHOTO: MOHAMMAD PONIR HOSSAIN/REUTERS

not only because of fairness, but because it risks stoking social and political tensions and endangering the incredible economic progress Bangladesh has made in recent years.

Thirdly, there must not be impunity for those who commit the most serious crimes of international concern.

Two weeks ago, a UN Fact-Finding Mission published its interim report providing insight into the appalling human rights violations by the Burmese military. I wholeheartedly commend the UN Fact-Finding Mission for their work. Their findings cannot be ignored, in particular that there is sufficient ground for an investigation to be launched into Burma military's top brass for genocide.

The UK has already been working with local and international partners to help victims. The British government was also instrumental in securing EU sanctions against seven individuals in the Burmese military, who can be directly linked to the appalling violence in northern Rakhine last year.

Britain is committed to ensuring the long-term safety of the Rohingya people and their eventual return to

Burma. While we must plan for the future, the immediate humanitarian challenges are far from over. Over the past two months, heavy monsoon rains have raised the risk of flooding, landslides and water-borne diseases in what is now one of the world's biggest refugee camps. Our best hope of meeting those challenges is by building better foundations and we do that by creating stronger partnerships with UN agencies and local and international NGOs.

As this protracted crisis moves into another year, the UK will continue working with the government of Bangladesh and our partners to deliver life-saving solutions for the Rohingya people. And to the Rohingya people living in the UK who are watching this crisis from afar as their friends, neighbours and relatives go through unimaginable suffering (the Rohingya community in Bradford is 400-strong and the largest in Europe)—please be reassured that the UK is doing all that it can to protect and support your loved ones.

Rt Hon Alistair Burt MP is the Minister of State for International Development and Minister of State for the Middle East at the Foreign & Commonwealth Office. He is a Minister of State for both DFID and FCO, and he recently visited Bangladesh and the Rohingya camps in Cox's Bazar.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

letters@thedailystar.net

Fed up with the toxic political environment

Ever since democracy was restored in the country in the 90s, the two major parties—Awami League and BNP—have been at loggerheads. The hatred is mutual, but it is so profound that it has poisoned the political atmosphere to a great extent. In the end, it is the people who were the ultimate sufferers. No matter which party is in power, the other party has to suffer in many ways in our winner-takes-all system. We have had enough.

We hope that the government understands that its primary aim should be to look after the welfare of the people and the country.
Nur Jahan, Chittagong

Ducusu inactive for 27 years!

The Daily Star published a front-page story titled "No Ducusu polls in 27 years" yesterday. It is really unfortunate that Dhaka University authorities have failed to arrange the elections despite the instruction of the High Court. What's ironic is that the university still collects fees from each student for the student council.

Once a prestigious student organisation, Ducusu produced a number of high-profile national leaders. Several important political movements such as the Language Movement and Six-Point Movement—which are inextricably linked to the history of Bangladesh—were contributed to by Ducusu leaders.

The DU authorities should take effective steps to hold Ducusu elections which would positively contribute to the political landscape of the country.

Md Zillur Rahaman, By email