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The Security World

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The Power of Air Force

Understanding the Rohingya Issue:
Military Dimension

The Assassin's Republic: Imran Khan is
probably safer in prison than outside

The Arakan Army in Rakhine: Present
Realities and Future Trajectories

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Bangladesh–Korea: Securing growth in a turbulent world

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THE SECURITY WORLD



ABOUT US

The Security World is being published with the primary purpose of promoting peace, security and international cooperation through analysis, policy dialogue and dissemination of information. We are also trying to focus on the contributions of our defense forces and law enforcement agencies in curbing terrorism and their role in the international arena to bring back peace and security. As there is no noteworthy publication to project these achievements, we believe the Security World will play a pivotal role in this regard.

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Bangladesh–Korea: Securing growth in a turbulent world

Rabb Majumder

Editor and Publisher of The Security World.



Bangladesh and Korea are charting a new chapter of cooperation, turning ambitious development goals into tangible outcomes through joint ventures in energy, infrastructure, ICT, and manufacturing.

This partnership is accelerating growth, expanding opportunity, and strengthening regional resilience in a fast-changing South Korea.

As Korea's strategic footprint grows in South Asia, Bangladesh stands at the center of a mutually reinforcing partnership that blends advanced technology, robust trade links, and transformative development aid. The Korea–Bangladesh relationship offers a compelling model of how two diverse economies can collaborate for shared prosperity in an era of



PARK Young Sik
Ambassador of the Republic of Korea





South Korean Embassy in Baridhara, Dhaka

► climate challenge and global.

We are pleased to present the following interview with Korean Ambassador PARK Young Sik. The Ambassador shares insights on the evolving partnership between Korea and Bangladesh. The Ambassador also shares the state of bilateral ties and what the future holds for Korea and Bangladesh.

The following is an excerpt from the interview:

What have been the most rewarding moments in your service here?

Which challenges did you face, and how did you address them?

During my time in Bangladesh, I have witnessed both the resilience and dynamism of this country. It has been a privilege to work at a moment when Bangladesh is undergoing significant political, economic, and social transformation. A particular highlight of my tenure has been engaging with a wide range of stakeholders, from senior government officials and business leaders

to academics and civil society representatives, in order to deepen mutual understanding between our two countries.

The most rewarding moments were when we could translate our discussions into concrete outcomes. For example, I was especially pleased to see progress in policy dialogue on improving the business environment for foreign investors, including Korean companies, and in expanding development cooperation projects in areas such as ICT, health, and infrastructure. Meeting young Bangladeshis (students, entrepreneurs, and professionals) who are interested in Korea and wish to build bridges between our two countries has also been deeply inspiring.

Of course, there were challenges as well. Global economic uncertainties, supply chain disruptions, and financial sector vulnerabilities in recent years created a difficult environment for both local and foreign businesses. In addition, the transition period following the change of government required careful and balanced diplomatic engagement. To address these ►►



► challenges, we maintained close communication with both the Bangladeshi authorities and Korean stakeholders, consistently shared factual information, and sought pragmatic solutions that could serve the interests of both sides. Patience, transparency, and continuous dialogue were key to overcoming these difficulties.

How do you assess the state of Bangladesh–Korea relations during your tenure?

Korea and Bangladesh established diplomatic ties on December 18, 1973. Over the last five decades, our two countries have witnessed a remarkable journey of cooperation in various sectors, including trade, investment, development cooperation, and people-to-people exchanges.

Korea does not pursue strategic interests beyond our economic cooperation. Over the last fifty years, collaboration in the RMG sector has been a driving force behind our bilateral relations. The Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA), which is now under negotiation, could serve as the next engine to take our partnership to new heights in the next fifty years.

Are there any particular cultural or social observations you'll take with you from Bangladesh?

Bangladesh has a long tradition and rich Bengali culture, comprising art, music, and dance. There are also many indigenous cultures, particularly in and around the Chittagong Hill Tracts. From Korea's experience, it would be beneficial for the Bangladeshi government to place greater emphasis on teaching art and music from the elementary school level.

I attended several meetings of the World Health Organization as the Director General of International Affairs at the Ministry of Health & Welfare. WHO has released guidelines on reducing the intake of salt and sugar in order to prevent the spread of non-communicable diseases (NCDs) such as hypertension and diabetes. In view of these WHO guidelines, Bangladesh would benefit from gradually improving its dietary habits, while respecting its rich culinary traditions.

What initiatives or programs are you most ►►



Dhaka, October 19, 2025 — South Korean Ambassador Park Young-sik reaffirms Seoul's commitment to strengthening its 50-year partnership with Bangladesh, calling it "a remarkable journey of cooperation built on mutual trust, shared growth, and friendship." Photo: BSS

► **proud to have contributed to?**

I am particularly proud of our efforts to strengthen economic partnerships and improve the business environment for Korean investors in Bangladesh. This included close dialogue with relevant ministries and agencies on issues such as customs procedures, taxation, foreign exchange, and the repatriation of profits. Supporting Korean companies that have long been committed to Bangladesh, especially in the RMG, electronics, infrastructure, and power sectors, has been a central part of my work.

I also take pride in advancing discussions on the Korea-Bangladesh CEPA, which, once concluded, is expected to provide a more stable and predictable framework for trade and investment. In addition, our development cooperation projects such as capacity-building programs, scholarship opportunities, and technical assistance have helped foster human

capital and institutional development.

In the field of public diplomacy, we organized various cultural and educational activities to introduce Korean culture and values to the Bangladeshi public, while also showcasing Bangladesh's culture to Korean audiences. These initiatives, though sometimes small in scale, play a meaningful role in enhancing mutual understanding and goodwill between our peoples.

How has your experience in Bangladesh influenced your perspective on diplomacy?

My experience in Bangladesh has reinforced my belief that diplomacy must be both principled and pragmatic. On the one hand, we must firmly uphold universal values such as peace, human rights, and the rule of law. On the other hand, we must be sensitive to each country's unique historical background, domestic situation, and ►►

► development priorities.

Bangladesh is at a critical juncture, facing both significant opportunities and serious challenges. Working here has reminded me that economic diplomacy, development cooperation, and people-to-people exchanges are just as important as traditional political diplomacy. It has also shown me the importance of listening carefully to local voices, engaging a broad range of stakeholders, and building long-term trust rather than focusing only on short-term gains.

What advice would you give to your successor in continuing and expanding bilateral ties?

I would advise my successor to maintain close and regular communication with both the Bangladeshi government and the private sector, including business associations and civil society. It will be important to continue supporting Korean companies operating in Bangladesh while also exploring new areas of cooperation such as green energy, digital transformation, health, and education.

I would also encourage my successor to pay special attention to cultural and public diplomacy. Reviving and updating the Memorandum of Understanding on Cultural Exchange between our two countries, for example, would be a meaningful way to deepen mutual understanding. Finally, I would suggest maintaining a balanced, fact-based approach to rapidly changing regional and global developments, always seeking solutions that can benefit both Korea and Bangladesh.

What are your plans after retirement, and how do you hope to stay engaged with Korea-Bangladesh relations?

After serving more than 36 years as a career diplomat, I feel that it is the right time to take some rest. However, if I have a chance to stay

engaged with Korea-Bangladesh relations, I would be ready to do so. In my initial thinking, I hope to help create Track 1.5 dialogues to discuss the current situation in the region and the world, and to reflect on the future of our bilateral relations together with the excellent experts and partners I met during my tenure in Dhaka.

Is there a message you'd like to share with the people and authorities of Bangladesh?

Looking to the future, Bangladesh is marching towards graduation from LDC status in 2026. This means Bangladesh should focus not only on quantitative growth but also on the quality of that growth. Such quality of economic growth must be driven by innovation, knowledge, and technology. As far as I am aware, there are ongoing discussions on the possible deferral of LDC graduation. I believe that four years still remain for the preparation of this graduation (GSP benefits end in 2029), and Bangladesh should comply with international standards and embrace overseas competition in order to make its economy resilient and sustainable. Continued reforms in key sectors, including banking, energy, and taxation, are extremely important to avoid falling into the middle-income trap and to achieve continuous and prosperous growth.

Personal and Career Background

What initially inspired you to pursue a career in diplomacy?

Could you summarize your career path and key postings prior to Bangladesh?

My career focus on economic diplomacy and regional expert in South Asia and South East Asia. I worked at the embassies of Thailand, Vietnam, Indonesia and Australia. I was also former Ambassador to Nepal. I worked in the divisions dealing with economic issues at the headquarters, including the CEPA negotiations ►►

► with India. Therefore, when I listened to the news that I had been appointed as Ambassador to Bangladesh, I felt happy and thought that I would work with more confidence.

What personal values have guided your diplomatic approach?

Bangladesh-Korea Relations

How would you describe the evolution of Korea-Bangladesh relations over your tenure?

During my tenure, Korea-Bangladesh relations have become more diversified and future-oriented. While the RMG sector remains the backbone of our economic ties, we have increasingly seen cooperation expand into new areas such as electronics, automobiles, infrastructure, ICT, and renewable energy. Policy dialogue on improving the investment climate has also become more structured and regular.

At the same time, our development cooperation has evolved from basic infrastructure and capacity building to more sophisticated projects in areas like digital governance, skills development, and health. Overall, the relationship has moved from a primarily aid- and garments-based partnership to a more comprehensive and strategic economic relationship.

Which sectors (economic, cultural, educational, technological) saw the greatest progress or potential?

Economically, the greatest progress and potential lie in manufacturing diversification, infrastructure development, and ICT. Korean companies are already active in sectors such as electronics, shipbuilding-related components, and construction. With the right policies, Bangladesh can attract further Korean investment in high-value-added manufacturing and green technologies.

In education and human resources, scholarship

programs, training courses, and exchanges between universities and research institutes have strong potential. In technology and digital transformation, there is room for closer cooperation in e-governance, fintech, and start-up ecosystems.

Culturally, K-culture including K-pop, Korean dramas, and Korean cuisine has gained popularity among Bangladeshi youth. This soft power can be further harnessed for mutual understanding, language learning, and tourism promotion.

What joint initiatives between our countries are you most proud of?

How have regional/global developments impacted your strategies here?

Leadership and Collaboration

How did you foster effective collaboration with Bangladeshi authorities and civil society?

Can you share a memorable collaboration with a Bangladeshi counterpart or institution?

One memorable example was working with Bangladeshi economic agencies and business associations to address practical issues faced by Korean investors. Through a series of meetings and consultations, we were able to identify specific bottlenecks and explore ways to streamline procedures. Even if all issues could not be solved immediately, the process itself helped build trust and contributed to gradual improvements.

Another meaningful collaboration was with academic and research institutions in organizing policy dialogues and conferences on topics such as LDC graduation, regional connectivity, and industrial upgrading. These events brought together experts from both countries and helped generate fresh ideas for future cooperation.

How do you approach cultural diplomacy and public diplomacy in this post?

My approach to cultural and public diplomacy ►►

► has been to focus on two-way exchange. While we introduced Korean culture through film screenings, food festivals, and cultural events, we also highlighted Bangladeshi culture in our outreach to Korean audiences. This mutual appreciation forms a stronger basis for friendship than one-sided promotion.

We also used public diplomacy to communicate Korea's experiences in areas such as economic development, education, and healthcare, not as a model to be copied, but as a reference that Bangladesh could adapt to its own context. Engaging young people through social media, scholarship programs, and educational activities was particularly important.

Challenges and Learnings

What were the main challenges you encountered, and what lessons did you learn?

How did you adapt to changes in policy priorities or external pressures?

Legacy and Future

What do you hope will be the lasting impact of your tenure?

What guidance would you offer to your successor?

I would encourage my successor to further deepen economic partnerships, maintain close communication with both governments and the private sector, and continuously identify new areas of cooperation that reflect evolving global and local trends. I also wish my successor will focus on cultural exchange between two countries. The revival of MoU on Cultural Exchange is one of possible ways to enhance mutual understanding on each other's culture.

What are your personal plans after retirement, and how might you stay connected to Korea-Bangladesh ties?

I am closing my foreign services of 36 years and 7 months. After returning to Korea, I will take rest for the time being and explore to have a possible opportunity to teach at the university, reflecting my experience of foreign service. I can come back to Dhaka if I can. 1.5 track of dialogue is one of such opportunities.

Farewell and Messages

Do you have a message for the people of Bangladesh and for the Korean community here?

Most Koreans who ask me about Bangladesh are very surprised by the facts that Bangladesh is the 35th largest economy in the world and will emerge as the 9th largest purchasing power in the coming 2030. Main reasons for their surprised response come from their existing perception that Bangladesh is a poor and undeveloped country with highly dense population.

On the contrary, Bangladesh is enjoying the demographic dividend with young population, expanding its market on a huge scale, and has strategical location connecting South Asia and South East Asia. The important task is how to materialize the potentials of Bangladesh.

Therefore, Bangladesh can have a confidence about its economic size and potential. However, in order to fully realize Bangladesh's potential for economic development, it is important to continue economic reforms such as financial sector, tax collection and reform, energy reform and the reduction of its subsidy, etc. Bangladesh also must further improve the business environment, particularly in areas such as timely visa issuance and renewal, smooth customs clearance, lower tariffs on raw materials and intermediate goods, prompt payment in U.S. dollars after project completion, and the ability to repatriate profits with ease. ■



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THE POWER OF AIR FORCE

Air Vice Marshal Mahmud Hussain (Retd)

is served as High Commissioner of Bangladesh to Brunei Darussalam from November 2016 to September 2020 and served as the Chairman, Civil Aviation Authority of Bangladesh (CAAB). Presently, he is working as the Distinguished Expert at Aviation and Aerospace University, Bangladesh (AAUB).



No other form of warfare has shaken the world so much as the air war since the beginning of the last century. The representative feature of air war was the power it signaled to the enemy. Even be-

fore the First World War, its application was conceived as a military act of political instrument. The Italians were the first to use air power in Italo-Turkish War in 1911-1912 against the Ottoman forces. The primary job was reconnaissance and bombing. It marked the beginning of aviation in warfare. War was, no longer, going to be the same in future. Aircraft had come to declare itself as the superior form of politico-military instrument in defending a nation.

More importantly, aircraft did not undermine the age-old belief in the principles of war rather it de-

fended them more strongly by making use of this scientific invention in the third dimension of space with the properties of momentum of physics. It attained the perfect ideal condition of Clausewitz's emphasis on occupying the 'high ground' and Napoleon's push for 'speed'. Height and speed both gave aircraft advantages that surface forces feared most. The operators of aircraft called 'pilots' became the most intelligent soldier for the enemy to fight with. Chivalry and knight-hood were bestowed upon the soldier who challenged the enemy either on the ground from the air or in the sky.

World War I saw the widespread use of aircraft in aerial combat, interdiction, battlefield support and even strategic bombing. Generals and admirals were quick to seize the opportunity when they made aircraft a dogged part of their inventory. So, the birth of air force as an independent service faced challenges from army and navy. In 1912, Royal Flying Corps (RFC) was formed as the British Army's air arm. Royal Navy also had an air arm called Royal Naval Air Service (RNAS). It ►►



Figure 1: The First Aerial Bombing was made by the Italian Army against Ottomans in 1911

► took quite an uphill task for the British to create a unified single independent air force. Royal Air Force (RAF) was born on 01 April 1918 by the merger of RFC and RNAS. RAF is the world's first national air force.

The story of the genesis of the United States Air Force (USAF) is even more absorbing. The root of USAF was Army Air Corps formed on 2 July 1926. The Air Corps became United States Army Air Force (USAAF) on 20 June 1941. It was not until 18 September 1947 that USAF was established as an independent force and an equal partner to US Army and US Navy. Henry Hap Arnold was the first Chief of Air Staff of USAF. Of the nine men who have held the rank of five star General and admiral in the US military, General Arnold is one of them, and the only one from the USAF. Today, he holds the same stature as a military strategist and leader as George C. Marshall, Douglas MacArthur, Dwight D. Eisenhower, Omar Bradley from the US Army and Fleet Admirals William Leahy, Ernest King, Chester Nimitz and William Halsey from the US Navy.

The story of USAF and RAF show the survival battles that the soldier-turned-airman had to wage to claim his unique position in the structure of

military hierarchy. The idea to become independent was prevalent among airmen who were born in the army. The redeeming feature of their avowal was hoisted upon the power of aircraft. It had the 'trans-national reach', and was not controlled by the friction of land and water. The sky provided it with an omni-directional motion. The cult of the offensive suited most the air force whose operational efficiency extended beyond the tactical urgency of war.

Two things made the power of air force formidable and non-negotiable. Air Force was capable of carrying the war into enemy's heartland. Strategic bombing became a code-word substituting for breaking the will of enemy people. It truly vindicated Thucydides' quote, "The strong do what they can, and the weak suffer what they must". A nation with a weak air force will always be at the mercy of a state with a strong air force.

The liberation war of Bangladesh clearly illustrates the power of air force. Bangladesh Air Force (BAF) was formally launched as the Air Wing of the Mukti Bahini on 28 September 1971. 9 Bengali pilots and 58 former PAF personnel formed the unit under the command of Group Captain (Later Air Vice Marshal and COAS) A. K. Khandker. It operated as a flight called "Kilo Flight". ►►

► BAF's initial fleet consisted of a DC-3, an Otter and an Alouette helicopter. Its base was at Dimapur Airport in the Indian state of Nagaland.

The size of the Kilo Flight was small but it played a crucial role in turning the tide of the war by engaging in air operations against the Pakistani forces. It was the Bengali pilots who struck the first air strikes against the Pakistanis on 8 October 1971. Between 4 and 16 December 1971, the Otter flew 12 and the Alouette flew 77 sorties. Its support to the ground forces was vital to establishing lines of communication for land battles.



Figure 2: Operation Kilo Flight (Flight Lieutenant Sultan Mahmud, later COAS third from the left)

The Pakistan Air Force (PAF) was put out of operations by the destruction of the Tejgaon Airport just after three days of the start of the war on 3 December 1971. The PAF employed F-86 Sabres were outmatched by Indian Mig-21s in the air battles over East Pakistan. The holistic use of fighters, transports and helicopters by Indian Air Force (IAF) and Kilo Flight effectively lowered the morale of Pakistan forces, and on 16 December 1971, Pakistan army surrendered with 90,000 soldiers realizing fully well that any further fighting without the air support was meaningless.

Attacks on targets like Chittagong port and Narayanganj fuel dumps demonstrated the morale and spirit of BAF in innovation and operational capabilities. The successful air opera-

tions by BAF in 1971 left a message for the country that Bangladesh needed a strong air force for the air defence of her skies after independence.

Historians often euphemistically attribute the survival of Great Britain to Royal Air Force (RAF) in World War II. The RAF and the Fleet Air Arm of the Royal Navy defended Great Britain against massive attacks by Germany's air force, the Luftwaffe. It was the first major military campaign fought entirely by air forces. Had Germany won in the air, it would have launched Operation Sea Lion to invade Britain, and the course of World

War II would have been different with its impact on the history of the world. There were occasions when an RAF pilot was shot down, his aircraft fell into the English Channel but he survived, and then swam ashore and was ready for the second mission in the air against the Germans.

Winston Churchill summed up the gratitude of the Britons about the battle with the words, "Never in the field of human conflict was so much owed by so many to so few". Pilots who fought in the battle have been known as "The Few".

On May 29, 1948, the Israeli Air Force (IAF) launched its entire fleet of four fighter aircraft in a desperate attempt to halt an Egyptian advance on Tel Aviv. This was the first use of Israeli fighter planes in combat. Louis Lenart leading the fighter mission, and three others with less than two hours' experience in fighters, attacked an Egyptian force of 10,000 troops supported by tanks and artillery, only 16 miles away to the south of Tel Aviv. The Israeli's untested aircraft Mezec, armed with only 20-mm cannons and 70-kg bombs, made history. One of the Israeli aircraft was severely damaged and the other crashed. But they halted Egyptian advance, and made ►►



Figure 3: The Battle of Britain: The Air Battle that foretold the defeat of Germany

► them turn back. Thus, the power of IAF permanently sealed the fate of the Arabs to claim Palestine their homeland.

The Iran–Israel war, also known as the Twelve-Day War (13 June – 24 June 2025), is the reality of taking the initiative away from the enemy by applying air force in the very first instant of conflict. Israel was able to exercise a high degree of air superiority over Iran. Israel used more than 200 manned aircraft in its initial attack, with its air force reportedly suffering zero casualties. Within 48 hours of starting the conflict, Israel gained control of the skies above Tehran, and for the rest of the conflict used its air force at will over any part of Iran.

Israel has always been saved by its Air Force from its enemies. No Arab country in the Middle East comes close to IAF's potential to instill psychological fears in the hearts of the enemy's population and armies. IAF has never allowed neighboring Arab states to exercise initiatives and dictate terms to its Air Force, thereby playing pivotal role in accomplishing the political objective of ensuring perpetual security of its nationhood.

In recent times, the success demonstrated by Pakistan Air Force (PAF) against the Indian Air Force is a transformation of reality into a symbolic record. PAF has shown that air force is a qualitative element of both political and military power and if used, as a system of warfighting systems, is capable of calling the shots to objective gains, no matter how small it is. On 7 May 2025, India and Pakistan engaged in one of the largest air battles in history.

There were 114 aircraft involved, 72 of Indian Air Force and 42 of PAF. The battle lasted for over an hour. PAF shot down 6 Indian aircraft (unconfirmed) including 3 newly procured French Rafales. The power of PAF has today transmuted the national pride of the Pakistanis. It is not a conjecture but a reality based on cold, hard facts taking shape face to face the formidable might of the Indian Air Force, the fourth largest air force of the world.

