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How long before Israel breaks this truce?

Lasting peace only possible under the two-state solution

AFTER 11 days of violence, we are relieved that an Egypt-mediated truce between Israel and Hamas came into effect on Friday. However, to call the violence perpetrated over the last 11 days lopsided would be an understatement, as Israel, a country armed to the teeth thanks to the advanced weaponry supplied by the most powerful western countries in the world, relentlessly bombed the already devastated remnants of Palestinian lands. In response, Hamas launched missiles towards Israel. But truth be told, it was the Palestinians who had suffered the most casualties and continues to do so, as Israel continues to brutally occupy their land illegally under international law and in complete disregard of international agreements and UN resolutions.

In the last 11 days of devastating Israeli offensive on the Gaza Strip, 232 Palestinians were killed, including 65 children. Almost 2,000 Palestinians were wounded, and 90,000 people were displaced, according to the UN. Around 1,800 housing units were destroyed, 74 government facilities were bombed, 33 media centres were destroyed and six high-rise buildings were levelled by the Israelis. While on the Israeli side, there were barely a handful of casualties and injuries. How can that be termed a conflict?

Even though a truce has been declared between Hamas and Israel, the latter continues to occupy Palestinian land and conquer more of it daily through the removal of Palestinian families from their homes, demolishing Palestinian houses and erecting illegal settlements. And that continues to remain the crux of the matter—that Israel, through western backing, continues to carry out its genocidal campaign against the Palestinian people.

Until the international community forces Israel to end its brutal genocidal crusade against the Palestinians, there can never be any real peace for the Palestinians, or for the Israelis for that matter. Now that the Israel-Palestinian conflict has returned to making international headlines, world leaders must realise that this is not a matter that should be swept under the rug once again until the next time Israel decides to bomb the already devastated Gaza Strip. This issue must be resolved once and for all in a way that ensures justice for the Palestinian people, who have suffered endless human rights violations for decades under Israeli occupation.

The RHD must be commended for their efficiency

We hope all government bodies will emulate this rare example

WE applaud the Roads and Highways Department (RHD) for its Kanchpur, Meghna and Gumti 2nd Bridge Construction and Existing Bridges Rehabilitation Project, which won the Technology Award of the Japan Society of Civil Engineers Award 2021. This was conferred to the RHD for the construction of three new bridges and the repairs of three old bridges, which was finished not only before its deadline, but was also done at a lower cost. In fact, the RHD managed to save almost Tk 1,400 crore from its budget during the course of the project.

This is a rare departure from the norm. Project delays are far too common in Bangladesh, and they end up costing the taxpayers crores of Taka that could easily have been invested elsewhere. In February this year, the Prime Minister expressed her frustrations over frequent revisions of projects and directed the authorities to take legal action against those responsible for flawed project designs that ultimately push up costs. This was after two projects, by the Local Government Engineering Department and by Dhaka Wasa, went up by Tk 5,433 crore. Subsequently, we have seen reports of the cost of the Super Specialised Hospital Project at the Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University (BSMMU) going up by Tk 195 crore. The National Household Database project, which could have been an important tool for the government in assisting the most underprivileged households in the pandemic, has also seen delays so lengthy that the data collected has become obsolete, and the costs have gone up by almost Tk 400 crore.

In this context, it is heartening to see this example of timeliness and cost efficiency from the RHD, proving that if there is a will, there certainly is a way. We hope that other government ministries and bodies will take their cue from this and follow suit. Before the RHD constructions and repairs, motorists often suffered in tailbacks for up to eight to 12 hours due to the bottlenecks near the old bridges. These travel times will now be significantly reduced. We hope that every government project will ultimately serve their purpose in this way, and be of benefit to the Bangladeshi public.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

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The disease of corruption

We know how badly corruption impacts our society. Yet, seeing how often it occurs, it begs the question: does one hate corruption because it creates chaos, or does one hate it because they do not get to enjoy the benefits? Corruption and the ability to corrupt ourselves lies within us. Given the opportunity, we are given two choices: do we yield, or do we oppose? We need the determination to oppose. Only then can we curb corruption, along with better law enforcement against corruption of course.

Abir Hasan, North South University

How do I hate myself? Let me count the ways



SHAMSAD MORTUZA

THE holiday lethargy has caused me self-loathing. Let me count some of the factors as to why I am beginning to hate myself.

I hate myself for living in an age that still sees religion-based racism overshadowing motherhood. I hated it when a sweet social media post on Mother's Day on May 9 turned bitter when actor Chanchal Chowdhury, a household name in the Bangladeshi cultural scene for over two decades, posted on Facebook a photograph of his mother wearing vermilion over her forehead. This was followed by serious backlash as some bigots attacked the *Aynabaji* actor for his religious identity. This narrow-minded crowd felt "cheated" since they had crowned the versatile actor with a Bangla name that lacks any religious tag as "one of their own" for such a long time, only to find out that he was "actually" their religious "other", and they did not have either the sophistication or the civility to hide their bigotry. I shall hate myself further if I have to stoop low enough to

engage with such arguments. Suffice to say, a mother in whatever hue is sacred and beautiful. By the same token, an artist is an extraordinary individual who exists outside our daily drudgery, who tries in his or her given capacity to make the world a better place.

