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Rohingya camps must be made more secure

ARSA or not, the priority should be refugees' safety and repatriation

THE recent and continued reports of increasing violence in the Rohingya refugee camps are deeply concerning. According to a report by this daily on Saturday, refugees claim their camps have become hubs of criminal activities carried out by members of the Arakan Rohingya Solidarity Army (ARSA). Their tightening grip on the already insecure camps (with only three battalions of the Armed Police Battalion employed to enforce law and order) came to light after Rohingya activist Mohib Ullah was assassinated in late September. In October, about 50 criminals entered a camp madrasa, killed six men and escaped.

This state of affairs in the camps, where Rohingya refugees fled for a safe refuge after facing severe persecution and torment at the hands of the barbaric Myanmar military, is simply not acceptable. Refugees reportedly are afraid to even say that ARSA is carrying out crimes, such as drugs and weapons peddling, human trafficking and extortion, but that they know exactly which people among them belong to this group of insurgents. If the refugees are afraid to speak out to the authorities to reveal the criminal elements in their camps, it is amply clear that it is because the authorities are unable to guarantee their safety. How else can ARSA members “take absolute control of the camps at nighttime”—according to a Rohingya refugee who recently spoke to The Daily Star?

To date, the government and law enforcers have argued that the insurgent group does not exist in the camps, and that regular criminals claim to be ARSA members in order to intimidate other refugees. Experts construe that the reason behind this denial is that the existence of terrorists amongst refugees would threaten the repatriation goal of Bangladesh. Rohingya sources have also suggested that the recent killings are a deliberate attempt by ARSA to thwart the repatriation process. Which is why, the security threat that they pose must be taken with utmost seriousness by the authorities. ARSA or not, we fail to understand why security is still not sufficient within the camps, even after the brutal killings of the past two months.

While the claims of refugees that ARSA members within the camps are funded by Myanmar agents should be looked into, it should not distract the authorities from prioritising Rohingya refugees' safety. The debate of whether criminals within the camps belong to ARSA or not may delay the only solution to the Rohingya refugee crisis: their safe and dignified repatriation to their motherland. We would therefore urge the authorities to not only deploy more law enforcers to the camps, but to actively engage in dialogue with the Rohingya refugees themselves and work with them to weed out criminals from the camps and create a safer environment. At the same time, wider networks in the Cox's Bazar region, especially in terms of weapons and drugs trafficking, must be dismantled in order to stop the enabling of the criminal networks that operate within the camps.

Uni teacher's shocking alleged involvement in question paper leaks

The masterminds of the syndicate must be apprehended

WE are shocked to learn about the alleged involvement of a public university professor in the question paper leaks of five state-owned banks' recruitment exams, from a confessional statement made by an arrested suspect over the leaks. According to Delowar Hossain, who gave the confessional statement, the professor, an adjunct faculty of Ahsanullah University of Science and Technology (AUST) was engaged with preparing and printing the question papers, and allegedly used to take two copies of the question papers in his bags when they got printed at the press. If the allegation made by Delowar is proved to be true, we have serious reasons to be worried.

Reportedly, the preliminary test for hiring 1,511 cash officers in five state-owned banks, held on November 6, was marred by allegations of question leaks, and the Bangladesh Bank subsequently cancelled the test on November 11. The central bank has also blacklisted AUST from moderating question papers for recruitment tests after the involvement of several of its employees in the leaks came to light. In the police interrogation, the arrestees named many other individuals who were involved with the question leak gang.

Question leaks in public examinations seem to have become the norm nowadays, since the masterminds behind the leaks are never arrested. We often see the police making some arrests immediately after the crime happens, but the cases hardly make any progress. The result is, the syndicates or gangs involved in such unethical practices continue with their nefarious activities and make a good amount of easy money by selling the leaked questions to the prospective candidates of public exams.