The power of air force is now an established logic. A strong air force is the first guarantor of credible deterrence. Its military utility is not merely in the concept of launching independent air operations but also to provide protection to surface forces. US Navy has the world's third largest air force. It has 11 active aircraft carriers and 9 "helicopter" careers with over 4,000 operational aircraft including about 800 fighters and more or less equal number of helicopters.

When Alfred Thayer Mahan wrote his book *The Influence of Sea Power Upon History*, the element of naval air force had not arrived on the scene of history, and navy was considered a tactical force to be engaged in battles. With aircraft ►



Figure 4: Gp Capt Saiful Azam (BAF) and Louis Lenart (IAF) with Peter Woodmanse (a fighter pilot of US Marine Corps). Both Azam and Lenart were honoured as “Ace Pilot” for their chivalry in the most prestigious event of Gathering of Eagles in the United States in 2000. Lenart is the Israeli Pilot who led the first combat mission of Israeli Air Force against Egypt in 1948. Azam shot down four Israeli aircraft in 1967 Arab-Israeli War for which he was decorated by both Jordan and Iraq. Azam has the rare credential of serving four air forces that of Bangladesh, Pakistan, Jordan and Iraq.

► carriers, Navy has turned into a strategic asset for the great powers to be engaged for political goals. The movement of aircraft carriers from one sea to the other is a signal to carrying out diplomacy by military means.

Air Force is the first priority in the order of application of force. This principle has now turned into an a priori logic. Air Force is the precursor to air superiority meaning the sky above own surface forces is protected from enemy air attacks. Air force's task is to make sure that army and navy is preserved today, so that they can fight winning battles tomorrow. The dissipation of energy by the Air Force in its initial success is what renders significance to the accumulation of momentum by the ground troops in the subsequent phases of conflict. The core of any military operation in the first and most crucial phase of conflict is the employment strategy of its fighter aircraft.

The idea of limited wars is posited upon achieving limited objectives. Future wars will be mostly limited in nature. Under the pressures of present civilizational norms encompassing international relations, no state will be willing to conquer and subjugate the land of another state. If the magnitude of force is the determinant of coercing adversary's political shenanigans, then no military power comes close to Air Force in attaining that moral realism.

The state has rightly appointed Bangladesh Air Force (BAF) as the overall responsible agency for national Air Defence. BAF is primarily responsible for protecting the sovereignty of Bangladesh airspace, and as well providing air support to Bangladesh Army and Bangladesh Navy. The Ministry of Defence (MOD) Directive 1975 clearly states BAF's role as “Safeguard/Defend the Airspace of Bangladesh”. During Myanmar ►►

►Crisis, Cox's Bazar Radar detected 19 airspace violations timely and accurately. Live Air Defence Alerts (ADA) were carried out by BAF fighters that deterred Myanmar Military from making any hostile ingress into Bangladesh territory. Air Defence surveillance of BAF did not fail in time of national call.

International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) in its manual on Security (Annex 17) titled Safeguarding International Civil Aviation Against Acts of Unlawful Interference empowers the state with the right to defend own airspace if violated by any unauthorized entry. It is the BAF upon which that right is vested on behalf of the state. On the basis of this right, the Bangladesh government gave approval to the mapping of Air Defence Identification Zone (ADIZ) on 20 November 2017. ADIZ has been activated with effect from 01 February 2018 upon ICAO's provisional approval. MOD's statement on Defence Policy of Bangladesh, 2018, page 9, states, "Bangladesh Air Force shall be able to defend the total Airspace of Bangladesh".

Present day air forces must include three broad principles in developing its organizational structure. The essential philosophical approach to their building blocks must be pragmatic and progressive. These principles are: hierarchical, professional and scientific.

The Chief of the Air Staff (COAS) is the Air Defence Commander (ADC). As ADC, his strategic task of integrating all resources and imperatives is immensely challenging. Bangladesh does need a comprehensive Air Defence Strategy incorporating air force, army, navy and civil (passive) defence. The elements should clearly know what their objectives are, what their plan of actions should be, and how they should make their resources available. The strategy process should be an iterative one meaning army, navy and passive defence source must engage with air force on regular basis under COAS's guidelines. Unless this

hierarchical principle is made sacrosanct, Air Defence Management based on the concept of "Total Airspace" will never be achieved.

The professional excellence of air force is substantiated by its continuous professional training and joint exercises with its sister services. Since BAF's role is to provide air support to army and navy, and as we have stated that its effective use in the air battles keeps the fighting momentum of the surface forces on reserve, such presumption requires constant sharpening of integrated operational planning of supporting forces through joint exercises.

The last but not the least, the principle of scientific is least understood. Air Force is not merely a military instrument of power. It is also a scientific instrument of power. Any nation whose air force is strong is also strong in science and technology. This makes it imperative for BAF to recruit the best boys and girls of the society. Modern wars are fought with brain, not so much with brawn. The advancement in the field of aircraft technology, radar coverage, unmanned systems, network-centric warfare, space and cyber domains, weapons' depth and diversity (just see the diversity of drones) and infrastructural resilience, should be a matter of deep reflection for the air force leaders and military strategists. BAF should not merely build a fighting culture but also a scientific culture. Nothing matters more for BAF than to factor human equation in its bid to strengthen its power. Aviation and Aerospace University, Bangladesh (AAUB) will be an ideal institution for honing the scientific, engineering, operational and aesthetic minds of BAF. Officers should be made to traverse in and out between academic and professional life on routinely basis to keep their intellect sharp and inquisitive.

Considering the geo-political realities and physical features for Bangladesh as well as scientific race to the swift, Bangladesh needs a strong air force. There is no alternative to it. ■

Understanding the Rohingya Issue: Military Dimension

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The first step to solving a problem is to understand the problem. Generally, we spend a lot of time and resources solving a problem than understanding it. Here in the intellectual circle, everyone talks about building

consensus on the Rohingya policy. I would urge building a consensus to understand the Rohingya crisis from a military dimension.

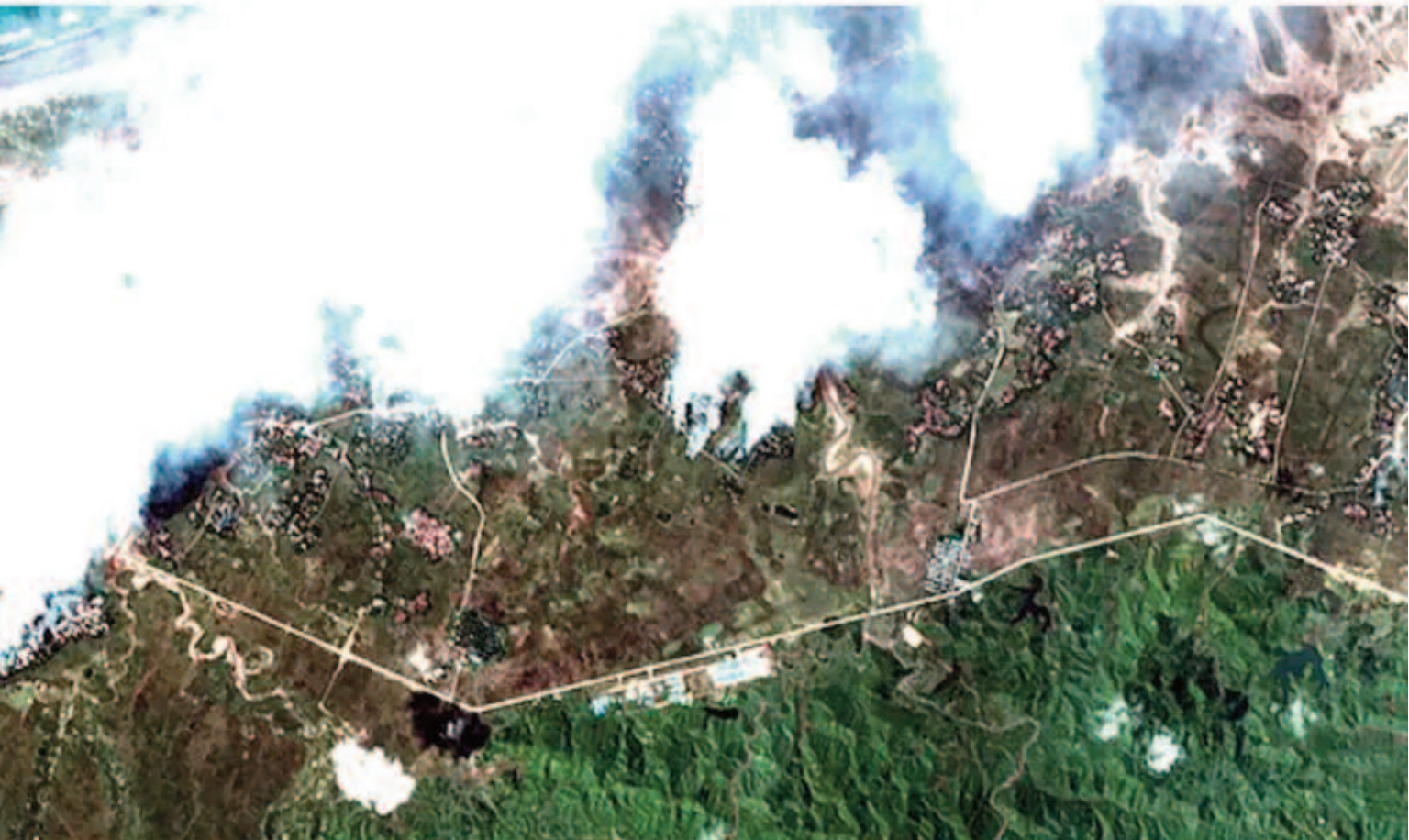
The Rohingya issue was a social issue in Myanmar society, but instead of politicising it, they militarised the issue and wanted to resolve it militarily. Now, let us understand Myanmar's society and its strategic culture relating to the Rohingyas.

a. The 'society' is based on tribal culture. The government does not represent the whole population. Sub-actors are more cohesive than nationalism. Myanmar society as a whole respects hard power and military power. Almost all of their ethnic groups have an armed organisation.

Often, differences are resolved by hard power play. The kinetic power determines your seat at the table. Respect for religious gurus (monks) is profound, and superstitions influence considerably.

b. Myanmar's 'strategic culture' relating to the Rohingya issue is important to recognise and appreciate why it has developed this way. They believe that the Rohingyas are non-ethnic to Myanmar, and their assumptions say that the Rohingyas have migrated to Myanmar in recent times. These have resulted in non-acceptance, causing hostile behaviour towards the Rohingyas.

Moreover, their common experience exhibits that Rohingyas have high growth rates, and inter-community marriages are growing. More so, there is an accepted narrative propagated by the monks that there will be Islamisation from the West, meaning Bangladesh. So, all these have shaped their collective identity. And this collective identity is "Security Anxiety", which has been considered as an existential threat. This is why Myanmar society in general, and the junta in particular, decided to address the issue militarily, with the political aim that 'Myanmar is free of Rohingyas'. ➤



Satellite images from Human Rights Watch show that only the Rohingya villages were burned in Rakhine. Photo: BBC News Bangla.

- The military applied its ends, ways, and means in 2017, and so here we are today with the Rohingya crisis.

The current problem was created by a General's daughter and a General. Now, resolving the Rohingya issue depends on two generals: Arakan Army (AA) Chief Major General Twan Myat Naing and TATMADAW Chief Senior General Min Aung Hlaing. The AA is the mirror image of TATMADAW. The Myanmar Army was established before the state of Myanmar, and it has dominated the country since then. The AA was established before its political wing, the ULA, and the AA has dominated its politics.

It may be remembered that military under military over time turns into brutal force; TATMADAW is no exception. Will the AA be an exception? And a brutal force respects a brutal force. (case example: Iran-Israel).

As stated earlier, this Rohingya crisis has been a military operation orchestrated in **five phases** by

TATMADAW, and the 6th phase will be executed by geopolitical players:

a. Phase I – Shaping Up Operation: When General Min Aung Hlaing took over as Chief of Defence in 2011, he said, “We have an unfinished job to be done.” Since then, the media campaign, propaganda, disinformation, demonization of Rohingya and the anti-Muslim movement 969 led by militant monks had intensified. These were all shaping up and conditioning the environment for military operations.

b. Phase II – Preliminary Operation: Many a times, before carrying out a major operation, a preliminary operation (prelim operation) is undertaken to facilitate the major operation. In 2016, in the name of ‘insurgency-clearing operation’ in the Mayu Range, about 90,000 Rohingyas were sent to Bangladesh. The purpose was to study the reaction of the world community in general, and Bangladesh in particular. They fathomed the weakness of Dhaka in its political, diplomatic, and military capability – especially the will to resist. ►

► **c. Phase III – Major Operation:** In 2017, genocide and ethnic cleansing caused 1.1 million Rohingyas to flee into Bangladesh.

d. Phase IV – Mopping Up Operation: Now, the AA is expelling remnants of Rohingyas in bits and pieces until ‘Arakan is free of Rohingyas’ (political aim).

e. Phase V – Conflict Termination: In this phase, civil order will be restored, administration will be set up, reconstruction will be carried out, and the lands of the Rohingyas will be surveyed and distributed among the Rakhine community. (As per laws of the land in Myanmar, when a land is burnt or abandoned, it belongs to the Ministry of Social Development, Relief, and Resettlement). Even if someday the Rohingyas go back to Myanmar and to their villages, getting back their lands would have legal complications.

f. Phase VI – Geopolitical Phase: This phase is not part of the ‘Myanmar Military Operation’ but would be mobilized geopolitically by global, regional, and local geopolitical actors shaped by INGOs and NGOs. There will be a synchronised move to assimilate Rohingyas into Bangladeshi society in exchange for lucrative offers.

What are the Options, and What Consensus Is Needed in the Bangladesh strategic community?

Diplomatic, political, and military options are on the table, but neither Bangladesh nor the international community has the appetite for military options. More so, there is a capability gap in our military, and there is a lack of ‘strategic culture’ in our society. As such, I do not see palatability for a military option, nor the military capability gap being narrowed soon.

Let this be amply clear, when I say military option, it does not necessarily mean going to war with Myanmar. It primarily means developing credible deterrence to circumvent wars and to avoid being humiliated (Myanmar has violated

our airspace more than 19 times and crossed our international border a couple of times with impunity; however, we only complained). Developing credible deterrence would meaningfully constrain their Phase IV, i.e., Myanmar’s Mopping Up Operation (When I say developing credible deterrence, it does not mean building up military capability only; it encompasses a wide range of capacity across the spectrum. However, this is beyond the scope of today’s discussion).

But let’s come to a consensus that it is a military crisis from the Myanmar side, and a military solution is one of the options. Let’s also come to a consensus to send a message to the Myanmar Military outfits that **even Strategic Patience has a shelf life**.

Whatever consensus we make, three things are important to AA/TATMADAW/Myanmar: (1) **Consequence**, (2) **Incentive**, and (3) **Motivation**. We need to build our options around these.

My final thoughts are built around these three factors. A clear political message needs to be given; if Myanmar and AA pursue continuing with Phase IV of their operation, there is a **consequence** that could be greater than the gain by pursuing their ‘Mopping Up Operation’. People of Rakhine (irrespective of community), in general, and AA in particular, are suffering from a logistics deficiency. Suspending or moving away from ‘Mopping Up Operation’ may be **incentivised** with administration, logistics, and humanitarian support, officially or unofficially from the Bangladesh side.

As proposed by Professor Imtiaz Ahmed, a mini-Marshall Plan could be worked out with global and regional partners so that there is a dream for economic emancipation, development, and a better life for the people of the tri-border region (India–Bangladesh–Myanmar). That could **motivate** people from this conflict zone to collaborate with each other. ■



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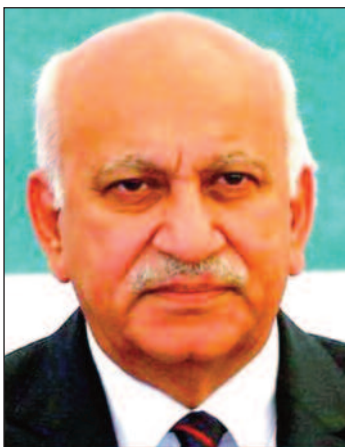


The Assassin's Republic: Imran Khan is probably safer in prison than outside

Imran Khan has self-belief, charisma and courage but does not possess the acuity of the political class or a deep understanding of Pakistan's complex power system and the international forces that have helped to keep Pakistan intact. He began to believe that he could govern on his own terms, backed by popular support

MJ Akbar

is the author of, among several titles, Tinderbox: The Past and Future of Pakistan. His latest book is Gandhi: A Life in Three Campaigns



There may not be smoke without fire, but there can be fire without smoke. In the history of assassinations in Pakistan, no evidence is ever found of crime.

Fears about Imran Khan's life are based on fact, not presumption. Every civilian prime minister of Pakistan has been killed, imprisoned, or exiled since its army seized power in 1958.

Sudden death begins at the beginning. The first prime minister, Nawab Liaquat Ali Khan, a Westernised aristocrat from Uttar Pradesh, was stopped by a bullet while trying to frame a democratic constitution. Shuja Nawaz, a historian whose brother rose to become Pakistan army chief, writes in *Crossed Swords: Pakistan, Its Army, and the Wars Within* that Liaquat was challenged by a coalition of army officers, bureaucrats and Punjab landlords who labelled him a weak 'outsider', a *muhajir* (refugee from India) with no base in the Pakistani provinces. He was neither a Punjabi nor a 'tough' autocrat, of the kind that appealed to the military-bureaucrat-landlord phalanx which argued that democracy was too ►►



Imran Khan, then prime minister of Pakistan, in Kabul, November 19, 2020 (Photo: AP)

► ‘soft’ for an incipient, fragile nation. In parenthesis, Islam as a glue of unity began to wither from inception.

On October 16, 1951 Liaquat Ali Khan landed in Rawalpindi in the state Viking aircraft to address a public meeting at Company Bagh. He had just begun the speech to his “Muslim brethren” when one of the brothers in the crowd fired two shots. Khan was rushed to hospital. He did not survive. Police caught Said Khan, a resident of Peshawar. Instead of taking Said Khan to prison and trial, they killed him instantly. Said Khan was described as an Afghan militant, but no one bothered to explain what precisely this alleged militant was militant about.

Scotland Yard was asked to help in the subsequent inquiry commission, but its full report was never published. The chief investigator, Nawab Aitzazuddin, was killed in an “aircraft accident” just a few days after a synthesised “public version” of the report was released. The government said that all documents of the inquiry were destroyed in this air crash.

As conspiracies go, this was written in capital letters, with fingerprints removed.

Huseyn Suhrawardy and Liaquat Ali Khan, both Anglicised aristocrats who enjoyed a drink, were the principal civilian leaders of Pakistan after the death of Muhammad Ali Jinnah. They disliked ►►

► each other. In 1950 Khan described Suhrawardy as the “dog let loose by India”, according to *Memoirs of Huseyn Shaheed Suhrawardy*. Suhrawardy came from an elite family which had lived in Bengal for two centuries without speaking a word of Bengali. He learnt the local language only when he discovered that Bengali Muslims were as passionate about their language as they might be about their religion. He spoke Bengali with an accent that amused or bemused the peasantry.

Suhrawardy, a democrat, had no chance of finding a berth in the power structure fashioned by bureaucrats and generals after the death of Liakat. He was resurrected only when their amazingly arbitrary governments, infused with bitter antagonism, became chaotic. In October 1954 the civil servant Governor General Ghulam Mohammad abolished parliament and created a ‘Ministry of Talents’ with army chief Ayub Khan as defence minister, Iskander Mirza as minister for interior, and Suhrawardy as law minister. When this too imploded, Suhrawardy was asked to make sense of the shambles.

During his brief months as prime minister, Suhrawardy tried to empower Pakistan with a constitution and adopt a sensible foreign policy. He scorned the idea of a Muslim bloc, pointing out archly that no matter how many zeroes you added to zero the total would still be zero. The permanent state, not to mention the Islamist doctrinaires, quickly dispensed with a sensible democrat.

Iskander Mirza, who had appointed himself president, forced Suhrawardy to resign in October 1957. Students of Karachi University took out a full-page advertisement in the pre-eminent English daily *Dawn* inviting applications for the post of ‘temporary’ prime minister from applicants willing to get the boot without notice.

That was prescient. Since Suhrawardy, all civilians

who have reached the top have learnt that the boot is worn by the army, and will kick at will.

On October 7, 1958, Mirza imposed martial law and named Ayub Khan Chief Martial Law Administrator. Exactly 20 days later, Mirza was ordered at pistol point to leave the country within 24 hours. He left hurriedly for London instead of an early grave. Suhrawardy was pushed out of Pakistan in 1962 on the charge of being anti-national when he was merely anti-army rule.

He died in a Beirut hospital.

The military-bureaucrat complex which seized power in 1951 has never surrendered it. When suicidal mistakes made army despots or their civilian dummies untenable, outsiders like Benazir Bhutto got brief spells of authority before being removed, and then killed.

The first military dictatorship ended in the misadventure of 1965, when Ayub Khan, encouraged by his egregious foreign minister, a young Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, lost the Kashmir war he had started. The people, fed up with lies, turned against him. Ayub Khan transferred power to the army chief, General Yahya Khan, who promised elections to assuage public opinion and could not survive the consequences. When Bengalis, denied their elected place in government, sought freedom, he ordered massacres, provoking a war with India in 1971 which ended in the triumphant emergence of Bangladesh.