I hate myself for seeing the same crowd defending the rights of minorities in other parts of the world where the role is reversed. Their frustrations and

expose the system where individual benefits are prioritised over collective ones. While I was glued to the TV seeing a tower building housing media outlets being bombed to clouds of dust, I realised that someone else was choking the voice of media in our own backyard. A senior female journalist has been accused of stealing government secrets from the Ministry of Health. Her bail has been denied, and she has been sent to jail.

there when the doctors are forced to be silent, and the empty pitchers of the admin officials start sounding.

I hate myself when I hear schools and colleges will reopen once everyone concerned is jabbed. My jaw drops while counting the number of ampoules that need to be imported and distributed before education resumes. Ah, the scheme and the number game: who cares for how long our children will stay away from books and classes! Let the vaccine orders be processed and let Covid-19 morph into Covid-21! We will have more "auto pass", while our corrupt officials will get more "free pass" to abuse the system. I hate myself for seeing our local businessmen, politicians and corrupt officials indulge in shopping sprees abroad, or invest in post-career settlements or second homes in overseas countries, with the money that they have milked or skimmed from our system.

I hate myself for seeing a bureaucratic system that is at odds with our democracy and all our democratic norms. I hate myself when my academic colleagues disgracefully leave their offices, accused of misappropriation of funds, negligence of duties, nepotism and what not. Our incompetence allows people from outside the civil society (both BCS and ISSB certified) to take over our jobs and offices. Conversely, our national incompetence allows the so-called "experts" from outside to drain away the bulk of the hard-earned currency that our low-skilled labourers are sending in from abroad.

I hate myself for being an educator in a country that has no respect for education. I hate myself for being in a country that allows an education system that runs amok in at least three different strains and fails to include the issues of racial intolerance, intellectual and moral bankruptcy, human rights, and transparency in its curricula. I hate myself for being in a system that fosters discriminations and discrepancies. But I shall hate myself more if I fail to be part of a strategy that offers to create a counter-system; a system that teaches empathy, humanity, fairness and honesty.

P.S. The title alludes to Elizabeth Browning's Sonnet 43, "How do I love thee? Let me count the ways."

Shamsad Mortuza is Pro-Vice-Chancellor of the University of Liberal Arts Bangladesh (ULAB), and a professor of English at Dhaka University (on leave).



ILLUSTRATION: KAZI TAHSIN AGAZ APURBO

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helplessness are evident in their *ad hominem*, fallacious attacks and invectives aplenty as they realise that they do not have any control over the truth or untruth propagated by the powerful other, in which their own kinds are minorities. They resort to verbal violence. They do not realise their poorly constructed arguments and abuses hurt our national pride on an international setting. Their supposed bravado paints the country they represent with the wrong brush. Potential tourists, for instance, will think twice before visiting our country if they feel that the people here are hostile to different colours and creeds. Their case, which is valid, can be presented in a rational and logical fashion. For that, we will need a culture of constructive criticism and fairness. For that, we will need a general mood of empathy—something that we failed to extend towards actor Chanchal Chowdhury.

I hate myself when I fail to render support to someone who wanted to

Rozina Islam is an investigative journalist for the leading Bangla daily *Prothom Alo*, who has published a series of reports on the alleged corruptions that are eating away at the health sector. I hate myself for writing "alleged" as I was taught by my seniors when I started my career as a cub reporter three decades ago. Even after all these years, I am handcuffed to such journalistic protocols. But Rozina Islam wanted to go beyond simple accusations; she wanted proof. Those of us who are eating the "corruption" pudding, we instinctively or circumstantially know where the proof lies. The proof is out there in the open when a canopy hospital appears like Aladdin's palace in the middle of nowhere and disappears when the evil vizier steals away the lamp containing the genie. The proof is out there when the middleman appears as a saviour figure at the start of the vaccine hunt and then disappears when the shipment is delayed. The proof is out

Harnessing marine renewable energy in Bangladesh



MOHAMMAD ALAUDDIN

BECAUSE of their continuous renewability and inexhaustibility, ocean energies are known as marine renewable energy (MRE). However, all ocean-based renewable energy resources are not considered MRE. For example, the production of biofuels from marine biomass is generally regarded as a form of bioenergy instead. Likewise, offshore wind is considered a particular application for wind energy technology. MRE resources are those that use the kinetic, potential, chemical or thermal properties of seawater. Ocean waves, tidal currents, tidal range, ocean currents, ocean temperature and salinity gradients are all examples of this. These renewable resources can be harnessed using various energy conversion technologies into a useful form, typically electricity.