Previously, officials of Bangladesh Bank were also found to be involved in question leaks of bank exams. They were later suspended by the bank and some of them were also arrested. And this time, police arrested several officials of the AUST in connection with the recent leaks. We think the Detective Branch of police is capable of finding out the real culprits of the question leak racket and will soon arrest all the kingpins behind the latest bank exam leaks.

The alleged link of a university professor must also be investigated to unearth the real truth. If he is found to be involved, action must be taken against him by the police as well as the university authorities. How can we stop question leaks in our public exams and rectify the system if someone as revered as a university professor is involved with the crime?



AN OPEN DIALOGUE
ABDULLAH SHIBLI

there were a lot of speeches and empty promises, but even a hard-nosed realist like me would have to concede that some important milestones were achieved at the end of the day.

I did not travel to Glasgow because of prior commitments, but also from my previous experience I could tell that, for me, it would have been useless unless I had made a commitment to stay there for the entire duration and attended all sessions, doing a “hop, skip and jump” like an Olympic sportsman to go from one event to another. I would have loved to hear Barack Obama, Alok Sharma and Greta Thunberg speak (although Greta was not “officially” invited, according to media reports). However, to accomplish these goals, I would have had to be like Superman, flying from one arena to another while keeping track of time and my physical limitations.

The good news is, from a distance, I was able to keep abreast of everything that was accomplished, as well as the shortcomings. I know now that the 1.5 degrees Celsius target is not achievable. Net zero by 2050 was not very likely to start with, and the poorer nations will get only a fraction of what they need to achieve all the mitigation and adaptation targets. On the other hand, we will see an end to deforestation, a possible end to the tyranny of fossil fuel by the turn of this century, and greater commitment to collaboration between nations to reduce carbon emissions.

One thing was clear even before the gathering at Glasgow began. There was an over-expectation. The international climate summit was billed by its chief organiser as the “last, best hope” to save the planet. The climate summit remains “our last, best hope to keep 1.5 in reach,” said Alok Sharma, the British government minister chairing the climate talks. “We must make it a success,” said Patricia



ANDREW SHENG

Climate Change seems to have generated a lot of agreements, but Greta Thunberg is still saying, “There is a still a very, very long way to go.” Just having some agreement is better than nothing, but the hard work is only just beginning.

All the leaders and signatories now



What narrative can make people move from agreement to action?

have to go home and start delivering on their promises. The fact that the US and China (the two largest carbon emitters) actually agreed to work together on achieving the 1.5 degrees Celsius temperature goal set out in the 2015 Paris Agreement was welcome relief on many fronts. The typical reaction was positive, because if Presidents Xi and Biden could deliver on their own domestic commitments, that would be steps in the right direction.

But how do we convince more people to make the change on climate action?

There is so much distrust of authority at this stage that many are cynical.

Espinoza, Executive Secretary of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC).

Was COP26 a success, then? For the “the glass is half full” school, i.e., the optimist, there are reasons to celebrate. Some major agreements were reached, the conference ended without any major disappointments, and it ended peacefully. However, the media has declared that “the glass is half empty”, or the summit was full of empty promises, with no major tangible achievement to show for it. The conference was mocked by some as a jamboree with all talk and no substance.

The statistics for COP26 is, nonetheless, impressive. A total of 197 countries participated and the participants ranged from “heads of state and titans of industry” (*New York Times*) to over 100,000 demonstrators from different walks of life chanting for “immediate action” at Glasgow Green.

Around 105 countries agreed to reduce emissions of methane—a short-living but powerful greenhouse gas—by 30 percent by 2030, as compared with 2020. More than 130 countries pledged to halt and reverse deforestation and land degradation by 2030.

More than 40 countries, including Canada, Poland, South Korea and Ukraine, have agreed to phase out their use of coal-fired power, the dirtiest fuel source. Our neighbour, India, which is the world's fourth largest emitter, pledged to join the net-zero club by 2070.

India's 2070 commitment was

Just as the negotiations at Glasgow got underway, a report from the United Nations (UN) poured cold water on the pledges made by the nations to cut greenhouse gas emissions.