Bhutto, once described by Suhrawardy as “a dock-side bully”, took over in what was now a moth-eaten Pakistan. Bhutto would go on to make more than one mistake but his fatal error was to believe that he had made the army subservient by appointing a seeming sycophant as chief.

General Zia-ul-Haq was a brilliant thespian, hiding his true ideology and intentions behind a mask of submission. In July 1977 he seized the ►►

► opportunity offered by Bhutto's growing unpopularity. Blessed with a subdued sense of humour, he called the second coup in Pakistan 'Operation Fairplay'. His version of fair play was hanging Bhutto after a farcical trial.

THE ZIA CHAPTER ended in 1988 in an inexplicable plane crash. Mystery has become endemic in Pakistan. General Mirza Aslam Beg was the formal Army chief in 1988, reporting to Zia. Just before take-off, Zia asked Beg to accompany him. Beg, never known to say anything but yes to the Big Chief, declined. The inquiry into this crash was little more than an infructuous farce. The truth is clearly too injurious to the health of successors. It is remarkable how quickly a despot is forgotten. No one celebrated Zia's 100th birth anniversary in 2024, not even the Pakistan army.

Zia had nurtured a young protégé, Mian Muhammad Nawaz Sharif, as the civilian face of army rule. Sharif was appointed finance minister of Punjab in 1981 and chief minister in April 1985. Benazir Bhutto inherited her father Zulfikar's legacy; her tussle with the army and its acolytes like Nawaz Sharif consumed two decades of political upmanship after Zia's death.

Aslam Beg, helped by fellow generals Hamid Gul and Asad Durrani, propelled Sharif to office by rigging the elections of August 1990. In 2012 they confessed from the comfort of retirement and



TWO MEN KILLED BENAZIR BHUTTO ON DECEMBER 27, 2007 WHILE SHE WAS CAMPAIGNING FOR THE JANUARY 8 ELECTIONS. NO ONE KNOWS THEIR NAMES, AND NO ONE WILL

sanctuary of old age that the polls had been manipulated. The 1990 honeymoon with Sharif was short. Sharif resigned in 1993. Benazir Bhutto won enough seats in the ensuing election to become prime minister. She could hardly last without the support of the cantonment although she did try to accommodate the generals. Sharif was back by 1997.

If this sounds complicated it is only because it is.

Sharif lost office through folly. He should have known that the generals were masters, not friends. In the spring of 1999, his army chief General Pervez Musharraf started a clandestine war with India by an offensive on Kargil in Kashmir. When, once again, Pakistan was defeated, Sharif presumed that he could hold a weakened military leadership accountable. On October 12, 1999 ►

IN JULY 1977 GENERAL ZIA-UL-HAQ SEIZED THE OPPORTUNITY OFFERED BY BHUTTO'S UNPOPULARITY. HE CALLED THE SECOND COUP IN PAKISTAN 'OPERATION FAIRPLAY' AND HANGED BHUTTO AFTER A TRIAL



Zulfikar Ali Bhutto and Zia-ul-Haq after Zia's appointment as Colonel-in-Chief of the Pakistan Armoured Corps in 1974

► Musharraf's troops climbed the walls of the prime minister's residence and that was that. The third coup took Sharif to prison. He survived a death penalty only because of American President Bill Clinton's intervention. King Fahd then brokered a deal by which Sharif was exiled to Saudi Arabia after promising to abandon politics. Naturally, that was easier promised than done.

The challenge to Musharraf, who led Pakistan into a putrid mess, came from Benazir Bhutto. In 2007 she was 54 years old. The people were elated by her return; the generals apprehensive. The unprecedented crowds at her rallies sent shivers across the officers' club. She escaped an attempt on her life on October 18. Benazir told colleagues and journalists that if she lost her life, the true assassin

would be Musharraf.

Rawalpindi is a cantonment city, home to the general headquarters of the Pakistan army. Two men, one armed with a gun and the other with bombs, killed Benazir Bhutto on the evening of December 27, 2007 while she was campaigning for the January 8 elections.

No one knows their names, and no one will. The street on which her blood was spilt was hosed clean with water soon after the attack. No traces. No evidence. Benazir Bhutto's party won the elections and a non-entity, Yusuf Raza Gilani, was sworn in. Musharraf resigned in

August 2008 before he could be impeached. Gilani lasted till disqualified by the Supreme Court in June 2012.

Nawaz Sharif had also tried to return in 2007 but failed. By 2011 he had made a deal with the permanent establishment and was back in Pakistan. He won the elections in 2013 with help from his old friends. Once again, the equation soured over the next thousand days; corruption was added to the usual reasons.

The generals needed a new face as much as the people, who were weary of shenanigans. Imran Khan, debonair cricket hero and London socialite in his youth, now a convert to "Islamic pseudo-socialism" in his rhetoric, was the only card left in a tired pack. Imran Khan has had a ►►

► phenomenal life, but the biggest phenomenon might be his third marriage, to Bushra Bibi, née Bushra Riaz Wattoo, then 47 years old, on February 18, 2018. Bushra claims to be a mystic who brings good luck. She persuaded Imran Khan that he would never become prime minister until he married her. He did, breaking a few Shariah taboos along the way. Six months later he was prime minister. He won the August 2018 elections through what his opponents described as a “manufactured verdict”. In Pakistan, security at voting booths is controlled by soldiers, not the police.

Among his first appointments was an unknown General Asim Munir, who became head of ISI on October 25, 2018.

Imran Khan has enormous self-belief layered on exceptional charisma and courage but does not quite possess the acuity of the political class or a deep understanding of Pakistan’s complex power system and the international forces that have helped to keep Pakistan intact. He began to believe that he could govern on his own terms, backed by popular support. There will be another occasion to examine his years in office, if not always in power, but since August 2023 he has been in jail, serving a 14-year sentence for corruption.

Imran Khan ventured into territory that made his survival incompatible with seven decades of Pakistani foreign policy. Carried away by an immature Islamism he sought to dilute his country’s dependent relationship with America. He described the terrorist icon Osama bin Laden as a martyr, *shaheed*, and blamed America for the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq.

President Donald Trump, then in his first term, lashed out, saying Pakistan had not done “a damn thing” for America. Trump, unable to resist hyperbole, was articulating the growing frustration in the Pentagon and the State Department. In Imran’s calculation, Pakistan had lost 75,000 lives

and \$123 billion in American causes, although of course he never detailed the arithmetic of either.

Imran Khan departed from the Jinnah doctrine when he rashly asserted that Pakistan would no longer act as America’s “hired gun”: Jinnah and his successors had exacted a high price for this hire. In August 2021, Imran celebrated America’s hurried departure from Afghanistan as liberation from the “shackles of slavery”. The alarm in Washington grew when Imran Khan became the first Pakistan prime minister to visit the Kremlin in two decades, on February 23, 2022. The timing could not have been worse. It was at the onset of Russia’s war against Ukraine. On March 7, 2022 Washington conveyed its concerns about Imran Khan’s neutrality on Ukraine.

On March 8, Shehbaz Sharif, the present prime minister, moved a no-confidence resolution in the National Assembly against Imran Khan. On March 27, Imran alleged a foreign conspiracy to remove him, describing the new ally of the Sharifs, Asif Zardari (husband of the late Benazir Bhutto) as a “Mir Jafar”, the Bengali Nawab who supported Robert Clive during the battle of Plassey in 1757. In April 2022 the Sharifs and Bhuttos were in office. In January 2024 Imran Khan was convicted of betraying secrets, corruption, and unlawful marriage to Bushra.

Moscow is not on Field Marshal Asim Munir’s travel schedule.

The army’s verdict has also come in. On December 5, 2025 their spokesman Lt General Ahmed Sharif Chaudhry said that Imran Khan was “mentally unstable” and a “narcissist” because he had “spread poison against the army”. You must be a bit mad in Pakistan not to recognise the place of the army in the power structure.

Imran Khan is probably safer in prison than outside. The street, as his Oxbridge colleague Benazir Bhutto discovered, is crowded with assassins. ■

The Arakan Army in Rakhine: Present Realities and Future Trajectories

Major General (Retd) Dr. Md. Nayeem Ashfaque Chowdhury

is the Chief Executive Officer, Prime Bank Foundation.



Bangladesh at a Strategic Crossroads: The Arakan Army Factor

Bangladesh stands at a critical juncture, confronting a complex array of challenges—both internal and external—particularly from its immediate neighborhood. Among these, the enduring and multifaceted threats emanating from Myanmar, especially the Rakhine region, remain among the most pressing.

Escalating Instability in Myanmar

The situation in Myanmar is marked by escalating instability. The erosion of control by the internationally recognized state actor—the Tatmadaw—and the rise of non-state entities such as Ethnic Armed Organizations (EAOs) and the People's Defense Forces (PDF) have severely constrained the scope of Track I diplomacy. Myanmar's

unchecked narco-terrorism, the Arakan Army's (AA) and United League of Arakan's (ULA) lack of professional statecraft, and the overwhelming burden of hosting 1.3 million Rohingya refugees have deeply impacted Bangladesh's socioeconomic, ecological, and security fabric. The looming influx of remaining Rohingyas from Rakhine, coupled with the absence of trust between the AA, ethnic Rakhine, and Rohingya communities, casts serious doubt on the prospects for sustainable repatriation. These are but the tip of the iceberg.

The Arakan Prosperity Plan

In late 2024, the United League of Arakan (ULA) and its armed wing, the Arakan Army, unveiled the "Arakan Prosperity Plan" as part of their broader governance and development vision for Rakhine State. Publicly articulated on December 29, 2024, the plan outlined six pillars: stance, economy, military, nationalism, peace, and politics. Spearheaded by Major General Twan Mrat Naing, the AA's commander, the plan is framed within the "Way of Rakhita" and the long-term Arakan Dream 2030 vision.





Arakan Army Seized 14 out of 17 Rakhine Townships

► From Insurgency to Governance

The evolving role of the Arakan Army sits at the intersection of ethnic assertion, regional geopolitics, and contested statehood. From a marginal insurgent group, the AA has transformed into a dominant military and administrative force—reshaping strategic calculations for China, India, Bangladesh, and the broader international community. The

AA now controls 14 of 17 townships, including Maungdaw, Buthidaung, and Paletwa—effectively securing the entire border with Bangladesh and India.

Reports indicate the planting of landmines along the Bangladesh-Myanmar frontier, resulting in casualties, including the tragic death of a Border Guard Bangladesh (BGB) soldier on October 25. Skirmishes between the AA and Rohingya armed factions—ARSA, RSO, and ARA—have intensified near Naikhongchhari and Teknaf. The AA has not offered clear guarantees for Rohingya rights, and many Rohingya remain wary of its ethno-nationalist agenda. Allegations of abduc-

tions of Bangladeshi fishermen by AA fighters have further heightened anxiety in border communities.

Human Rights Concerns

The AA stands accused of forced labor, arbitrary arrests, and religious persecution in Rohingya-majority areas. Families are coerced into night patrols or fined, and mosques have reportedly been demolished—raising grave concerns about cultural erasure. Meanwhile, the AA is advancing toward Sittwe, the state capital, and Kyaukphyu, home to China's strategic deep-sea port and energy corridor. In Sittwe, civilians face soaring prices, acute food shortages, and lawlessness. The city is encircled, accessible only by sea or air.

Strategic Advances and Constraints

The fall of the Western Regional Military Command has significantly weakened the Tatmadaw's grip on Rakhine. While hostilities persist, signs of tactical restraint suggest the AA may be avoiding overstretch. It has captured all three entry ►

► routes from mainland Myanmar into Rakhine and is now advancing eastward into Bago and Ayeyarwady—regions hosting the bulk of Myanmar’s military industries.

Relations between the Arakan Army and the National Unity Government (NUG) remain tenuous. Although both oppose the junta, the AA has not endorsed the NUG’s federal vision, nor has it forgotten Aung San Suu Kyi’s hostility toward the group during her tenure. Instead, the AA may pursue a trajectory similar to Kosovo or Somaliland—securing *de facto* autonomy first, followed by incremental international recognition.

Shifting Ethnic Dynamics

The AA’s ascendancy has shifted the balance among ethnic armed organizations. Its model of parallel governance and military consolidation could either inspire other groups or destabilize them, reshaping the broader landscape of Myanmar’s ethnic conflict.

A critical dynamic in Myanmar is that most armed groups wield greater decision-making authority than their political wings—including the AA. The exception remains the National League for Democracy (NLD). This imbalance is mirrored in the relationship between the Tatmadaw and the civilian government, where the military retains predominant influence. Such realities must be carefully considered when engaging with both state and non-state actors in Myanmar.

Geostrategic Implications

Beijing’s strategic interests in Rakhine revolve around Kyaukphyu and the China-Myanmar Economic Corridor (CMEC). Thus far, the AA has refrained from disrupting Chinese investments, signaling pragmatism. Yet instability in Kyaukphyu could jeopardize Beijing’s efforts to mitigate the “Malacca Dilemma.”

India has deepened informal ties with Rakhine-based actors, while China continues to exert overarching influence—balancing relations with both the Tatmadaw and insurgent groups. The AA’s control over Paletwa directly affects India’s Kaladan Multi-Modal Transit Transport Project (KMTTP), a flagship initiative for Northeast connectivity. Although the AA has not opposed Indian infrastructure, New Delhi remains cautious, maintaining a delicate balance between the junta and ethnic armed organizations.

ASEAN has reiterated its commitment to the Five-Point Consensus (5PC), voicing deep frustration over the lack of progress. It has refused to endorse the junta’s planned elections and continues to call for an immediate ceasefire and inclusive political dialogue. Western governments remain wary of legitimizing secessionist movements. However, the AA’s state-building efforts may quietly attract interest—particularly if it demonstrates inclusive governance and respect for human rights.

The United States is likely to prioritize three strategic objectives: ensuring regional stability, countering China’s expanding footprint, and combating transnational crime.

The AA’s rise in Rakhine is also reshaping Bangladesh’s security environment. Its popularity among Rakhine Buddhists contrasts sharply with hostility toward the Rohingya, generating new refugee flows and border instability. With the AA now

controlling the entire 270-kilometer frontier with Bangladesh, Dhaka faces mounting security dilemmas. The presence of nearly a million Rohingya refugees and the risk of spillover violence make stability in Rakhine a strategic imperative. Reports of arms smuggling from Rakhine into the Chittagong Hill Tracts—directly or via Mizoram—and rampant drug trafficking through porous borders further compound the threat. For Bangladesh, this translates into heightened risks ►►

► of cross-border tensions, maritime insecurity, and complications in Rohingya repatriation.

Projected Security Outlook in Rakhine

The Tatmadaw is unlikely to leave any stone unturned in its effort to reassert control over Rakhine and reinforce Myanmar's unitary state structure. Achieving this objective will almost certainly require close strategic alignment with China—a partnership that could materialize swiftly given existing geopolitical ties. Reports suggest Beijing has already begun pressuring the Arakan Army (AA) to conform to its terms. Once the Tatmadaw secures Chinese backing and consolidates gains in other parts of Myanmar, a military offensive in Rakhine appears likely.

In the meantime, the Tatmadaw is expected to strengthen its strategic footholds, focusing on key urban centers such as Sittwe and Kyaukphyu, as well as critical military-industrial assets in the Bago and Magway regions. This consolidation phase may serve as a launchpad for broader operations.

For Bangladesh, vigilance is essential. Whether the AA or the Tatmadaw ultimately prevails, there remains a credible risk of further displacement of Rohingya populations—potentially triggering renewed cross-border influxes.

The AA itself faces mounting constraints. Encircled by hostile forces—the Chin National Front (CNF) to the north, the Tatmadaw to the south and southeast, the People's Defense Forces (PDF) to the south, and the Bay of Bengal to the west—the group is severely deprived of logistical support. Economic activity in Rakhine has stagnated, exacerbating resource scarcity. Historically, the Rohingya provided much of the agricultural labor force in northern Rakhine, particularly in rice cultivation, fisheries, and seasonal farm work. Their absence has left farms struggling with acute labor shortages, especially during peak seasons. Rakhine Buddhists, who traditionally owned land but relied on Rohingya labor, now face declining productivity.

To sustain its growing logistical demands—expected to rise exponentially—the AA has report-►



►edly become increasingly reliant on illicit networks, including arms smuggling, narcotics, and human trafficking. This reliance not only undermines local stability but also poses serious transnational security risks for the wider region.

Strategic Recommendations for Dhaka

Bangladesh must adopt a multi-track diplomatic approach—Track I, Track 1.5, and Track II—engaging all stakeholders in Myanmar as well as the wider international community. Naturalization of Rohingyas in Bangladesh is not at all an option which Rohingyas also strongly believe. From a security perspective, several measures stand out as imperative:

Military Deterrence

Bangladesh should reinforce its military posture through:

Strengthened military diplomacy with regional and global partners

Regular operational audits to identify vulnerabilities

Procurement of appropriate arms and munitions

Enhanced training and preparedness of forces

Exploration of strategic alliances with friendly nations to bolster deterrence

Border Security

Securing the frontier with Myanmar is critical. Recommended steps include:

Comprehensive border sealing through fencing and construction of border roads

Intensified deployment of Border Guard Bangladesh (BGB) units

Expanded intelligence operations to detect and neutralize threats

Rohingya Engagement

The Rohingya refugee population must be integrated into community-based initiatives that promote stability. This involves:

Engaging camp residents and their leadership in security awareness programs

Building motivation and leadership capacity to reduce susceptibility to radicalization

Encouraging constructive participation in local resilience efforts

Local Mobilization

Bangladesh should harness the strength of its local communities in combating narco-terrorism and transnational crime. This requires:

Coordinated action against arms smuggling, drug trafficking, and human trafficking

Active involvement of local administration, elected representatives, media, religious leaders, and civil society

Sustained public awareness campaigns to build resilience against illicit networks

Conclusion

The Arakan Army's trajectory—from insurgency to de facto governance—has transformed Rakhine into a crucible of ethnic assertion, contested statehood, and regional geopolitics. For Bangladesh, the stakes are existential: stability in Rakhine is not merely a neighbor's concern but a strategic imperative. Navigating this volatile landscape will require vigilance, pragmatism, and a recalibration of regional diplomacy. ■



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25.39.0000.092.33.237.21,
DATE: 31 March 2024,

Project Name: FGC (Fortuna Green City)
Address: Targach, Gazipur
Developer: Fortuna Green City Ltd.
Land Area: 28,730.3 sqm (7.15 acre)

Residential Tower: 6nos.
Tower - 1-5 (G+16) + 1 Basement
Tower - 6 (G+17) + 1 Basement
Total Apartment: 627 nos.
Simplex Type - A (1610 sft) - 381 nos.
Simplex Type - B (1660 sft) - 140 nos.
Premium Type - C (3260 sft) - 66 nos.
Premium Duplex Type - D (3320 sft) - 40 nos.
Car Parking - 710 nos.

Commercial Building:
Podium - (G+3) storied
Commercial space - 1,78,000 sft
Service Apartment - 14 storied
West Tower - 800 sft (288 nos.)
East Tower - 780 sft (204 nos.)
Car Parking - 3 Basement (580 nos.)

CONTACT NO: 01518384096, 01990798540, 01969983741
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Post Charter Reforms: Ten Year Strategy for Better Governance in Bangladesh

John Charles Dalton

is a highly experienced advisor, team leader, and management consultant. Among the relevant experiences which support his writing on this topic are the following:

Chief Researcher on the Special Commission to Implement the 89th Amendment to the Massachusetts State Constitution; Reviewed thousands of draft laws and constitutional amendments as legislative staff to the Joint Committee on State Administration (all organizational changes and setups) and the Committee on Election Laws of the Massachusetts State Legislature; Provided technical and strategy inputs to the formulation of local charters in approximately 25 subnational jurisdictions and reviewed hundreds of draft charters; Elected by the voters at an annual election to serve as a member of a local charter-drafting commission; Prepared legislation and testified on the need for specific laws to support the charter making and voter approval process to buttress the Home Rule Amendment; Advised six national agencies in Zambia on the preparation of integrity charters to complement the newly enacted constitutional provisions on anticorruption; and, Advised the Offices of the President of Liberia and the Prime Minister of Zimbabwe on policies and laws to implement political and democratic change (i.e., charters)



Mr. Dalton is a highly experienced advisor, team leader, and management consultant. Among the relevant experiences which support his writing on this topic are the following:

The interim government has approved a

four-issue referendum question which the Presi-

dent has agreed to place before the people on the same day as the next general election, currently planned for around mid-February 2026. The Referendum question, which the voters will be asked to approve or reject with a single yes or no vote is as follows:

“Do you agree to the July National Charter (Constitutional Reform) Implementation Order, 2025 and the following proposals?”

The proposals are:

a) During election periods, the caretaker government, ►►



Parliament Building of Bangladesh

► *the Election Commission and other constitutional institutions will be formed in line with the July Charter framework.*

b) Parliament will become bicameral, with a 100-member upper house whose approval will be required for any constitutional amendment. Members will be allocated proportionately based on the national vote share.

c) Winning parties must implement the 30 consensual points of the July Charter, including increased representation for women, an opposition-elected deputy speaker, limits on the prime minister's tenure, enhanced presidential powers, expanded fundamental rights and stronger judicial and local government independence.

d) Other reform commitments in the July Charter will be carried out as pledged by political parties.

Voters will respond to all four items through a single "yes" or "no."