The conversion of MRE resources into electricity could play an important role in the use of renewable energy, while meeting growing energy demand and bolstering economic activity. It also contributes to offsetting emissions from conventional greenhouse gas (GHG)-intensive electricity generation. Therefore, it has been recognised by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change as a means of mitigating climate change. A special report commissioned by the High-Level Panel for a Sustainable Ocean Economy (Ocean Panel) on "The Ocean as a Solution to Climate Change: Five Opportunities for Action", published in 2019, estimated that ocean-based climate solutions could reduce global GHG emissions by nearly four billion tons of carbon dioxide equivalent (CO₂e) per annum in 2030. Additionally, ocean-based renewable energy has the potential to support a wide range of socioeconomic benefits, including new opportunities for economic activity, job creation and local value creation, and position itself as the main source to power the blue economy.

According to the International Renewable Energy Agency's (IRENA) report "Fostering a blue economy: Offshore renewable energy," published in 2020, the theoretical resource potential for electricity production from all marine renewable technologies combined ranges from 45,000 terawatt-hours (TWh) to well over 130,000 TWh per year, while global electricity demand in 2019 was 25,814 TWh. Despite huge potential, the worldwide cumulative installed capacity of all marine renewable energy in 2020

was 535 megawatts (MW). Several challenges stemming from technology, infrastructure, finance, policy, market and environment may be accounted for this low uptake.

According to a recent study based on cost data provided by developers, the existing levelised costs of energy (LCOE) for tidal and wave energy are estimated to be between USD 0.20/kilowatt-hour (kWh) and USD 0.45/kWh, and

is principally distributed in the tropics. Salinity gradient and tidal range are more patchily distributed. In any case, some form of marine renewable energy is available at every coast and often more than one form could supply local power needs. Currently, over 30 countries around the world are pursuing MRE. The European Commission set a goal of producing at least one gigawatt (GW) of wave and tidal energy by 2030 and 40 GW

such as remote islands, which depend on relatively costly fossil fuel imports. Following a resource mapping exercise, suitable wave and tidal positions among these islands must be established, which has yet to take place in Bangladesh. A number of countries including Canada, Chile, the UK, and the United States have mapped their marine renewable energy resources on a national scale. These countries can assist developing countries



Representational image.

PHOTO: REUTERS

between USD 0.30/kWh and 0.55/kWh respectively. Harsh marine environment and relatively low maturity of most of the technologies with poor grid connection infrastructure and supply chain result in high LCOE. Technology costs typically fall as deployment increases, as well as other factors such as supply chain sophistication and investor confidence. Looking at the learning curve of other renewable energy sources—for instance, between 2010 and 2019, offshore wind costs fell 29 percent to USD 0.115/kWh and solar photovoltaic fell 82 percent to USD .068/kWh, as reported in IRENA's 2020 publication "Renewable Power Generation Costs in 2019"—it is clear that significant cost reduction occurred in the past. In the same way, greater capacity deployment and accelerated learning are projected to lower the costs of MRE.

Marine renewable energy resources are vast, but they aren't evenly distributed. Waves tend to be greatest at higher latitudes, whilst ocean thermal energy

by 2050. Bangladesh has the Bay of Bengal to its south, with about 710km of coastline extending from St Martin's in the south-east to the Sundarbans in the south-west. Many small islands are scattered along the Bay of Bengal and the word "Char" is used in many of the names. The long coastline and many small islands have the continuous presence of strong tides and waves coming from the Bay of Bengal. However, the ability to tap energy is contingent on technological readiness. Of all MRE technology, tidal technologies have the highest level of readiness and are nearest to commercialisation. Tidal power can be generated using two technologies—tidal stream and tidal barrage. Tidal stream power plants are now preferred because of their lower environmental footprint. Wave energy comes next to tidal in terms of technological readiness.

Tidal and wave energy technologies could be competitive in niche markets

with access to the sea in determining their marine renewable energy resources to expedite global energy transition.

Harnessing inexhaustible indigenous sources as much as possible is key to ensuring energy security in the context of regional and global political economy. In Bangladesh, terrestrial renewable energy is limited by land available for capacity expansion, while fulfilling the targets of the Sustainable Development Goals and the Nationally Determined Contributions under the Paris Agreement requires substantial increase of renewable energy. Marine renewable energy should thus be one of the important elements, not only for driving the blue economy for Bangladesh but also for the transition to a clean energy future. An initiative to map marine renewable resources and launch a pilot project could pave the way for a new renewable energy frontier to emerge.

Mohammad Alauddin is Chairman of the Sustainable and Renewable Energy Development Authority.