Elections do not seem to solve anything, because when the majority margin is wafer-thin, coalition governments cannot make tough decisions. We find ourselves like the principal character Joseph in Franz Kafka's book *The Trial*, where he finds himself in a faceless court case facing neither charges and accusations he understands, nor how he can get out of his predicament. Kafka describes very well how many feel alienated, hopeless against a faceless bureaucracy, frustrated against the system and lost in an absurd reality. Many hark back to a golden lost era, which causes identity conflicts between race, religion and cultures.

Politicians on both sides of the spectrum, from democracies to autocracies, understand the power of

soon blown out of the sky by its other neighbour, Pakistan. Malik Amin Aslam, an adviser to the prime minister of Pakistan, scoffed at some of the long-term net zero goals being announced. “With an average age of 60, I don't think anyone in the negotiating room would live to experience that net zero in 2070,” he said.

There were plenty of sceptics, including Greta Thunberg of Sweden, who lampooned the “blah blah blah”, i.e., the big speeches. “It is not a secret that COP26 is a failure,” she said. “This COP26 is so far just like the previous



British PM Boris Johnson and UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres greet Bangladesh's PM Sheikh Hasina during arrivals at COP26 in Glasgow, Scotland on November 1.

PHOTO: CHRISTOPHER FURLONG/REUTERS

COPs—and that has led us nowhere,” Thunberg said as she addressed climate activists who had gathered at Glasgow.

Just as the negotiations at Glasgow got underway, a report from the United Nations (UN) poured cold water on the pledges made by the nations to cut greenhouse gas emissions. Analysts at the UN tallied up the Nationally Determined Contributions (NDC), the plans to curtail emissions over the next decade, and estimated that the world was on track to heat up roughly 2.7 degrees Celsius above preindustrial levels by 2100. “To limit warming to just 1.5 degrees Celsius, the UN said, global emissions from

said.

A more recent report by the International Energy Agency (IEA) is less alarming though. IEA estimates suggest that all the climate pledges announced to date, if met in full and on time, would be enough to hold the rise in global temperatures to 1.8 degrees Celsius by 2100. In order to succeed, what is required in the coming decades is stronger implementation, and clearer tracking or monitoring.

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or taxes, let alone removing subsidies on fossil fuels. A lot of time in Glasgow was spent debating on whether the rich countries should put up USD 100 billion hard cash annually to help poor countries deal with climate change. India boldly asked for USD 1 trillion in aid to help it meet net zero by 2060.

So what narrative can make people move from agreement to action? Writing books and articles no longer matter so much, because most people do not get their information through the printed media. Videos, tweets and social media matter far more. Most people no longer have the patience or interest to go through very complex and technical scientific evidence. They need simple stories with clear cut options.

Greta Thunberg is very effective because she speaks the language of the young. To get the story right, four elements are required—clear identifiable characters—villains, victims and heroes; a political context that is believable (waiting for the winds of change); a moral theme that shows options and outcomes; and finally, a riveting plot that engages the audience.

This week, I passed through the Spanish village of Guernica, which has a mural painted by Pablo Picasso of the horrendous bombing of the village destroyed by the Spanish civil war. In a single mural, Picasso evoked the emotion worldwide that the violence and suffering of war is futile.

What we need post-COP26 is not more blah, blah, but evoking an emotional reaction from more people that climate change is everyone's responsibility, so that they will act. We do not as yet have that story, video or event, nor a hero or heroine.

The war between Troy and Sparta was never really about the beauty of Helen, but about power and glory. The destruction of humanity by climate change is either too catastrophic or too remote to be believed. Perhaps human beings will only move like the murmuration of starlings when attacked by predator hawks. One will make the first move, and the others follow, and then the whole mass movement begins like a symphony. The hawk may kill a few starlings, but the mass survives. We should never doubt the power of imagination to spark change.

Which is why stories are ingrained in the human DNA. We need that spark to set our imaginations free. And the leadership to make the mass move forward to save ourselves.

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