My first reaction was to consider the proposed charter referendum from both a procedural, legal perspective, emphasizing its inherent flaws, and also to examine the content of individual charter proposals that seemed too insignificant to be included in a Constitution. However, after due consideration, I determined that I have neither right nor reason, as a foreign resident, to criticize what

six reform commissions and a National Consensus Commission have deemed necessary in order for Bangladesh to return to the rule of law and establish a constitutional foundation for good governance. From a substantive perspective there is nothing so egregious in the Charter, nor in the referendum question itself, which is contrary to those aspirations.

Therefore, it is only fair and right to applaud the effort and acknowledge the good intentions of all the commissioners (reform and consensus) involved.

I do wonder, however, why more emphasis was not allocated to (i) the role of women, (ii) protecting the environment through harsh penalties for polluters, (iii) empowering local governments and (iv) as was done in the Philippines, spelling out the revenue sharing formula so that real, legitimate local governments - cities, municipalities, and unions - are guaranteed funds to improve local services for education, health, public markets, rural roads, water and waste water, and a host of other technical and administrative matters. Maybe that will come later.

These policy and fiscal equity gaps are among the reasons why I propose an intentionally longer, ten-year reform period, as described below. ►►

► The Flaws

According to international best practice, as well as Article 142 of the Bangladesh Constitution, the first line of any referendum question which proposes to amend the Constitution **MUST** alert the voters that they are voting to change the highest law of the land, the National Constitution.

“Section 142 (1)(a)(i) states: *“no Bill or such amendment shall be allowed to proceed unless the long title thereof expressly states that it will amend a provision of the Constitution”*.

The requirements of both a “Bill” – which is a produce of Parliament – and the importance of adequate notice are missing in the current referendum question, provided above. While a notice could be added by the EC, the requirement for a Bill seems to raise some doubt about whether the authority for a referendum exists under the law.

Perhaps the oversight about notice is intended to deflect attention away from Section 142 (1) (a) (ii) which states: *“no such Bill shall be presented to the President for assent unless it is passed by the votes of not less than two thirds of the members of Parliament.”* This provision of law would suggest that the President must **WAIT** for Parliament to be sworn in and follow the usual internal procedures before a Bill is passed by 2/3 majority in Parliament and presented to the President for assent. On matter affecting the Preamble or Sections 8, 48, 56, 58 and 142 of the Constitution, the President will order a referendum to determine the will of the people before “assenting” to a Bill modifying the “basic structure of government”. (see Section 7 of the Bangladesh Constitution).

Finally, the referendum question (part b) is proposing that *“Parliament will become bicameral, with a 100-member upper house whose approval will be required for any constitutional amendment*. Logically, therefore, as part of Parliament it must follow the legal requirements for Parliament, which dictate (in Section 142) that a “bill” related to a Constitutional question must be approved by a super-

majority -2/3 vote of the members of Parliament - before it can be sent to the President for assent. Section 19 (e) states: *“Any bill relating to the amendment of the Constitution must be passed by a simple majority in the Upper House”*. So, each House (Charter Section 17 designates the Lower House as the National Parliament and the Upper House as the Senate, a term never repeated in the documents) will follow a different standard? That makes no sense. The referendum question adds to the confusion by indicating that *“Parliament will become bicameral”* , so when Section 142 specifies that a 2/3 super majority of **“Parliament”** is required to pass a bill related to the Constitution, it is only logical to assume that both houses of a bicameral legislature, individually or in the aggregate, must approve a bill that proposes to amend the Constitution by a super majority.

Is it fair to ask why a bunch of unelected individuals sitting as the Upper House/Senate - from no designated constituency -get any say at all in a Constitutional matter? I am sure the answer lies somewhere deep in the socio-cultural heritage of Bangladesh and will be addressed before the country goes too far down this winding road.

The logical conclusion: a bit more work is needed on the charter and the referendum question before it can be aid to conforms to existing law.

To salvage something positive from the enormous effort in 2025, I used the time-honored 3T analysis approach - **THINGS TAKE TIME** - to align with the following standards:

“A Constitution is a set of fundamental legal-political rules that:

Are binding on everyone in the State, including ordinary law-making institutions;

Concern the structure and operation of the institutions of government, political principles and the rights of citizens;

Are based on widespread public legitimacy;

Are intentionally harder to change than ordinary law ►►

► (e.g., a two thirds majority vote on a referendum is needed); and,

Meets the internationally recognized criteria of a democratic system in terms of representation and human rights.”¹

So then, what is a Charter? Historically – from the Magna Carta to today – a charter is a grant of rights and powers/duties and obligations from a higher authority to another entity over which it has some control. However, and in the case of Bangladesh this is the key point, in recent times a charter may be prepared by “the subject” of the charter to claim authority, to self-empower, to assert agency. The people themselves become the sovereign power that demands their rights and powers. How can this be accomplished? Via a referendum in which the people instruct the Parliament to amend the Constitution and adopt other laws which would give practical meaning to the July uprising. This appears to be the quick and dirty; fast and furious intent of sections c and d of the referendum question, which is not a 3T approach at all.

The interim government’s intent, as reflected in the referendum Question, to instruct a future Parliament, rather than advise it, takes the charter provisions deep into the weeds of public administration. Does Bangladesh have consensus? Does mutual trust exist? If not, how can it be restored?

First of all, even a perfect charter, a perfect referendum, or a perfect election is not reform, per se. Real reform takes real time. Reform is iterative – one reform leads to another- and then another even bolder reform follows. Confidence builds. It takes time! So, if things take time...how long is enough time? I suggest ten years: a Reform Decade (2026-2035). One could also argue that it might take as long to rebuild the fundamental edifices of government as it did to destroy them. Sixteen years, then? Maybe that’s too much time. I think ten years may be a good enough test decade: but real reform takes real time.



Parliament must be the instrument of reform. The National Commission knew this, of course, but may have decided to downplay the role of Parliament since the legislative body will have such a profound and dispositive effect on the rationale for a referendum on the charter and, subsequently, on the Constitution itself. The National Consensus Commission acknowledged the central role of referendum under the description for Constitutional change in Charter Issue 3, Amendment to the Constitution, which states “...specific articles, including the preamble, Articles 8, 48, 56, and 142.... shall require a public referendum for any amendment.” Unfortunately, but maybe tactically, the Commission left out the specific legal and constitutional requirement of Section 7 of the Constitution and the Referendum Law of 1991 which specifies that Parliament has the exclusive power to amend the Constitution. Consequently, it is imperative to vote out a bill from Parliament FIRST before you can have a referendum on even a single issue. Choose wisely! The first legislative bills in 2026 should identify a few key priorities. The undifferentiated **TO DO** list in Sections c and d of the Referendum Question is not a well-planned, rational approach to a legislative session.

Could the voters navigate this dense, textual forest of the Referendum Question and know what a ►►

¹ Constitution net.org, August 2014

- “yes” or “no” vote actually meant for them? I doubt it. Which leads to my key recommendations

Urgently a Charter in Brief (5 pages max) should be drafted to reduce the current administrivia in the National Charter 2025 to understandable language. This streamlined document – in the peoples’ language – should be widely circulated via legacy media, social media, all printed magazines and newspapers and also discussed on Bangla language talk shows. Constitutional provisions are not administrative procedures. To propose Articles that are not worthy of inclusion in the Constitution demonstrates a basic misunderstanding of the elevated status of a constitution. To propose itty-bitty minute details about how things will be done are not critical matters of State and undermine the principle that the Bangladeshi Constitution is the Supreme Law of the land.

For example, if Charter Issue 17, which concerns internal working procedures – the flow of document up and down between the Upper House and the Lower House – for a bicameral legislature is not adopted by Parliament even after the referendum is approved then Charter Issues 10, 12, 18(a) (b) (c), (d), 19(a) (b) (c) (d) (e), 20, 23, and 28 are mooted and nullified since they each do a deep dive into extraneous and irrelevant issues regarding the Upper House. A very common rule for drafting legislation: Do not assume a law upon which to establish a different law.

Some work is needed here.

One of the obvious flaws in the list of Constitutional changes proposed in the July National Charter 2025 is that many of the so-called 30 consensual points (Referendum section c) are mere procedures, or policies, or exhortations to do the right thing, or are blatantly narrow, self-interested provisions that are not people-centric. The Charter in Brief should focus on WHAT not HOW.

For example; Issue 42(b)(5) states: “*The Anti-Cor-*

ruption Commission may make necessary regulations to discharge its duties and functions”.. and the sun rises in the East. Or this one, under Issue 38(5)(c): “*The Secretariat of the National Parliament, under the supervision of the Speaker, will provide secretarial support to the (Selection Committee for the selection of the Chief Election Commissioner)*”. Really, what about a tea boy?

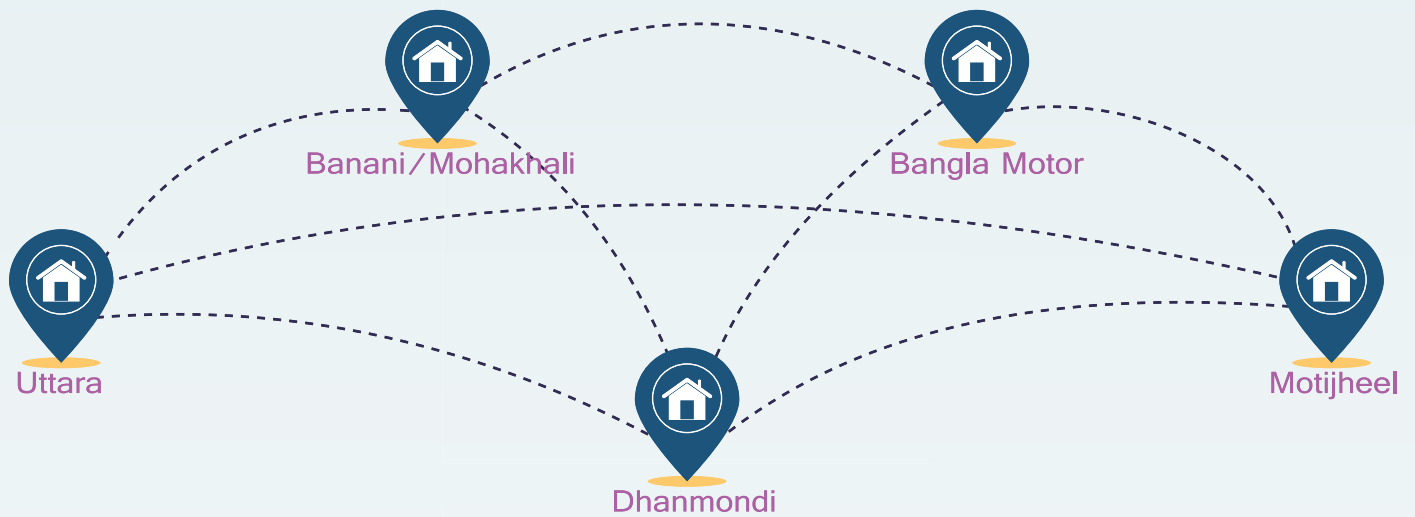
These are NOT Constitutional matters.

The CA – no committee, no commission, no “usual suspects” – should oversee the preparation of the Charter in Brief by retaining a talented young barrister or two (not a judge or a bureaucrat or an academic) to prepare the Charter in Brief document assuring that it is devoid of jargon like “proportional representation” a term that may be added to the law but is way too complex for the majority of voters at a referendum. KISS.

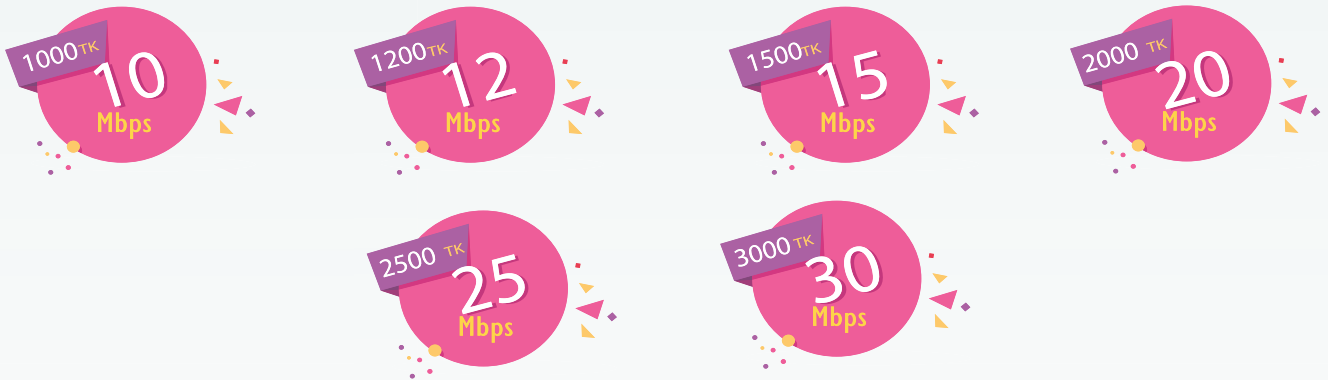
If possible, the CA’s office may prepare a fast-track legislative agenda for consideration by the Parliament in the period 2026-2027. Carefully selected from all charter issues the CA’s office will select 8 key laws that will lead to Constitutional amendments and therefore will require a referendum by the end of 2027. In the end there may be only 5 laws that are proposed as bills, but the will of the people could be discerned from such a specific selection. Sections c and d of the Referendum Questions is a complete surrender

The Ministry of Finance shall be instructed to include in the annual budget for 2026-2027, and annually thereafter, a sum of money for nationwide referendums as recommended by the Election Commission, which amount may not be adjusted except upon final budget approval by Parliament.

I hope these observations lead to positive change. It seems ironic to this outsider that the first demonstration of a commitment to the rule of law is....to ignore the law. ■



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Transformation of the Healthcare System and Medical Diplomacy

Rifat Latifi, MD, FACS, FKCS, FICS

is a Professor of Surgery President, Kosova College of Surgeons, Editor-in Chief, Kosova Journal of Surgery, Minister of Health, Republic of Kosova (November 16, 2021-October 6, 2022) E-mail: latifi@surgery.arizona.edu

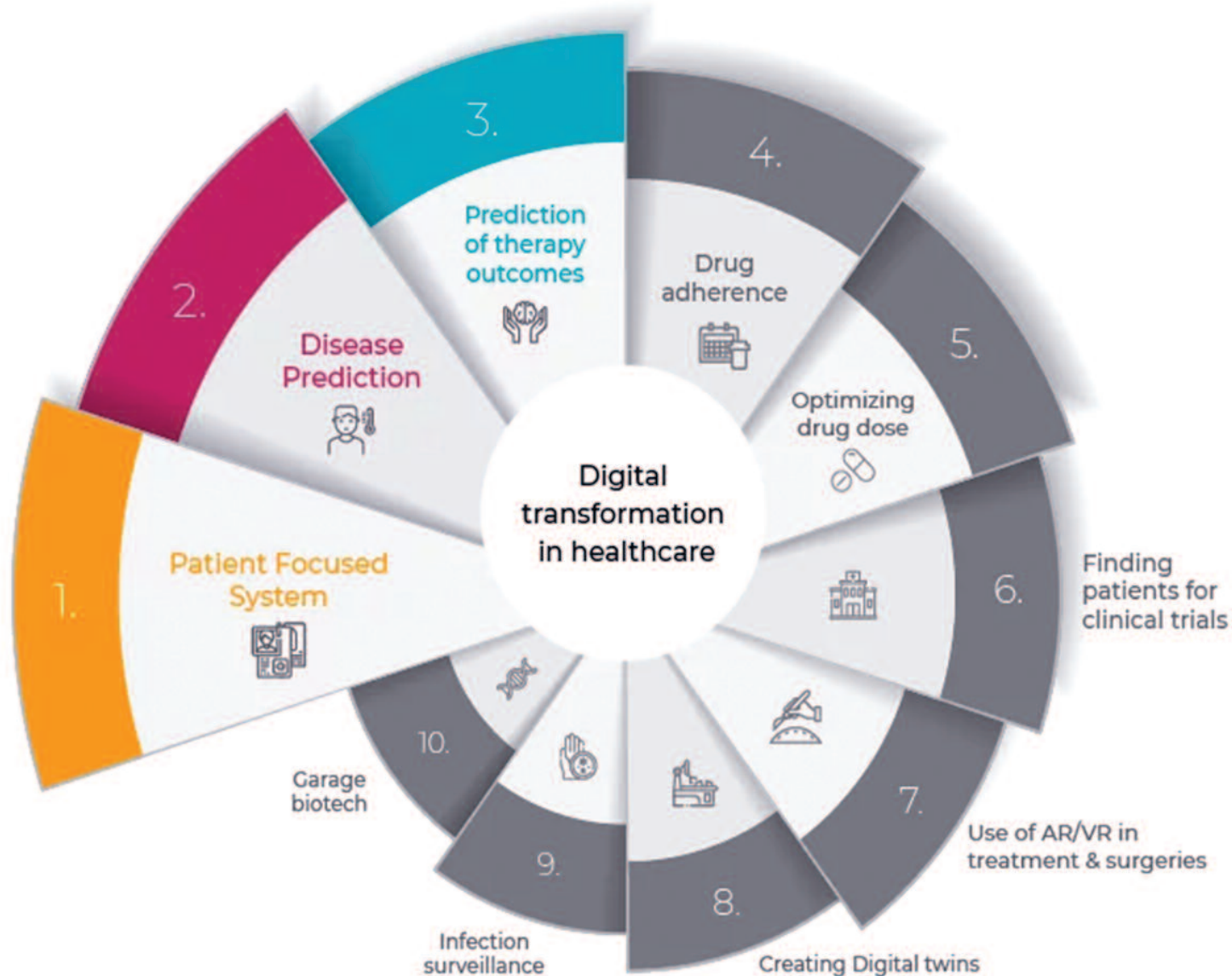


The article by Prof. Rifat Katifi on transforming healthcare systems through medical diplomacy offers timely insights also for Bangladesh and other developing nations. By illustrating how strategic international partnerships,

knowledge exchange, and targeted policy reforms can strengthen health infrastructure, workforce capacity, and access to essential services, the piece highlights a practical pathway for modernization that aligns with local needs. This framework—focusing on collaboration, innovation, and sustainable investment—holds broad applicability across

third-world contexts seeking to advance universal health coverage and resilient health systems.

Being the Minister of Health, of any country, is the greatest honor and privilege, but being the Minister of Health in Kosova, the newest country in Europe and where I grew up and was educated before I left for a better life, is a very different honor yet is the biggest responsibility that I could have. As a surgeon, I have worked hard to prepare for any occasion and to treat any condition in my domain. But, how does one prepare to be the Minister of Health? What tools does one need to have that can help the Minister transform a healthcare system in disarray? How much money do you need? How do you fight the corruption embedded in every layer of the healthcare system? Can you use medical diplomacy as a potential tool to deal with the problems of inequality and ►►



► healthcare disparity? In this perspective, I will discuss my short tenure as Minister of Health in Kosova and how, during that time, we created a model of healthcare transformation in Kosova, using every possible tool, including international medical diplomacy. We designed a two-prong process: 1) creating 12 clinical centers and programs of excellence (CCE), 22 advanced clinical training fellowships (ACTF) for more than 100 physicians and surgeons (during 2022–2024) at international centers of excellence, while simultaneously starting to reform residency training programs and building research capacity and infrastructure, and 2) working through local and international collaboration in order to build and modernize the hospital infrastructure, and improving the quality of healthcare services, and

management skills.

This was an ambitious plan, one has to agree, but these measures were the only way to transform the healthcare system and reduce patient flow outside of the country and public healthcare institutions. We knew that transformation would not happen quickly. It would take time, but we needed to start with a comprehensive plan and vision.

Transformation From Chairman of Surgery to the Minister of Health

On November 16, 2021, at the invitation of Prime Minister Albin Kurti, I took over the job as the Minister of Health in Kosova, a non-political Minister. While it was never something I had imagined doing in my career, I was not surprised ►►

► by my own willingness to accept this position. A lifetime opportunity. I thought, finally, I can help transform healthcare in Kosova. Yet, I had a few questions: Was I prepared to be a Minister? Could not find a book on how to become a good Minister. What will it be like? Will I have the needed support?

Following graduation from Medical Faculty of University of Prishtina and two years of residency in orthopedics, I moved to the USA in 1985. Since then, I have trained and worked in major medical institutions in the USA (Houston, Texas, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, Cleveland, Ohio, New Haven, Connecticut, Richmond, Virginia, Tucson, Arizona, Valhalla, New York) and abroad (Doha, Qatar) and led a major academic department of one of the oldest university hospitals and medical schools in the USA (Valhalla, NY). I have written and edited 20 books, including one entitled "Modern Hospital". In addition, I have published more than four hundred peer-reviewed articles and book chapters. I am familiar with the healthcare system in Kosova and have also critiqued how healthcare was being managed during the last 2–3 decades. As the founding president of Kosova College of Surgeons (KCS), I led the creation of daily operations and content, as well as the growth strategy of KCS. Should all this have prepared me for a job as the Minister? My answer was yes. It made perfect sense to me, then and now, to leave my position

at NYMC and WMC in Valhalla, NY (even though it was abrupt, surgically one can say) and come back to Kosova to help rebuild the healthcare system. Most importantly, at this stage of my career (been there, done that), I thought I could help Kosova. So, I said yes to the invitation by Prime Minister Kurti and abruptly left my job as chairman and director of surgery in Valhalla, New York. Normally, one would have to give at

least six months' notice in advance, but instead it was one phone call to Gary Brudnicki and Mike Israel, my bosses at WMC, the day before I travelled for Kosova. Both were surprised (as I was), but incredibly supportive and understood the gravity of my decision. The news went viral. Many were surprised, some were supportive, and others thought it was a bad idea.

I came in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic, while I was creating the cabinet and learning an administrative maze. I was welcomed by the protests of residents and nursing staff in front of my office at the Ministry of Health (previously an old tuberculosis hospital), where, as medical student, I did the rotation on pulmonology. Media outlets had a lot to say about my cowboy boots and bow tie. None were interested in my vision to transform the healthcare system.

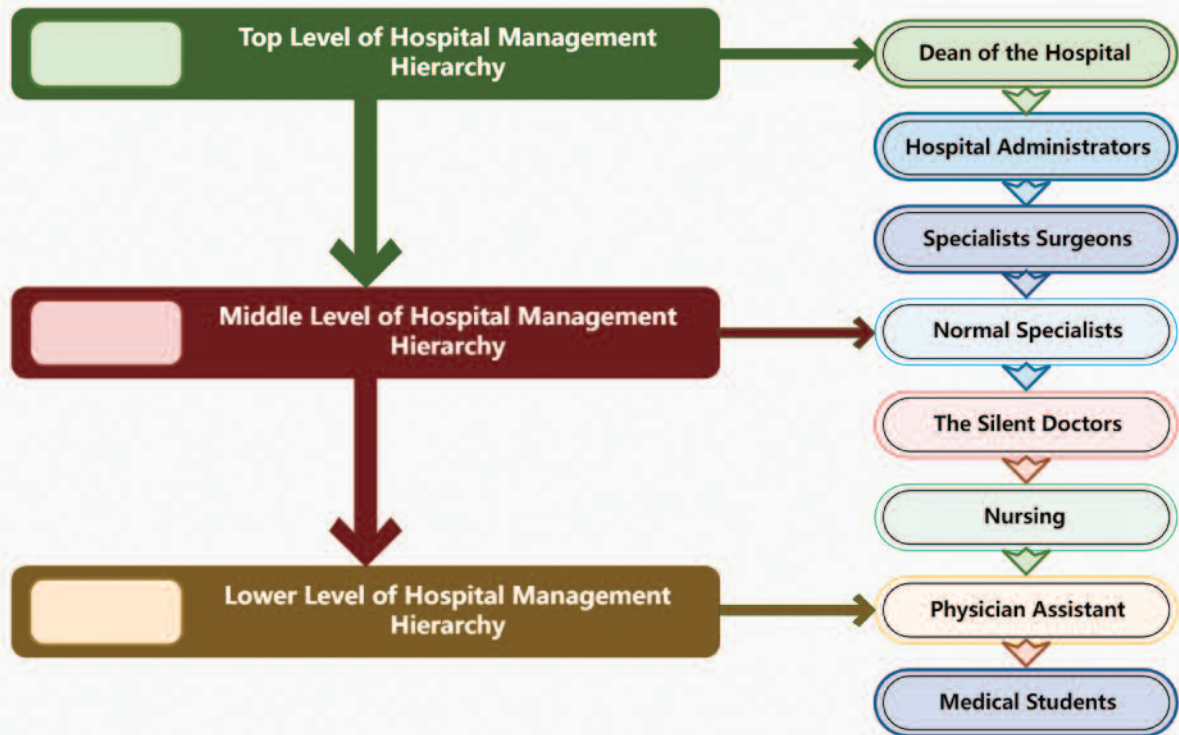
As the new Minister, I met many new people, ambassadors of many countries, many representatives of various governmental and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and partners of the Ministry of Health, both national and international. I particularly enjoyed parliamentary meetings. Having members of parliament express themselves freely, criticizing ministers and the Prime Minister was not allowed just 25 years ago. Now, we are a democratic nation with our own parliament. I love democracy. What else can one want?

My calendar was terribly busy, but I enjoyed. I woke up at 5 AM, and was usually emailing my team by 5:15. There were way too many useless emails, and when I did reply, I was told that I was the only minister that sends emails. There were too many of these meetings too, courtesy dinners, lunches, and other useless meetings.

When do you actually work? I kept asking. Five to eight AM. I would answer myself.

I lived alone in my apartment (first few months) ►►

Hospital Management Hierarchy



► in the most famous, muddy, and always under construction, “Muharrem Fejza” street. I often did not have electricity and had to walk to the 8th floor to get to my apartment.

I did not mind the walk at all. The apartment was small (compared to my house on the hill in Katonah), and the winter was brutal. My apartment was cold too, and I do not like the cold. My life became a mess, but I loved my new mission. Days were passing and I remained very busy, but I could not see as much satisfactory progress as I expected. As a surgeon, you see progress immediately. Not as the Minister.

The State of Healthcare in Kosova

It did not take long to conclude that the healthcare sector in Kosova, particularly the administra-

tive part of the Ministry itself, was a very complex enterprise: a maze or web of entanglement in incomprehensible designed rules, regulations, and policies in which many actors had stakes. The healthcare in Kosova was ignored for decades, if not outrightly neglected, poorly managed, segmented into ridiculous segments and clinics that had more doctors than beds: clinics with no professors, but many directors. There were many questions that I could not get answered. Why was Kosova healthcare sector in this state? A state of disarray. Why did the public healthcare system continue to be underfunded year after year, government after government? Why did Kosova have the lowest GDP for healthcare in the Western Balkans countries and amongst the lowest in the world? Why, even when something was invested, was it mismanaged? Why were so many hospitals started but were never finished? A hospital do-►

►nated and inaugurated but had no patients? The hospital infrastructure is old, or of low quality, and for many years, there have been a number of hospital buildings (such as emergency and trauma hospital building, the Ferizaj regional hospital building, the pediatrics department at Mitrovica hospital and a few other projects) that have remained unfinished or not completed for various reasons; they look like ghost buildings that have disintegrated year after year. The central pharmacy of UCKK is placed in a malodorous and poorly secured basement of Gynecology and Obstetrics clinic. Why did private “hospitals”, private clinics, and pharmacies grow like mushrooms right in the backyard of the public University Clinical Center of Kosova? Who owned them? It is difficult to understand the web of manipulation and outright abuse of the public trust and healthcare system, the very same healthcare system that should care for all of us, rich and poor.

Due to low wages, most physicians, nurses, laboratory technicians, and others healthcare workers are forced to work 3–4 jobs, often to the detriment of public hospitals. All doctors work without malpractice insurance, because no one has ever asked for it, despite the fact that court cases often get dragged out for years in courts, fuelled by the media with unverified information. Clinical faculty were divided into those who teach medical students at the Medical Faculty of University of Prishtina and those who “cannot”. For both groups (although many are Doctors of Science or

have Master’s degrees), the scientific contribution and peer-reviewed publications are very low.

Answers to all these questions were not easy to find. That is how it is here in Kosova, everyone was telling me. Matter fact. I could not understand, and it was impossible to justify this state of the healthcare system. How does an ordinary mind understand this? In asking this question, I found solace in working on a new complex and ambitious transformation plan.

Study after study of many donors and partners came to the same conclusions: Kosova has too many hospital beds but an occupancy rate of just about 50%, too many doctors (most of them in Prishtina), too many nurses, no efficiency, and a major mismanagement of resources. How can 15 surgeons perform only 1,500 operations per year or, even worse, 13 surgeons perform only 600 operations per year and, in both cases, the majority of procedures not be major surgeries by any standard? ►►



► The answers were a lack of available operating rooms (OR), a lack of anaesthesiologists, a lack of OR nurses, and other managerial issues. The University Clinical center has 37 operative rooms that are dedicated ORs for certain clinical disciplines. I could not help but remember that Westchester Medical Center where I was a director of surgery had only 21 ORs (7 of which were ambulatory ORs), where we did everything including heart and liver transplants and everything in between, in all clinical disciplines. When one needed an OR, the one that was not busy became your OR.

Over the span of 23 years since the war ended, despite the lowest GDP share, large amounts of funding from international donors and various NGOs have come to the healthcare system. Several Ministers, governments, and directors of hospitals and clinics have come and gone, but the situation has not changed. Even when highly expensive medical equipment was purchased, they did not function, another mystery to me.

Visiting the various departments and clinics reminded me of days when I was a medical student here: four patients in one room. Even in the renovated parts of the hospitals that have been finished in the last few years, there are three beds in one room (for the most part); the offices of staff occupy large portions of hospital wings, with one exception, the new pediatrics wing of surgery.

In summary, the public healthcare system in Kosova has remained in disarray and, overall, can be realistically characterized as unsafe, unregulated, low quality clinical services with a lack of clinical faculty ability and skills, modern hospital infrastructure, and, above all, lack of managerial skills at all levels. Most patients with complex diagnoses are sent out of the country or private institutions for treatment, at an astronomical cost.

How Do We Transform the Healthcare In

Kosova?

- A Trauma Surgeon's View

Can we transform healthcare in Kosova? I asked myself every day while the Minister and still do, now one month after I have resigned from the position.

Rightly, people of Kosova asked the same question. Yes, we can, is my unequivocal answer, but it will require support for the vision and new investments, determination, and time. But, how do you transform this state of healthcare and deal with each of these parts and segments of this very complex and distorted mosaic and healthcare disparity? The ugly truth of the healthcare system is that those who have the financial means go to boutique private hospitals and clinics in the country or outside. Most rich people use Germany, Turkey, and other countries for routine examinations. Most politicians go to private hospitals or outside the country even for routine procedures. Those who do not have the financial means or do not have any one in the hospitals to vouch for them are faced with long wait times to see a doctor, with even longer wait times for a radiologic test or procedures or even an operation unless it is an emergency. These wait lists are often super-inflated and are created by some doctors in order to have patients go to private institutions to see the same doctors. Not all doctors are like this, but a majority are. It should not be like this. But it is here, and we must deal with it.

Let me try to simplify the answer to can we transform healthcare in Kosova, using the analogy of a trauma surgeon. As trauma surgeons, we save many lives by stopping the bleeding, securing the airway (intubate the patient early), always expecting the worse, performing laparotomies or emergency thoracotomies or whatever it takes, and working system by system, organ by organ, and simultaneously using lots of blood and blood products.

In rebuilding the healthcare system, we must use ►►

► the same approach. Stop the bleeding (stop the flow of patients out of the country). This can be done by creating local expertise and modernizing the hospital infrastructure. Secure the airway (bring oxygen for the healthcare system) by adding resources to provide high-quality healthcare services and curbing treatment abroad, and finally, transfuse blood (transfuse knowledge and reform training) to increase the ability to make the provision of high-quality services possible.

In summary, to achieve this, however, there are a few (essential) requirements:

1) Attract well-trained and prepared medical students, residents and fellows, faculty, nurses, and healthcare managers; 2) Modernize the hospital infrastructure, by putting in place an advanced internationally- accredited healthcare system with health insurance and a health information system, and finally, 3) Exhibiting professionalism and dedication at all levels by each and every one of us. People of our small but beautiful country deserve that. They fought for this; they expected this from us, and we have failed them. The question remains, how do we do all this and is there an appetite for change?

The Medical Diplomacy and Data Driven Strategy as Tools of Transformation

The backbone of medical diplomacy or global health diplomacy (GHD) has been defined as wide spectrum of health determinants as a crucial element in foreign, security, and trade policy, and require collective action^{1, 2, 3}. Efforts in global health diplomacy have been broken down into seven concepts ^{4,5} that include: 1) Promoting healthcare in the face of other interests; 2) Establishing new governance mechanisms in support of health; 3) Creating alliances in support of health outcomes; 4) Building and managing donor and stakeholder relations; 5) Responding to public health crises in a timely fashion and with appro-

priate tools and means; 6) Improving relations between countries through healthcare relations; and 7) Contributing to peace and security between nations and people by a variety of means. Which one of these dimensions can a country, region, special group of scientists⁷ or continent⁸ find most suitable is a matter of creativity or political will and establishment. Medical diplomacy has been shown to be a great tool to create bridges between nations and countries as well as institutions, and for establishing infrastructural, administrative, and regulatory support⁹.

Moreover, medical diplomacy has taken a center stage as an emerging field that bridges the disciplines of public health, international affairs, management, law, and economics^{10, 11}. The question still remains, who should be involved in medical diplomacy? Should diplomatic core be better prepared for health diplomacy and for fostering effective global health action that aligns public health and foreign diplomacy outcomes¹¹. My answer is yes they should but medical diplomacy is everyone's business, but Ministers of Health should lead the process based on their country's needs and global interest while working very closely with other segments of the governments (the Foreign Affairs Ministry and the entire diplomatic core).

With all this in mind, I embarked on medical diplomacy, starting with Albania; visited several countries including the USA, Turkey, Norway, Greece, Austria; and was in the process of establishing relationships with a number of other countries including Luxembourg, Croatia, Slovenia, Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates, Qatar, Israel, Slovakia, Germany, Australia, India, and others to ensure that our physicians got training and expertise. Each and every one of these countries were happy to help Kosova's healthcare transformation, but the narrow-minded media and some politicians sadly did not see it that way. Building international relationships to support ►►

- the needs of the healthcare system in Kosova is the only way to bring the much-needed resources, education, and training opportunities to the country and medical personnel.

Over last three decades we relied on teaching each other. It is like the blind leading the blind. We were blinded to science and modern medicine for the last 30 years. Overcoming these embedded consequences of three decades will take time and data, as real transformation cannot happen without data. There is no other way!

Methodology and Analysis of the Current State

During the months I was in the office, my team and I performed an analysis of the healthcare system, using the following methodology: 1) Interviews with various stakeholders, and a written survey for key clinical leaders (directors of each clinical discipline); 2) A review of all patients treated outside of the public healthcare system, including the total number, diagnosis, reasons for treatment abroad (2019-August 2022); 4) Review of all reports of costly consultants on hospital infrastructure; and other opinions and materials available to the Ministry of Health in Kosova (MHK) on infrastructure, hospital bed occupancy, human capacities, and healthcare efficiency.

Results

Seven pillars of transformation

The main outcome of this analysis was the lack of clinical expertise, hospital infrastructure (equipment or technology), lack of system in place (trauma and emergency system) or others factors (lack of legislation for transplant), which lead that great number patients with even trivial problems (need for biopsy) to be sent out of the country for treatment. The cost for each organized and highly structured enterprise was tremendous, and the amount for each patient that Kosova paid or owe to many countries, with the majority (84%) owed

to Turkish private hospitals was incredible. Based on these analysis and reports we designed a seven point (or pillar) platform from which the entire strategy of transformation will be derived (Table 1), that will include centers of excellence (Table 2) and establishing new advance clinical fellowships (Table 3).

Transformation of Residency and Adding Fellowship Training Programs

Ordinarily, the transformation of a healthcare system start with medical school and with residency programs, and not with fellowships but Kosova does not have time. In fact, for the transformation of the healthcare system, Kosova has everything but time. It needs a mechanism to prepare the residents and trainees in post-graduate residency training or fellowships, so they can help training residents and new fellows of the future. To achieve this, we designed a plan to train more than 100 physicians and surgeons during 2022–2024 in international centers of excellence and 22 clinical disciplines, including 2–6 fellowships in each clinical field (Table 3).

In other words, the residency and fellowship training programs will need to undergo significant reform. Residency and fellowships programs should enroll new residents and fellows on an annual basis for most clinical programs—based on clinical needs for the country and international standards and accreditation. There has never been a study on long-term needs of healthcare in Kosova. The residency training programs in anaesthesiology and critical care, general medicine, primary care, family medicine, public health and epidemiology, and other deficient services will be promoted. Moreover, each potential resident will have to serve as a general practitioner for a minimum of two years before entering residency, while the internship will be structured in ►►

► a particular specialty and will last one year. The fellowships training programs or subspecialty training programs need to be structured and accredited internationally, while adding structure and administrative professional support to residency and training programs. The fellowships will be well-structured and have a well-designed curriculum with partner countries and institutions. It is predicted that the initial educational cost of these fellowships will only be around three million Euros, but these expenses will be offset by significantly curbing the flow of patients seeking treatment out of the country. Simultaneously, hospital infrastructure and medical equipment will be needed while education is undergoing.

Another, critical element of transformation has to do with advancing human abilities and modernization of training programs, with the addition of research experience for residents and trainees. This should be done by adding 1–2 years of mandatory research training before or during residency programs; combining research programs with MPH, Doctor of Science, or Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) programs; collaborating with the medical and pharmaceutical industry; and embedding clinical scientists in each clinical discipline as part of the research staff.

Summary

The main objective and goals of transformation of healthcare of Kosova are to advance clinical medicine and surgery, increasing human abilities and expertise; reduce the number of patients flowing outside of the country or to the poorly regulated private sector to zero; and deepen the relationships between Kosova and partner countries. This should not be a medical neo-colonialism, as it has been thus far, for the most part.

It should be a true partnership built through medical diplomacy and friendship, aiming for Kosova to become part of the global medical village and

to independently run its medical affairs. This totally can be done, but Kosova needs to lead the process, not those who benefit greatly from our medical incompetence. Finally, the next leaders of healthcare in Kosova will need to have the expertise and knowledge of how to do it but mostly free hands to transform and lead the change.

Despite a great deal of difficulties at each step from the moment I took over my tenure as Minister of Health in Kosova, we have made significant progress. We have a clear picture what is missing. Moreover, we have defined the platform and the path to transformation by creating seven pillars of transformation, establishing 12 centers of excellence, and 22 advance clinical fellowships and reforming the residency training program. All these steps will improve human capacities and the hospital infrastructure and this will stop or significantly reduce treatment abroad.

I still believe that, while the odyssey of transformation is complex in any circumstance, and despite many distractions, obstructions along the way from the incompetent and corrupt administration (that must be changed) and corruption on many levels of healthcare system, Kosova's healthcare can prosper and become independent. Let us remember that there is no true country independence without healthcare independence. Only then will young people see that they can achieve their full potential and see the opportunities I see for them in the future. But, it will take time and real dedication from the government and confidence and knowledge to trailblaze these changes. The first step though is to admit that in the developing countries healthcare system is in disarray.

On a personal note, this has been one of the most remarkable segments and truly enriching experiences of my life. It has been an awesome opportunity to attempt to give back all I know and have learned in the USA and around the world, as well to attempt to integrate that global experience into our vision and mission of healthcare transforma-►►

► tion in Kosova. We cannot accomplish this major transformation without partnering with countries around the world and without using medical diplomacy as a platform.

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► Tables

Table 1. Seven Pillars of Transformation**Seven pillars of transformation**

1. Digitalization of healthcare services, including health insurance.
2. Brain return (gain) and reducing brain drain, creating policies for including the experts from diaspora in clinical, managerial, and leadership positions throughout the healthcare system.
3. Advancing clinical programs and centres of excellence through the specially designed and data-based analysis of programs for treatment outside the country and private hospitals and institutions.
4. Reforming residency and training programs and adding fellowships and international accreditation.
5. Decentralization of the hospital system and reorganization of UCK, with empowering regional and local health systems.
6. Advancing research capacities and embedding research personnel, research residents, and medical students into most of the major clinical disciplines.
7. Modernization of hospital infrastructure and other healthcare institutions and increase quality of healthcare services including international accreditation of hospitals and other institutions.

Table 2. Proposed Centers and Clinical Programs of Excellence

1. The Emergency, Trauma, and Burn Center
2. Clinical Oncology Center of Kosovo (COCK) or Cancer Center with ten departments and eleven clinical programs
3. Bio Medical and Scientific Research Institute with four departments: 1. Scientific Research; 2. Medical Simulation, and Technological Ed-

ucation; 3. Minimally Laparoscopic Surgery Laboratory, and 4. Clinical Guidelines and Protocols

4. Center for Children and Adults with Disabilities (Autism, Down Syndrome, and Other Rare Diseases)
5. Addiction Rehabilitation Center
6. Regional Center for Training and Emergency Disaster and Trauma Management
7. Expansion of the Telemedicine program from all Regional Hospitals of the Country to Main Centers of Family Medicine
8. Consolidation of the Center for Neurosciences
9. Consolidation of the Heart Center
10. Minimally Invasive Laparoscopic Surgery Program in General Surgery, Urology, Gynecology, Pediatrics, and Thoracic Surgery
11. Endovascular Surgery Program
12. Kidney and tissue transplant program

Table 3. Advanced Clinical Fellowships Type of fellowships

1. Trauma and Surgical Intensive Care
2. Critical Intensive Care Medicine
3. Acute Burn and Wound Care
4. Breast Surgery and Breast Health
5. Surgical Oncology
6. Colorectal Surgery
7. Pediatric Cardiothoracic Surgery
8. Minimally Invasive Surgery
9. Geriatric Medicine
10. Palliative Medicine
11. Intra-abdominal Organ Transplant
12. Neonatology
13. Neurosurgery
14. Orthopedy
15. Psychiatry
16. Endovascular Surgery
17. Hematology
18. Pediatric Hematology-Oncology
19. Inner Ear Surgery
20. Obstetrics & Gynecology
21. Thoracic Surgery
22. Maxillofacial Surgery ■



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Economics of Migration and Migrant Remittances to Home country: The Comparative Analysis and the Bangladesh Story

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The aim of this paper was to determine which pillar of development, FDI or Remittances, contributes the most to economic growth in South Asia using data from Bangladesh, India,

Pakistan and Sri Lanka between 1990 and 2012. We conducted our analysis through employing Random Effects GLS. The key finding was that FDI outperforms Remittances in enhancing economic growth in South Asia. In terms of our research questions, our first research question was validated; FDI positively contributes to economic growth in South Asia and that too significantly.

However, our second and third research questions were not supported; Remittances do not positively impact economic growth and Remittances do not outperform FDI in enhancing economic growth in South Asia. With regards to our fourth research question: in which country does FDI or Remittances positively enhance economic growth the most. It is Sri Lanka.

Our findings about FDI in South Asia support many studies such as Tasneem and Aziz (2011), Balasubramanyam et al (1996) and Tiwari and Murtasqu (2011). We can infer that an increase in FDI leads enhances economic growth and as such we suggest policies that open up the economy. For example, engage in more trade agreements, improve the quality of the infrastructure – both physical and political, and provide incentives for investors and so on. These policies could improve the attraction of FDI thereby enhancing economic growth. ►►

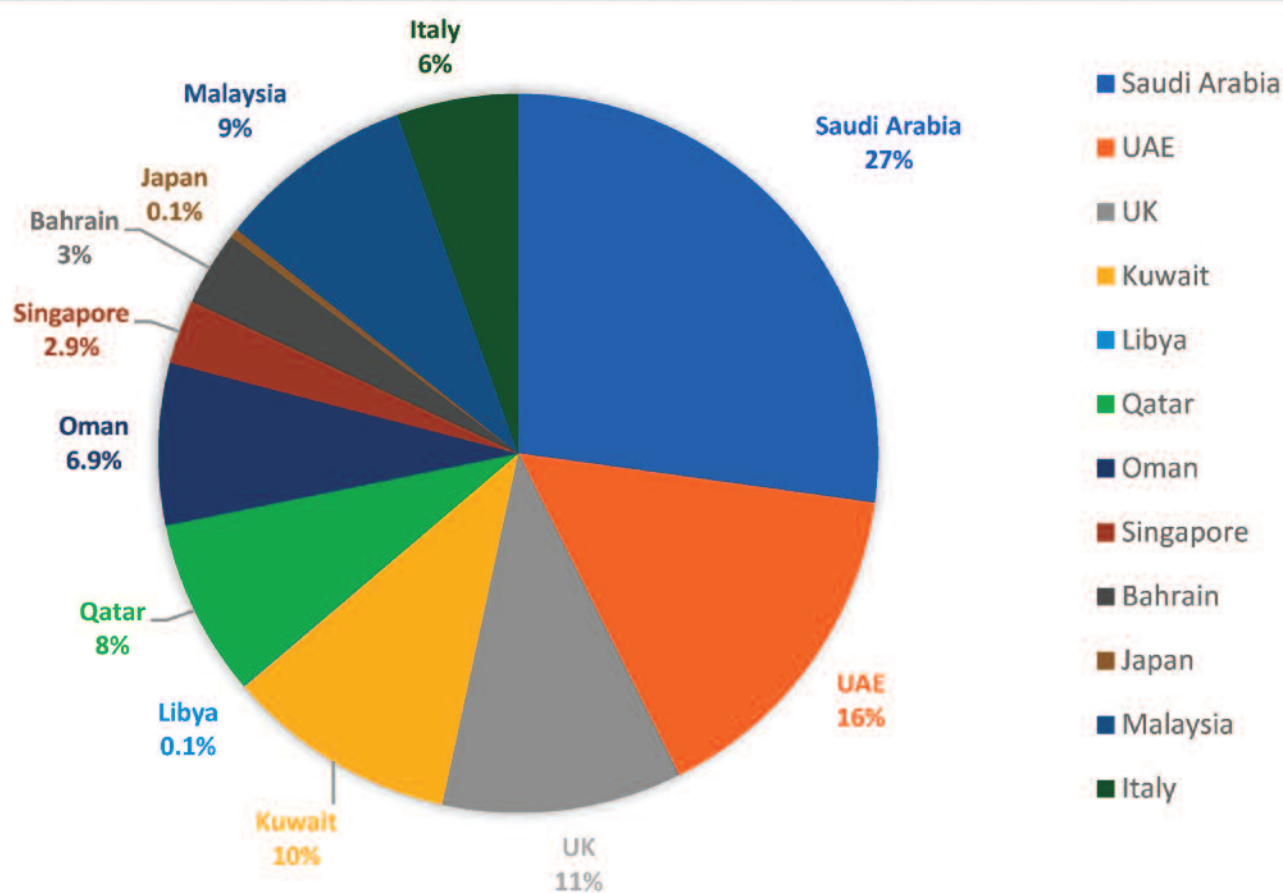


Figure 1. Partner-wise remittance inflow into Bangladesh.

Source: (from Bangladesh Bank monthly remittance data).

Courtesy: MDPI.COM

► Remittances impacted GDP negatively and this supports the studies of Barajas et al (2009), Russell (1986) and Catrinescu et al (2002). However, the remittance inflows are large in volume so governments should implement policies to increase financial literacy, establish easier but formal methods of remittance transfers, and provide savings' incentives to migrant workers to further increase remittances transmitted through formal channels and promote growth. For Remittances to enhance economic development and growth, South Asia needs higher quality economic and political institutions.

For Bangladesh and Pakistan, FDI is crucial in enhancing economic growth. They should focus on policies to continue attracting more FDI such as engaging in more trade agreements and enhancing their infrastructure. However, in India and Sri Lanka, FDI did not positively contribute to

GDP and this could be for a variety of reasons. They should improve their institutional framework and infrastructure to absorb more of the benefits from FDI. However, if they are over-dependent on FDI then they should focus on finding alternative sources of capital.

For Bangladesh and Sri Lanka, Remittances are pivotal in providing capital to achieve economic growth as well as poverty alleviation. Governments should make it easier for migrants to transfer remittances. For India and Pakistan, the significance of Remittances is inconclusive. However, this does not undermine their importance and they still need to improve many factors such as government policies and infrastructure since it is evident that Remittances are not being utilised in a manner conducive to maximum growth. Despite the importance of remittances, policy makers have not given them the attention they ►►

- deserve. Policies for all these countries include providing incentives for migrants to save and invest their remittances, improving the access to financial services, educating residents about formal remittance channels and encouraging further market competition in the international remittance market to reduce costs.

Overall, we suggest that Bangladesh and Pakistan should focus on improving the necessary conditions to maximize the benefits from FDI since it positively impacts GDP. FDI and Remittances can provide the necessary tools to aid development and achieve higher growth levels through using its resources in the most efficient way. India and Sri Lanka need to enhance their human capital and improve: governance, physical and technical infrastructure and administrative capabilities to positively utilise FDI. However, India and Sri Lanka may be over-dependent on FDI and potentially should focus on improving the use of and attracting more Remittances, ODA and exports to finance their economic growth.

Future research could investigate the impact of FDI and Remittances on GDP in different sectors of the economy. It could also include more South Asian countries and perhaps split the countries according to their income levels and compare results. Other recommendations include comparing the impacts to other regions in the world and using interaction terms between FDI and Remittances and the various explanatory variables we included in this paper. This model itself could also be improved so as to include the omitted variables, Education Attainment and Life Expectancy, and examine their impact on GDP as well.

Theory of Migration and Review of Literature

Theoretical Studies, Neoclassical theories, structuralist views on migration, pluralist perspectives, theories of remittance, determinants of remittance, the age of remittance, migration and devel-

opment debate, neo-classical equilibrium perspective, historical-structural theory and asymmetric growth, the push-pull framework, transitional models. Internal dynamics and feedbacks, social capital, network theory and chain migration, migration system theory, migration and development optimists vs. pessimists, dawning of a new era: developmental is views, migrant syndromes: cumulative causation and structural views, towards a pluralist perspective, new economics of labor migration, migration as a household livelihood strategy. Ongoing insights in to migration and development interactions, Migration and the propensity to invest in migrants sending areas. The indirect impact of migration on economic development, narrow and arbitrary definition of investment. Migration and inequality in a spatiotemporal perspective. Human capabilities, development and migration. Space, structure, migration and development etc are discussed.

Remittance corridors and the cost of remittance

A remittance corridor is typically between two countries where migration is common, such as between the United Kingdom and Somalia or between Norway and Poland (Carling, 2008, p.593). The World Bank (2015) reports the most common remittance corridors to the ASEAN countries. Review of empirical analyses of remittances are presented. A Brief History of Remittances in the United States dates back to Western Union's introduction of its money transfer business in 1871. The Cost and Accessibility of Remittances Originating from the United States with a focus on the Mexico Corridor). The cost and benefits of immigration, immigration pathways, economic costs and benefits, hi-tech development, social costs and benefits in the united states are explained. The central question for immigration policy is the balance between costs and benefits. Vivek Wadhwa and colleagues reach a clear conclusion based on their studies. They say that "im-►

►migrants have become a significant driving force in the creation of new businesses and intellectual property in the U.S.—and that their contributions have increased over the past decade.” In contrast to critics who worry that immigrants take American jobs and depress American wages, considerable research suggests that immigrants contribute to the vibrancy of American economic development and the richness of its cultural life. They start new businesses, patent novel ideas, and create jobs. When one strips away the emotion and looks at the facts, the benefits of new arrivals to American innovation and entrepreneurship are abundant and easy to see. The costs immigrants impose are not zero, but those side-effects pale in comparison to the contributions arising from the immigrant brain gain.

Economics of International Migration and Technological Progress

International migrants are an important channel for the transmission of technology and knowledge. The so-called “brain drain” associated with better educated citizens of developing countries working in high-income countries is acute in some developing countries. Emigration rates of the university-educated tend to be higher than for the general population in developing countries. This is even greater for scientists, engineers, and members of the medical profession. For some



countries, the brain drain represents a significant problem: emigration rates of highly educated individuals exceed 60 percent in some small countries. In addition, the emigration of professionals who make a direct contribution to production, such as engineers, may result in reduced rates of domestic innovation and technology adoption. In countries with more moderate out-migration rates, the creation of a vibrant and technologically sophisticated diaspora may be beneficial in net terms, especially when domestic opportunities are limited, because of technological transfers from the diaspora and because most migration is not a one-way flow. The diaspora as a brain bank. Diaspora networks and returnees help promote technology adoption, remittances can promote technology diffusion by making investments more affordable. What influences remittance cost are underdeveloped financial infrastructure, limited competition, and lack of transparency in the fi-►

► financial market, regulatory obstacles, lack of access to the banking sector by remittance senders and/or recipients, lack of digital and financial literacy skills, lack of trust in the financial system and lack of access to necessary identification documentation for migrants are some of the main reasons for high remittance costs which influences remittance cost. Remittance cost architecture and transparency, market arrangements, digitalization of remittance services, users' behaviour, driving a price revolution, assessing the impact of mobile money on lowering remittance prices and costs are discussed.

Barriers to remittance markets: A Comparative Analysis of Sub Sharan Africa

Barriers to remittances, commercial/Business case barriers, middle-mile barriers, infrastructure, consumer and regulatory, ranking barriers and fast payment systems in selected countries are explained. The remittance market in Africa is on average the most expensive in the world. Sending and receiving funds in the region is not only costly in terms of price for the consumer but also in terms of access of remittance service points. Especially the rural population often has to travel long distances or spend an entire day in a queue to pick up over-the-counter remittances. To reduce the cost to the consumer, the cost of doing business over the entire remittances value chain needs to be reduced while ensuring improved access at the first and last mile for consumers. The remittance value chain requires a fine balance between cost, price and access from a consumer perspective. Merely reducing a price does not mean that the effective cost or level of access to a consumer remains static.

The economic empowerment of digital remittances: How to unlock the benefits of innovation and competition

Remittances are born of sacrifice and separation.

Remittances are monetary lifelines sent by migrant workers back home. Remittance inflows are critical—and they have been resilient in challenging times. Remittances are key to many Lower Middle-Income Countries. Digital remittances were key to the resilience of inflows, but we need to enable more of them. The Price of Remittance: Do high transaction cost depress Transfer. Global Consensus to Reduce Remittance Costs. Costs and Methods of Sending Remittances. Trends in Remittances & Cost Reductions. Overview of Efforts to Reduce Remittance Costs and literature on cost of migrant remittance are discussed. An analysis of the impact of cost on amount remitted are presented. Two recent studies on the impact of mobile money in Bangladesh and Ghana also provide evidence of the potential impact of reducing the cost of person-to-person money transfers. In a randomized controlled trial facilitating mobile-money access and providing training on how to use it in Bangladesh, Lee et al. (2018) find that access to mobile-money services led, approximately, to a 30% increase in urban-to-rural internal remittances. Cost measurements include transfer charges and foreign exchange margins are explained. Cost modelling confirms the value of digital remittances and the ability to compare options are detailed. Used publicly available tools to model costs have been analysed. Comparative remittance fees to the Philippines are among the Lowest in East Asia and Pacific. Average Costs of Sending \$200 (%) to a Particular Region of the World.

Reasons for high remittance costs are presented. Structural transformation, urbanization, and remittances in developing countries. Traditional remittances must become digital to continue lowering costs reasons justified. How we unlock the benefits of remittance innovation and competition for everyone, everywhere are explained.

Migrant Remittances and Economic Complexity

Policymakers and researchers are keen on identi-►

► fying the potential benefits of these inflows in promoting economic development. This section let us first look at the economic impacts of foreign remittances. Foreign remittances are important in increasing foreign exchange reserves in developing countries. Migrant remittances are more stable in nature in comparison with other capital inflows. Remittances and Economic Growth effects of remittances on growth have been discussed extensively in the literature on remittance and growth. Remittances are primarily used for consumption, accumulation of assets, and productive investment at the household level. Combined Effects of Remittances and FDI. Theoretical and Conceptual Framework have been analysed. Migrant remittances are also used for productive investment, which boosts economic development in developing countries. Remittances also help bring and adapt cutting-edge technologies, bringing innovation to the industries in the recipient economies. There are several ways through which remittances influence recipient countries' economic growth. Remittances enhance aggregate consumption and bring productive investment by raising the saving capacity of the remittance-receiving households resultantly, all these factors lead to cause economic growth. Remittances stimulate investment and help in reducing credit constraints in the absence of formal credit markets in low-income countries. There are several other potential channels through which remittances may directly or indirectly impact economic growth. remittances can be used as an investment to enhance economic capital accumulation. Remittances sent through the formal banking system is another channel that helps increase the aggregate amount of deposit that might affect the economy and ultimately lead to capital accumulation. Remittances are, currently, the *second most important source of external finance* to developing countries, after foreign direct investment. Remittances tend to be more stable than volatile capital flows such as

portfolio investment and international bank credit. Remittances are also an international redistribution from low-income migrants to their families in the home country. Microeconomic motivations to remittance has a positive role. Stability of remittances in the economic cycle and workers *remittances are more stable* than *portfolio* investments and *bank* credit. The development impact of remittances have been analysed. Remittances may also have a *poverty reducing and income distribution effect*. The international markets for remittances are discussed. Cost of remittance have been elaborated. Country experience have been explored. Theoretical justifications of remittance are placed.

Impact of Remittance on Economic Growth of Bangladesh

Most Bangladeshi emigrants are men, although more women have been leaving, particularly to go to the Middle East and East Asia. However, they do not always secure a stable income or safe residence; many have been victims of torture and violence, including sexual exploitation, and have returned to Bangladesh. Millions have taken short-term contracts abroad, with a record 1.3 million leaving in 2023 alone. In addition, an unknown but large number of Bangladeshis have taken unofficial overseas contracts that are not registered with the government. The nature of labor migration from Bangladesh is mainly short-term, based on unskilled or semi-skilled work. More than 7.4 million Bangladesh-born individuals lived abroad as of 2020, according to UN estimates. The money these migrants and others send back—\$21.9 billion via official remittance channels in 2023, according to the government—is a major source of development for Bangladesh. Aside from India, Saudi Arabia has long ranked as the largest origin of official remittances to Bangladesh, accounting for \$4.1 billion in 2022, followed by other Gulf countries. Most ►►

► Bangladeshi emigrants are men, although more women have been leaving, particularly to go to the Middle East and East Asia. However, they do not always secure a stable income or safe residence; many have been victims of torture and violence, including sexual exploitation, and have returned to Bangladesh. The territory that was once a part of the British colony of India and after the partition of India and Pakistan in 1947 became known as East Pakistan was recognized as an independent country on December 16, 1971. The migration history of what is now the People's Republic of Bangladesh is divided into five important phases.

In the *precolonial era*, there is ample historical evidence that the region once known as East Bengal experienced frequent international and internal migration, which helped make it famous for tea cultivation. In a *second phase*, during the British colonial period (1858-1947), many people especially from Bangladesh's northeastern Sylhet district moved to England and worked in British shipyards and other sectors. A *third phase* occurred amid the partition of India and Pakistan in 1947. As many as 20 million people moved between and within both countries, with religion often a motivating factor; many Muslim people left India and settled in Pakistan, while Hindus went in the opposite direction.

The nine-month 1971 war of independence triggered Bangladesh's *fourth phase of migration*, with approximately 10 million people displaced from Bangladesh across the Indian border, many of whom—particularly Hindus—did not return afterwards. Moreover, many people living in Pakistan since 1971 have been unable to return to their native Bangladesh, while people in Bangladesh with Pakistani roots, called *Biharis*, have sought to be repatriated to Pakistan. The current and fifth phase began after independence. Bangladesh's fragile economy had limited job opportunities, resulting in large numbers of semi-skilled and unskilled male workers moving temporarily for employment in the Mid-

dle East, particularly Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates. Many of these patterns began in 1973, when oil prices rose and several Gulf countries had a rapid demand for new infrastructure. The *heterodox migration process continues to this day*, even as the world's eighth most populous country has been touted as a model of development and an economic miracle, in part because of the reliance on exports as a driver of domestic growth.

Although most Bangladeshi migrants work in low-or semi-skilled sectors abroad, they are driven in part by a mismatch between Bangladesh's educational offerings and job prospects. As a result of a massive increase in educational institutions in Bangladesh, the number of educated people has risen, including in rural areas, yet there are not sufficient employment opportunities for them. Much of the economy relies on agriculture and the booming garment sector. And due to factors such as economic insecurity, depressed wages, and the absence of a robust social safety net, there is a growing interest among the educated population in emigrating rather than local entrepreneurship. Environmental vulnerability also contributes to the drivers of migration, especially when combined with poverty and poor labor market conditions, providing a strong impetus for seeking work abroad.

The vast amount of money sent back by emigrants and others as remittances has been among the most powerful tools in Bangladesh's economic outlook, contributing to improving the living standards of families and spurring development. Although the country's domestic garment sector is said to be the highest foreign income earner, accounting for nearly \$47 billion in 2023 (more than 10 percent of gross domestic product (GDP)), remittances are likely more important. This is because a significant amount of garment export earnings covers the cost of importing raw materials, thereby reducing net income. Therefore, official remittances, which ►►

► added up to nearly \$21.9 billion in 2023, are likely the top income-generating economic sector for Bangladesh. International remittance flows have generally risen swiftly since Bangladesh's independence, increasing from \$1 billion in 1993 to \$12.8 billion in 2013 and \$18.4 billion in 2019 (see Figure 3). During the COVID-19 outbreak, fewer Bangladeshi workers were able to travel overseas and many analysts predicted remittances would decline significantly in Bangladesh and other major remittance-receiving countries. However, recorded remittance transfers to Bangladesh remained resilient, and rose to \$21.8 billion in 2020—a 19 percent increase over the previous year.

Bangladesh is the *sixth largest migrant-sending country globally*, and the eighth largest remittance-receiving country, according to the International Organization for Migration (IOM). According to Bangladesh government statistics, *workers have taken nearly 16.1 million short-term labor contracts in 164 countries around the world from 1976 through 2023, with the overwhelming majority in the Persian Gulf*. Some may have returned to Bangladesh after their contract ended; others were forced to return for a variety of reasons, such as unsuccessful health tests or poor job performance. Moreover, some migrants die while abroad—including more than 1,000 Bangladeshis who reportedly died in Qatar during the decade-long build-up to the 2022 FIFA World Cup. And many return after their contract ends.

Of the more than 7.4 million Bangladeshi migrants abroad as of 2020, approximately 1.3 million were in Saudi Arabia, 1.1 million in the United Arab Emirates, and 380,000 in Kuwait, with smaller numbers elsewhere in the region, according to UN statistics. Migration has been increasing to other Asian countries such as Malaysia (home to 416,000 Bangladeshis as of 2020), Singapore (80,000), and South Korea (12,000). Nearly 2.5 million Bangladeshis are believed to

live in neighboring India, many likely without authorization. Irregular migration between the two countries is a controversial topic given their history. During the COVID-19 outbreak, fewer Bangladeshi workers were able to travel overseas and many analysts predicted remittances would decline significantly in Bangladesh and other major remittance-receiving countries. However, recorded remittance transfers to Bangladesh remained resilient, and rose to \$21.8 billion in 2020—a 19 percent increase over the previous year.

Remittance inflows through formal channels have remained relatively stagnant since 2020. The World Bank predicts that remittances to South Asian countries in general will slow down somewhat in 2024, although the region is projected to receive the most remittances among those sent to low- and middle-income countries. India, Bangladesh's neighbor, is the world's largest remittance recipient (with an estimated \$125 billion in remittances via formal channels in 2023) and Pakistan is also a major remittance receiver (\$24 billion in 2023). However, it is impossible to calculate precisely how much money comes to Bangladesh and other countries via all forms of remittances, due to the large sums believed to travel through unofficial channels. Because of currency devaluation and exchange rate management policies, among other factors, many people sending money to Bangladesh do so through informal channels such as the *hawala* system or via gifts and goods that migrants bring with them on their return.

Remittance-receiving households in Bangladesh tend to be better off financially and socially than others. Families often spend remittances on consumer goods such as food, clothing, education, medical care, and shelter, and this is especially true for poor urban and rural households. This income thereby improves households' standards of living. Moreover, remittance-receiving house-►

► holds may use a significant portion of the inflows to purchase land and (for agricultural households) improve farming techniques such as by making investments in modern machinery. Because Bangladesh is incredibly vulnerable to natural disasters, remittances place recipient households in a stronger position to bear future risks. This in turn enables private savings, diversified livelihoods, and investment in small businesses. Remittance-prompted investments in land, agriculture, and housing also boost local markets and stimulate rural economies. These transformations can increase mechanization of agriculture, cash crops, and fisheries, directly contributing to local community development. Remittances can make it easier for receiving households to become self-employed in these sectors and to hire other workers. When households use remittances to construct, expand, or improve their homes, they increase the demand for labor and raw materials, thereby contributing significantly to local employment. Remittance senders also tend to contribute to the public life of their communities of origin by making donations to local schools, colleges, libraries, religious institutions, and other facilities.

Negative Impacts of Migration and Remittances

For the time being, emigration of Bangladeshi laborers does not have significant negative consequences for the country. However, there can be risks to individuals (and their families) who bear the predeparture costs of migration—which are often excessive—meaning migrants must spend time abroad to recoup their money, and workers who cannot complete their contracts may lose sizable sums. Over the long term, Bangladesh's dependence on remittances may pose future risks, increasing the need to diversify the country's fiscal situation. Otherwise, the economy may become vulnerable to headwinds outside of its

control. While remittances sent via formal channels did not drop as expected during the pandemic, transfers could still be affected by future events. A potential decline in remittances requires innovative policies that reduce the country's dependence and increase domestic sources of revenue. Since most remittances come from unskilled and semi-skilled laborers, a skilled workforce and new labor markets could lead to employment for different occupations and more resilience to remittance-related challenges.

Migration Governance

Bangladesh's migration governance is multidimensional. The country has made significant progress in priorities such as ensuring the well-being of migrants, protecting their rights, and responding to crises, although there remain some critical problems. For instance, the national framework has focused on labor migration at the expense of other forms of cross-border human mobility, such as humanitarian migration, which may have complicated the government's efforts to respond to the population of Rohingya refugees. Bangladesh has no law specifically governing refugee and asylum issues, and the government has maintained that the Rohingya population is only temporary.

Role of Remittance in the Economic Development of Bangladesh

Increased economic activities due to economic globalization in the 1980s and 1990s led to a rapid international rise in demand for skilled and unskilled manpower. That paved the way for many people, including those of the developing countries, to move to the outside destinations (Castles & Davidson, 2000). For a large number of Bangladeshi workers, mostly semiskilled and ►►

► unskilled, this external demand opened up opportunities for earning their livelihood abroad. Many others have also left the country for different pull and push factors. This migration was, however, a welcome relief for Bangladesh as its development strategies since independence could not cope with and accommodate the growing demand for employment from a fast growing population. The consequence of the multidirectional relocation of people, both temporary and permanent, was the quick rise in remittances in the economy of Bangladesh.

As a parallel development to this growth in outward movements of workforce, the volume of inward remittances has accelerated to become a regular and substantial source of resource transfer in the Bangladesh economy, although this was not the case until 2000 when remittances were seen as trivial in size and had little developmental relevance. In fact, remittances now stand many folds to its foreign direct investment (FDI) and official development assistance (ODA) combined. According to the MRF 2011, official remittances to Bangladesh exceeded US\$11 billion in 2010, making it the eighth largest remittances recipient country in the world (World Bank, 2010, p. 58). Certainly, this was a significant flow of fund for Bangladesh. Indeed, a regular growth in the flow of remittances has upended the developmental significance of remittances, both in social and economic sectors, in the eyes of the policy strategists.

The development impacts of remittances may be assessed by the effects remittances have on various short- and long- term micro and macro socioeconomic variables. Again, these impacts are considered to be more in the developing countries with higher poverty incidence and lower financial development density (Giuliano & Ruiz-Arranz, 2009; Jongwanich, 2007). The remit-

ters, who were mostly unemployed in their home countries, have now jobs in overseas places. This may create limited employment opportunities for the others in the home country. Likewise, the remittances they are sending back may help employment generation domestically as well. The latter happens through the reinforcement of remittances-induced national savings, capital accumulation, and investment (Barua et al., 2007). So the direct, trickle down, and indirect benefits of remittances could be significant in aggregate for many of the developing countries.

Uses of Remittances and Impacts on Socioeconomic Factors in Bangladesh

In analyzing the transfer and utilization dynamics of remittances, De Bruyn and Kuddus (2005) find that remittances inflows in Bangladesh happen mostly in the forms of (a) transfer to family and friends and (b) transfer to save or invest, and not much in the forms of (c) transfer to charity or community development and (d) collective transfer to charity or community development. So the impact assessment mainly centers on the first two types of transfers. Sensibly, in those two types of transfers, the recipients are often the father, mother, spouse, other family members or even relatives of near and far.

Beyond Economics: Practice of Family Culture of Bangladeshi Migrant from Los Angeles USA

Hasan Mahmud (2021) conducted a study *Beyond Economics: the Family, Belonging and Remittances among the Bangladeshi Migrants in Los Angeles*. Based on migrants' perception, the paper recognizes the centrality of the family and origin community in migrants' remittances both in the NELM and in the transnational perspectives. It empirically investigates migrants' belonging and recognizes their membership in their ►►

► parents' family, their own nuclear family, joint family including siblings with their respective families, extended family including multiple generations and a community of origin. It finds migrants' belonging simultaneously to the destination and origin countries, and also confirms the presence of 'friction' in such belonging, indicative of both cooperation and conflict in migrants' remittances allowing for explaining changes in their remittances such as remittances decay and resurgence. This study offers guideline for further empirical research on migrants' transnationalism and remittances with policy implications regarding the developmental consequences of remittances.

Migrants' belonging to home and remittance

Remittance is defined as the money migrants send home to their origin country. Scholars recognize the family as the primary recipient of a migrant's remittances as acknowledged in the United Nations' declaration of 16 June as the Family Remittance Day. Studies on transnational families and remittances demonstrate that migrants send remittances from a sense of responsibility and obligation to help the family (Abrego, 2014; Mahmud, 2014; 2020; Parreñas, 2001; 2010; Thai, 2014; Vanwey, 2004; Wong, 2006). The concept of 'home', central to understanding migrants' belonging to the family and remittances, is often used interchangeably with the household or the family. The household—according to the NELM approach—is a social unit consisting of parents, spouse and children with share economic interests and something that migrants leave behind in their origin country. In comparison, the family – as obvious in the transnationalism approach – is a union of intimate relations that the migrants maintain across borders and reunite with when and where they can. Thus, migrants' home is both '*a private domestic space and*

a larger geographic place where one belongs, such as one's community, village, city, and country' (Espiritu, 2003, p.2). Terms like 'homeland' and 'hometown' also reveal the spatiality of migrants' conception of homes (Castaneda, 2018). However, home in this sense is not a place one comes from but a habitation. As Wise (2000, p.299) demonstrates, home as a place/territory does not exist 'out there' but is an act, a process of territorialization, a conscious effort to conquer a space as one's own. Home is an experience that evokes—as Boccagni (2017) argues—security, familiarity and control. Home is where the individual finds expressions of being and becoming among a set of relations in a certain space (Boccagni, 2017; Castaneda, 2018; Wise, 2000).

Beyond the economics of remittances

The NELM perspective assumes sending remittance is a reciprocation in the part of the migrants towards their family (i.e. self-interested remittance), while it is actually a conforming behaviour towards a distinct cultural norm. In Bangladesh, the sons are expected to share responsibility for their family once they grow up and begin to earn (Ballard, 1982; Indra & Buchignani, 1997; Kabir et al., 2002). When Bangladeshis migrate to various countries abroad, they bring this culture of sharing family responsibility with them. Thus, Mobin (24 years in the United States, living with wife and a child) told us: *Ninety eight percent [that is, nearly all] Bangladeshis earn and send money to their families. This is because they come from financially struggling families. They grew up in poverty. They want to help their family to have a better life. HM: Do they consider their self-interest in this remitting. Mobin: No, it is our responsibility. We think that we come to America and earn money. So, we will send money. There is no other consideration. This sense comes from one's inside. This is because we are brought up in this way, this is our culture, nothing else.* ►►

► Sense of belonging, family Dynamic and changing remittances

Migrants' sense of their responsibilities and obligation to the origin family is indicative of the presence of what Thompson (1971) calls moral economy: local social and cultural conceptions of who 'ought' to receive migrants' remittances. Thus, a satisfactory understanding of the topic requires examining how this moral economy functions within the dynamic family structures and transnational relations (Abrego, 2014; Boccagni, 2013; Carling, 2008a; Contreras & Griffith, 2012; Silver, et al., 2018; Thai, 2012, 2014). Scholars recognize gender, generation, migrant's position within the household and the question of return or permanent settlement as decisive factors in shaping migrants' remittances (Carling, 2008b), but also see the migrants as embodying culturally specific roles within the family and origin community. This membership or belonging to the family and origin community—a social fact in the Durkheimian sense (Durkheim, 1982)—shapes migrants' remittances.

Diaspora Contributions to Development in Their Countries of Origin

For many diasporans, the experiences and opportunities they are exposed to in their countries-of residence inspire them to seek ways to contribute to the development of their countries-of-origin. They engage with their countries-of-origin in many different ways, including (1) *advocacy and philanthropy*; (2) *remittances, investment, and entrepreneurship*; and (3) *tourism and volunteering*. Some diasporans join diaspora advocacy groups, lobbying the government of their country-of-residence on behalf of development issues in their countries-of-origin. Other diasporans strive to enhance the development of their countries-of-origin by engaging in *philanthropic activities*, raising money in the country of residence or volunteering

their time for social and environmental organizations located in the country-of-origin.

People's Republic of Bangladesh: Taka Denominated Diaspora Bond

Bangladeshi diasporans can invest any amount up to BDT 01 (One) crore converted against foreign remittance 05 (Five) years are allowed to invest complying the documentary requirements and applying simple interest rate.

Special Benefits; Bangladesh: The U.S. Dollar Premium Bond Rules, 2002; Additional Benefit for Substantial Investment; Additional Benefit for Substantial Investment The Wage-Earner Development Bond Rules, 1981 and Additional Benefits for Substantial Investment.

Extending Digital MFS Services at Remittance Corridors Currency Diaspora Bonds

Government of Bangladesh may form a committee to work out a plan to collect more migrant remittance by selecting 10 best performing commercial banks allowing them to issuing diaspora bond through formulating a standard operating procedures by forming a committee comprising of representative from the Finance Ministry, Foreign Ministry officials from different remittance corridors, MFS experts, BAIRA officials, Central Bank, Bankers Association, Economists, Lawyers with Banking experience and any other of government choice.

Expand MFS activities to significant remittance corridors to collect diaspora remittance Digitally MFS companies in collaboration with Central Bank of Bangladesh should plan establishing their branch office in remittance corridors to extend MFS activities which many countries are following can be a example for Bangladesh. ■

For greater and mutually beneficial Korea-Bangladesh relations

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The Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) Leaders' Meeting was held on Oct.31-Nov. 1 in Gyeongju amid the intensifying U.S.-China strategic rivalry and growing

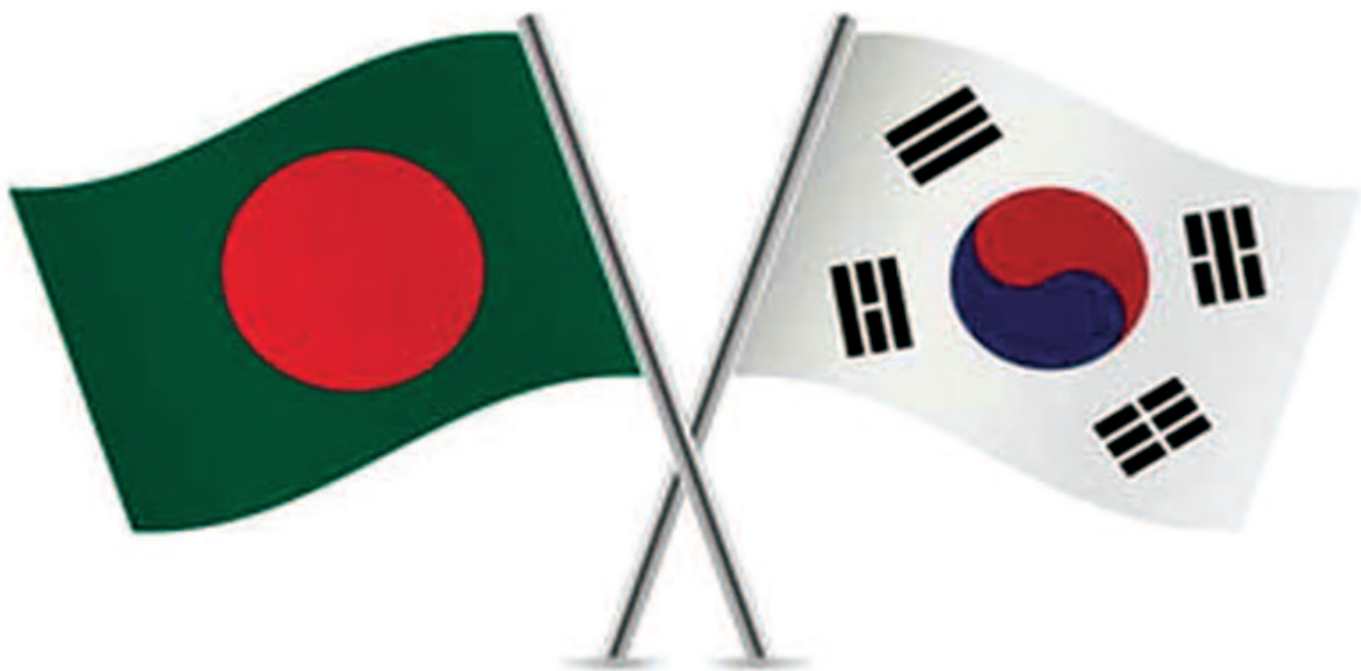
geopolitical and geoeconomic uncertainties. APEC was already a success in that it brought Messrs Donald Trump and Xi Jinping together to meet in Busan on Oct. 30 and agreed on certain measures. However, the measures were limited to stopgap measures.

Besides, the decision of the Supreme Court of the United States on the U.S. tariffs, expected in December or January 2026, will not change course, contrary to the wishes of many, because some U.S. laws provide leeway. For instance, Section 232 of the Trade Expansion Act of 1962 allows

the U.S. president to impose tariffs on individual goods imports. Hence, more uncertainties are likely to continue into the next year.

Against this backdrop, my recent visit to Bangladesh to attend a seminar organized by the Korean Embassy in Dhaka reaffirmed for me the urgent need to further strengthen Korea-Bangladesh cooperation in more diversified ways.

Korea and Bangladesh have enjoyed a special economic partnership since the 1980s. Korea is one of Bangladesh's largest investors, with Korean garment and apparel companies actively operating in the market. Today, Bangladesh is the world's 35th-largest economy, but it was once among the poorest countries in the world and was frequently devastated by annual cyclones and floods. Despite these difficult circumstances, some entrepreneurs recognized its potential and entered the market early on, including YOUNGONE and Yupoong, one of the world's leading sports cap manufacturers. I admire and appreciate the vision of such entrepreneurs. ▶▶



► Nonetheless, the ongoing political instability since last year and the 20 percent reciprocal tariff imposed by the United States are likely to adversely affect the investment environment in Bangladesh. But my conversations with several Korean investors there explained to me that Bangladesh remains an attractive and competitive investment destination, thanks to its favorable investment conditions and diligent workforce, despite chronic challenges such as bureaucratic red tape, inefficiencies, and insufficient infrastructure.

Some of these chronic problems could be addressed and improved through Korea-Bangladesh development cooperation. As of 2024, Korea's total development assistance to Bangladesh amounted to \$107.6 million, making Bangladesh Korea's sixth-largest development partner. The two countries have collaborated on human capital development, capacity building in both the public and private sectors, water management, ICT, public health, and many other areas that are closely linked to mitigating these longstanding challenges. I sense that the time is ripe for the two countries to review and stream-

line the areas of cooperation toward a more result-oriented partnership.

The long years of economic vision and cooperation led the two countries to finally launch a series of negotiations in November 2024 toward concluding a bilateral comprehensive economic partnership agreement (CEPA).

The CEPA, once concluded, will pave the way for expanding cooperation from conventional textiles to electronics, health and biotech, and AI. Another reason to expedite it is related to Bangladesh's graduation from the Least Developed Country (LDC) category. It will be much more beneficial for Bangladesh to conclude the CEPA before its LDC graduation. Moreover, in an era of receding globalization and weakened multilateral institutions such as the World Trade Organization, bilateral and plurilateral trade agreements have gained renewed importance in advancing trade and economic integration. For this very reason, Korea should join the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership as soon as possible and support Bangladesh's accession to the Regional Compre-►►



South Korean company to invest \$8.06m in Mongla EPZ. Photo: BSS

► hensive Economic Partnership.

Cooperation between Korea and Bangladesh is also important in the area of maritime security. Maritime security is vital not only for Korea's trade and economy but also for its overall security and survival. More than 90 percent of Korea's trade, including its oil imports, passes through the Indian Ocean, one of the world's most strategic sea lanes. This region is frequently affected by nontraditional security threats such as piracy, illegal fishing and natural disasters like tsunamis, among others.

Close cooperation to enhance maritime security capabilities is essential for addressing both conventional and nonconventional threats. As an Indian Ocean rim country, Bangladesh is a natural partner in pursuing this goal. In this context, the launch of the Korea-Bangladesh navy-to-navy staff talks in October in Dhaka represents a meaningful step toward closer cooperation in maritime security and defense production. The

two countries agreed to expand high-level personnel exchanges in military education, increase joint exercises and collaborate on the modernization of the Bangladesh navy.

It is time for Korea, long regarded as a bridge between developed and developing countries, to recognize Bangladesh as a core partner in its outreach to and cooperation with the Global South. The Korea Indian Ocean Cooperation Fund is a good step in the right direction. It aims to promote economic and social cooperation with the Indian Ocean Rim countries, in consultation with the Indian Ocean Rim Association, with a special emphasis on sustainable port development and the utilization of marine resources. More such mechanisms will be most helpful.

Korea and Bangladesh are laying the groundwork for an upgraded relationship. Now, more than ever, this effort requires greater public attention and steadfast support. ■



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India Retires MiG-21: A Legacy of the 1971 War and Bangladesh's Air Force Awakening

Rabb Majumder

Editor and Publisher of The Security World.



As India retires the MiG-21 Fishbed, the jet's six-decade career prompts reflection beyond its home country's borders. For Bangladesh, memories of the 1971 Liberation War remain vivid, and the MiG-21's role in that conflict is a defining chapter in a shared history of struggle, resilience, and the birth of a nation's air power.

Lede: A decisive chapter in 1971

The MiG-21's contribution to the 1971 war extended far beyond routine patrols. In the conflict's opening days, MiG-21s struck East Pakistani airfields such as Kurmitola and Tejgaon, undermining air operations and helping to establish air

superiority in the eastern theater. Perhaps the most enduring moment came on 14 December 1971, when MiG-21s conducted a high-impact strike on the Government House in Dhaka (then the Governor's House). Pilots from No. 28 Squadron, led by Wing Commander B. K. Bishnoi, launched dive-rocket attacks using 57 mm rockets. The strike, captured by Western journalists at the Intercontinental Hotel, reportedly left the governor visibly shaken, signaling a shift in the balance of power during the last days of the war. The surrender of East Pakistani forces followed on 16 December 1971, culminating in a turning point for the birth of Bangladesh. The remark attributed to Lt. General A. A. K. Niazi at the surrender ceremony—"Because of you—the Indian Air Force"—is often cited as a blunt testament to air power's influence in the conflict.

A legacy in the skies: MiG-21's versatility and reach

First inducted in 1963, the MiG-21 propelled the ►►



Indian Air Force MiG-21 Bison fighter jets stand at the tarmac during rehearsal ahead of their farewell at Chandigarh Air Force Station in Chandigarh, India, Sept. 26, 2025. (AFP Photo)

► Indian Air Force into the supersonic era. Designed as a lightweight, single-engine interceptor, it featured short delta wings and a long fuselage, optimized for high-speed interception of strategic bombers.

Over its long service life, the MiG-21 proved startlingly versatile: it performed ground-attack missions, engaged in dogfights, conducted electronic warfare, and adapted to numerous mission profiles.

Globally, the MiG-21 became one of the most widely produced Russian jets, with more than 50 countries operating variants. India emerged as the largest single user, with numbers exceeding 700 aircraft at peak deployment.

The type's longevity cemented its presence in air forces and popular memory alike, even as newer platforms emerged.

The Bangladesh connection: Kilo Flight and the air force's birth

The war highlighted the emergence of the Kilo Flight, a small group of eight volunteer pilots who carried out audacious air operations from Dimaipur. Their missions included parachuting relief supplies and conducting air strikes against Pakistani targets, contributing to air operations in the eastern theater at a critical juncture.

The bravery and effectiveness of the Kilo Flight and related air operations helped catalyze the formation of a fledgling national air force. After independence, these experiences influenced the evolution of the Bangladesh Air Force (BAF), shaping its early doctrine, structure, and aspirations.

The MiG-21's involvement in 1971 stands as a symbol of transnational solidarity and shared ►►

► struggle, marking a moment when air power played a decisive and memorable role in shaping the region's history.

Retirement and reflection

As India retires the MiG-21—an aircraft widely praised for its performance and long service life—the broader historical significance persists. For Bangladesh and many in the region, the MiG-21's legacy is intertwined with 1971's sacrifices and the birth of a sovereign nation.

Analysts note that the retirement invites reflection on how air power shaped the histories of two nations and how contemporary air forces can honor past sacrifices while investing in modern capabilities.



India's MiG-21 fighter jets prepare to take off for the last flypast during their farewell ceremony at the Chandigarh Air Force Station in Chandigarh, India, Sept. 26, 2025. (AFP Photo)

Looking forward: lessons and memorialization

The MiG-21's story underscores the importance of air power in regional security dynamics, and it highlights how technology, training, and international cooperation intersected during a pivotal era.

For researchers and enthusiasts, the 1971 war remains a case study in strategic bombing, air superiority, and rapid political change catalyzed by aerial operations.

Bangladesh's current and future air-power development continues to honor the Kilo Flight's legacy and the broader efforts that contributed to the nation's independence. ■



A firefighter gives a water cannon salute to India's MiG-21 fighter jets during their farewell ceremony at the Chandigarh Air Force Station in Chandigarh, India, Sept. 26, 2025. (AFP Photo)



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Fleet Financing for Startups: Leases, Purchases, or a Hybrid Strategy

Sqn Ldr Md Khirul Islam

is a Squadron Leader in the Bangladesh Air Force.



Secured Fleet acquisition is one of the most perilous strategic decisions for any airline especially for a startup. The choice between leasing and purchasing aircraft directly impacts financial flexibility,

operational control, and long-term competitiveness. This article will provide an in-depth analysis of both methods, examining the advantages, disadvantages, and practical considerations relevant to a new airline for secured entering the market.

Approach by Startup Airlines

1. If it is approached by a startup airline to me, an aviation business analyst and consultant, by a startup airline to provide insight into his secured fleet acquisition strategy. Where the approaching company, startup airline is specially attracted the merits and drawbacks of aircraft leasing as compared to outright purchasing. In light of the above the treasured opinion is coined in the treatise.

Revealing the Treasured Insight to the Startup Airline Company

2. As an aviation analyst, my insights will be through the discussion of aircraft leasing and outright purchasing of aircraft to met-up the requirements of startup airline with brief elaboration of merits and drawbacks of above underlined topic.

3. **Aircraft Leasing.** To lend or borrow the aircraft for operation (fleet) commercial purpose for special period on the basis of contract for the consideration of money (agreed currency) whether only aircraft or along with staffs, crews, maintenance staffs (technicians) etc. either wet lending/borrowing or dry lending/borrowing is termed as aircraft leasing.

4. In literary words, when an airline or operator pays to use an aircraft from an owner (lessor) for a set period, avoiding large upfront purchase costs, with options of **Dry Lease** (just the plane) or **Wet Lease** (plane + crew + maintenance), offering flexibility and access to new fleets without full ownership burdens, making it popular for escalating capacity or managing cash flow, then its called Aircraft leasing. ➡



► **a. Merits of Aircraft Leasing.** For the affirmative approach to the aircraft leasing for startup aviation company following merits of the title may ponder:

- (1) Low upfront capital cost
- (2) Quick Access to aircraft
- (3) Quick operability of fleet
- (4) Fleet Flexibility
- (5) Less liability in business in Aviation
- (6) Less risk in business
- (7) Quick profitability and better flow of cash
- (8) Quick strategic implication by lessee company
- (9) Flexibility to end the aviation business.

b. Drawbacks of Aircraft Leasing. For the affirmative approach to the aircraft leasing for startup aviation company following merits of the title may ponder:

- (1) Higher Long-Term expense through rent which may exceeds aircraft's purchase price
- (2) Limited Customization of fleet i.e. aircraft configuration, interior design or branding modification
- (3) Dependency on Lessor
- (4) Contractual restrictions by articles on operational freedom, usage limitations e.g., flight

hours, cycles maintenance standards etc.

- (5) Loss of Capital than Purchasing is in long range.
- (6) No ownership in range.
- (7) Less independence in usage and modification.
- (8) Depreciation benefit-less business.
- (9) High payment in contractual period.
- (10) Obligation of business in time limitation.
- (11) Limitation of business expansion for less investment in leasing.
- (12) High Tax of income in business through the leasing aircraft.

5. **Outright Purchasing of Aircraft.** The outright purchasing aircraft in cash or loan or taking finance from other ways is the way to enter into the aviation business by the startup airline. It has merits and drawbacks; are discussed below:

a. **Merits of Outright Purchasing**

- (1) Achievement Full Assets Ownership
- (2) Strategic Control is ensured over aircraft usage, configuration and long-term deployment
- (3) Lower Lifetime Cost after loan repayment
- (4) Stability and Independence i.e. eliminating ►►

► dependency on lessor and long-term operational planning predictability

(5) Potential Asset Value retained and collateral useability for future financing

(6) Long Term Assets in Aviation business.

(7) Benefits of depreciation in aviation business.

(8) Operational Liberty in aviation business.

(9) Liberty of customization in all aspects like aircraft configuration, interior design or branding modification and technical specification.

b. Drawbacks of Outright Purchasing

(1) High Initial Capital Requirement

(2) Financial Burden

(3) Exposure to Depreciation and Residual (market) Risk

(4) Reduced flexibility for fleet change

(5) More Liability in balance sheets.

(6) Low fleet flexibility.

(7) Have to take more risk on damage.

(8) Lowest drawback in short range loss case is less profitability but in worst case the cause of bankruptcy.

(9) Have to maintain own technical team with own cost.

(10) Need own hanger/ engineers/technical equipment's, Ground Handling Equipment.

(11) Required owned GHA- (Ground Handling Agents).

World's Aviation Industry Trends.

6. Over 50% of the world's commercial aircraft fleet is now leased. Startups and low-cost carriers (LCCs) often prefer operating leases to maintain flexibility. Major legacy airlines maintain a mixed strategy, part owned, part leased, to balance cost and flexibility.

Comprehensive Analysis on Aircraft Leasing with Pros and Cons.

7. Area of comprehensive analysis on aircraft leasing

with pros and cons, contains; Initial Capital Requirement, Fleet Flexibility, Operational Costs, Balance Sheet Implications, Risk Management, Strategic Implications. Details with pros and cons are discussed below:

a. Initial Capital Requirement

(1) Pros. Less initial requirement to enter easily in aviation business or market.

(2) Cons. In aircraft leasing, startup airlines have to rely on other's finance or aircraft, they have less stability but more risk.

b. Fleet Flexibility

(1) Pros. There is fleet flexibility in aircraft leasing to operate aviation business and operation.

(2) Cons. Less Usage and modification chance.

c. Operational Cost

(1) Pros. Quick gain of profit in terms of operational cost, rapid flow of currency.

(2) Cons. More operational cost is bearded by operators in leasing in terms of owned aircraft.

d. Balance Sheet Implication

(1) Pros. Leasing improves liquidity and avoids heavy initial borrowing, maintaining stronger short-term financial flexibility.

(2) Cons. Under IFRS (**International Financial Reporting Standard**) 16, leases are recorded as liabilities, reducing previous accounting advantages and potentially increasing debt ratios.

e. Risk Management

(1) Pros. Comparative less risk during fleet operations for damages, crashes.

(2) Cons. Dependent on aircraft owner's determined risk management provisions to execute. No own strong risk management procedure.

f. Strategic Implication

(1) Pros. Quick access in aviation industry is the positive strategic implication for new entrant airlines. ►►

- (2) Cons. To control the aircraft owning and in modification no strategic implication.

Secured Strategic Recommendation for the Startup Airline.

8. In the secured strategic recommendation following strategies and focus given as the startup's position:

a. **Primary Strategy.** Begin operations with operating leases to minimize capital expenditure and accelerate market entry.

b. **Medium-Term Strategy.** As profitability stabilizes, gradually transition to a mixed fleet strategy, owning a portion of aircraft to build equity and reduce long-term costs.

c. **Negotiation Focus.** Secure favorable lease terms (e.g., return conditions, maintenance reserves, renewal options)

9. On the basis of the above pointy discussions i.e. pros and cons of aircraft leasing and outright aircraft purchasing by startup airline, it is preferred to a start-up airline the "Aircraft Leasing" initially for their smooth business. For a startup airline, leasing is the better initial option. It minimizes capital burden, offers operational flexibility, and allows quicker market entry. As the airline grows and gains financial strength, a mixed strategy, leasing some aircraft and purchasing others, will provide the best long-term balance.

Concluding Insights for Starup Airlines

10. In the conclusion of my article as an aviation analyst, on the basis of the above point-triggered, I would tell that for the Startup airline initially to enter in aviation business, they should consider "aircraft leasing" with. Limited capital being tied up in a contract with renown company may be for 5 to 12 years.

11. Later on, that company should shift, with some stability of fund and capital, to "partial purchasing the aircraft" to run their aviation business. If the business runs upwards, they should transmit the combination of leasing and purchasing in the next step to prosper in their business.

Rationale & Consideration for long term Implications:

12. For startup airlines at the initial stage it is best suited the aircraft leasing because, initially they don't have own enough capital or fund and they have Less options to take risks; their primary purpose is to enter into the commerce in aviation industry. So, it will be the foundation for long-term implications.

13. In the next to initial stage i.e. intermediary steps with the conditions of upwards of business capital the partial purchase of aircraft is required to expand their business and to sustain in competition in aviation business, so it is rationale that in the next step, the combination of aircraft leasing and partial purchasing by startup airlines can be the business icon in the long range i.e. long-term implications in aviation business.

14. So, for startup airline in first stage leasing, second stage partial purchasing and in the next long range, the combinations of both become best suited in aviation business.

Conclusion.

15. Leasing offers agility, financial relief, and rapid scalability are the key advantages for a startup airline. However, outright purchasing provides ownership benefits and lower long-term costs once the airline is well-capitalized. Therefore, a balanced, phased approach starting with leases and moving toward selective ownership, provides the optimal pathway for sustainable growth and financial resilience for the startup airlines in aviation industry. ■



BRIEF NEWS

Bangladesh, Netherlands sign naval defence co-op MoU



Bangladesh and the Netherlands signed a new memorandum of understanding (MoU) on naval defence cooperation at Dhaka Cantonment on December 11.

The signing was conducted under the supervision of the Armed Forces Division.

Lt Gen S M Kamrul Hassan, principal staff officer of the Armed Forces Division, signed the deal on behalf of Bangladesh, while Dutch Ambassador Joris Van Bommel signed for the Netherlands.

Officials said the MoU establishes a framework for cooperation in naval defence equipment, information and experience sharing, education and training exchanges, technology transfer, industrial security, and logistical support.

The agreement is expected to enhance exchanges between military experts and support future initiatives to strengthen naval capabilities.

12th Bangladesh-US bilateral defence dialogue ends in Dhaka

The 12th Bangladesh-United States Bilateral Defence Dialogue was held at the Armed Forces Division in Dhaka from 10 to 11 December.

The two sides discussed global and regional security, technology, defence equipment, disaster response, peace-keeping, training, visits, joint exercises, drills and workshops.

Military representatives from both sides joined the meeting. Brigadier General Muhammad Ali Haidar Siddiqui, director general of Operations and Plans at the Armed Forces Division, led the Bangladesh delegation, while Brigadier General Sarah Roos headed the US team.



Senior officials from the Armed Forces, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Border Guard Bangladesh, Bangladesh Coast Guard and other agencies were also present.

Officials said the dialogue will help strengthen existing ties and deepen mutual friendship.

We must be prepared to face tough challenges: Army Chief

Army Chief General Waker-Uz-Zaman has urged all members of the East Bengal Regiment to remain prepared to confront the tough challenges of the twenty-first century by enhancing



their capabilities through dedication, commitment, professionalism, and modern, up-to-date training.

He made this call on December 11 while speaking as the chief guest at the 38th Annual Commanders' Conference 2025 of the East Bengal Regiment (EBR), held at the East Bengal Regimental Centre (EBRC) in Chattogram Cantonment.

According to the Inter-Services Public Relations Directorate (ISPR), during his interaction with officers of the East Bengal Regiment, the Army Chief discussed various issues including the regiment's technological development, research, enhancement of professional skills, and future planning.

At the outset of the annual conference, the Army Chief recalled the glorious history of the East Bengal Regiment and prayed for the eternal peace of the souls of all heroic martyrs who fought in the Liberation War.

Upon his arrival at the EBRC, General Waker-Uz-Zaman was received by the GOC of Army Training and Doctrine Command, the GOC of the 24 Infantry Division and Chattogram Area Commander, and the Commandant of the East Bengal Regimental Centre.

The event was attended by the GOCs of Army Training and Doctrine Command and the 24 Infantry Division, the Chattogram Area Commander, the Commandant and Papa Tiger of EBRC, the Military Secretary, the Adjutant General, the Commandant of BIRC, the Chairman of the Bangladesh Tea Board, senior army officers from Army Headquarters and Chattogram Area, brigade commanders of all infantry brigades, >>

► commanding officers of various units, as well as representatives of the media.

Army chief inaugurates permanent campus of Army Medical College in Ctg



Chief of Army Staff General Waker-uz-Zaman on Thursday inaugurated the permanent campus of Army Medical College, Chattogram, at Chattogram Cantonment.

On his arrival, the army chief was received by the GOC of the 24th Infantry Division and Chattogram Area Commander, along with the college's CEO and principal.

In his inaugural address, General Waker-uz-Zaman expressed hope that the Medical College, together with the under-construction Army Medical College Hospital, would play a significant role in strengthening the country's healthcare sector.

The ceremony was also attended by the GOC of the Army Training and Doctrine Command, BIRC Commandant, Military Secretary, Adjutant General, former principals, faculty members, students, and military personnel of various ranks.

Navy contingent leaves Dhaka for UN mission in South Sudan

A contingent of 99 members of the Bangladesh Navy departed Dhaka on December 9 to join the United Na-

tions (UN) peacekeeping mission in South Sudan.

The naval personnel left Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport (HSIA) to serve under the UN Mission in South Sudan as part of Bangladesh Force Marine Unit-11. The unit will replace Bangladesh Force Marine Unit-10, which is currently performing duties in the mission area.

Officials confirmed that a second group of 39 naval personnel will join the mission on 19 December.

According to the UN mandate, the Bangladesh Navy's Force Marine Unit has been deployed in South Sudan to support global peace efforts.

The unit ensures the safe movement of cargo vessels carrying fuel, food items, medicines, and humanitarian aid in remote areas. It also monitors and controls piracy on waterways, assists local people during fire incidents, and ensures the safety of civilian sailors working on the vessels.

In addition, the unit conducts rescue operations for accident-hit vessels and regularly transports essential supplies to difficult and remote locations for mission personnel.

Over the past three decades, Bangladesh Navy members have served in various conflict-affected regions, providing rescue, emergency medical care, and diving operation support to injured military and civilian personnel.



Bangladesh set to buy European fighter jets



The Bangladesh Air Force (BAF) on December 9 signed a letter of intent (LOI) with the Italy-based defence company Leonardo S.p.A. to procure Eurofighter Typhoon multi-role combat aircrafts, marking a major step in the modernisation of the force.

The Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) Directorate announced the development in a press release on Tuesday (Dec. 9).

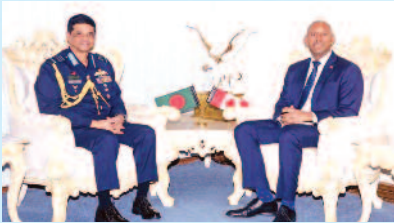
Mentionable, the Typhoon is produced by a joint consortium of UK, Germany, Italy and Spain. Even though the aircraft is a fourth-generation fighter jet, it can beat the US-made fifth-generation F-35s in a dogfight due to its superior speed.

The LOI signing ceremony was held at Air Force Headquarters in the presence of Air Chief Marshal Hasan Mahmood Khan and the Italian Ambassador to Bangladesh Antonio Alessandro.

Under the LOI, Leonardo S.p.A. will supply Eurofighter Typhoon jets to the Bangladesh Air Force. The aircrafts are intended to be integrated into the Air Force's modern multi-role combat fleet for frontline operational duties.

Senior officials from the Armed Forces Division, along with representatives from Italy, were also present at the event.

► Canada for boosting ties with Bangladesh's defence institutions



Canada is interested in expanding engagement with Bangladesh's defence institutions, said Canadian High Commission Ajit Singh in a meeting with Chief of Naval Staff Admiral Mohammad Nazmul Hassan.

The Canadian High Commission is exploring opportunities for collaboration between reputable Canadian industry partners and Bangladeshi defence institutions, Ajit Singh said in the meeting, the Canadian High Commission said in a statement on December 9.

Canada values Bangladesh's significant contributions to international peace and security, Ajit Singh added.

The Canadian High Commissioner also met Bangladesh Chief of Air Staff Air Chief Marshal Hasan Mahmood Khan, for holding productive discussions on Bangladesh-Canada defence cooperation.

The "warm meetings with the chiefs of two services" covered shared priorities, including training, capacity building and deepening defence industry ties, said the High Commission in its statement.

High Commissioner Ajit Singh highlighted the strong capabilities of Canadian defence, maritime and aerospace suppliers, whose technologies and services support modernization, safety, and interoperability, with

global partners.

Ajit Singh also received an update on preparations for the upcoming election, which will be the "largest in Bangladesh's history."

He appreciated Bangladesh's Armed Forces for the positive role they have played in maintaining stability towards a peaceful democratic transition in Bangladesh.

AFMC holds 18th Council of the College meeting

The 18th Council of the College meeting of the Armed Forces Medical College (AFMC) was held on December 7 at the AFMC campus in Dhaka Cantonment.

Army Chief General Waker-Uz-Zaman presided over the meeting. He laid the foundation stones for the expansion of the academic building, the extension of the girls' hostel, a mosque complex, a spectator gallery, and a multipurpose hall.

The council reviewed the college budget, admission process, and professional examination results. The meeting was informed about the enrolment of four cadets from the Central African Republic under the Full Free MBBS Scholarship for 2024–25. Admission for two students

from Palestine for 2025–26 was approved. A decision was also taken to provide medical services to AFMC intern doctors at CMH Dhaka.



Principal Staff Officer of the Armed Forces Division Lt Gen SM Kamrul Hasan, DGMS Major General Quazi Md Rashid-Un-Nabi, Adjutant General Major General Mohammad Hakimuzzaman, AFMC Commandant Major General Md Masudul Alam Mazumder, BUP Vice Chancellor Major General Md Mahbub-ul Alam, senior officials from the defence, finance, education and health ministries, council members and representatives of the armed forces were present.

Yunus lauds armed forces, calls for historic role in February polls

Chief Adviser Prof Muhammad Yunus on December 3 praised the Bangladesh Armed Forces for their contributions to national security, development and UN peacekeeping, and urged them to play a "historic role" in ensuring peaceful and festive national elections and a referendum in February.

Speaking at the graduation ceremony of the National Defence Course (NDC) and Armed Forces War Course (AFWC) 2025 at the National Defence College in Mirpur Cantonment, he highlighted the forces' support during crises and their role in enhancing Bangladesh's global image. He called for a calm, inclusive electoral environment that would be remembered as a turning point for the nation.

Bangladeshi emergency aid reaches cyclone-ravaged Sri Lanka

Emergency humanitarian assistance from Bangladesh reached Sri Lanka ►►



► on December 3 to help the island nation cope with the devastating impact of cyclone-triggered floods and landslides.

Acting on directives from the Chief Adviser, an Air Force aircraft transported relief supplies to Colombo's Bandaranaike International Airport around 1:30pm Bangladesh time, said a foreign ministry's press release.

Bangladesh High Commissioner to Sri Lanka Andalib Elias formally handed over the aid to Sri Lankan authorities. Air Commodore Mohamad Shahidul Islam supervised the entire mission, the ISPR said in a separate press release. The aircraft is set to leave for Bangladesh on the same day, it added.

Earlier, the Sri Lankan government requested the Bangladeshi High Commission in Colombo to arrange for emergency relief support.

The C-130J transport aircraft had a 15-member crew from the Air Force and a representative each from the Armed Forces Division and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

The total 10-tonne consignment included dry food items, mosquito nets, tents, rescue helmets, gumboots, protective vests, hand gloves for rescue personnel, torch lights, essential medicines, and other emergency materials.

The Sri Lankan government expressed sincere gratitude to Bangladesh for the timely support.

Cyclone Dittwah and subsequent flooding have so far claimed around 480 lives, while around 300 remain missing.

Large areas of the country were severely damaged, and significant portions remain submerged.

Army chief for developing army as a professional force

Chief of Army Staff General Waker-Uz-Zaman has reiterated his deep determination to develop the Army as a trained, disciplined and professional force equipped with modern weapons.

He came up with this call while speaking at the 'Presidential Parade' marking the commissioning of the officer cadets of the Bangladesh Military Academy (BMA) Long-Term Course and the 60th Special Course on the BMA Parade Ground at Bhatiani in Chattogram on December 2.

The Army Chief told the newly-commissioned officers that through taking the oath, they have been entrusted with the sacred responsibility of protecting Country's Independence and sovereignty, said a release of Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) Directorate this afternoon.

Finally, he expressed his sincere gratitude to the academy's commandants, all officers concerned, JCOs, NCOs, soldiers, and civil officials and employees to make the event a successful one.

General Waker-Uz-Zaman, the chief guest, received the salute of the pleasant parade and inspected the 'march-pasts' also.

Later, he also distributed prizes



among the meritorious cadets on the occasion.

After the rigorous military training, a total of 184 officer cadets of the 89th BMA Long Term Course and 20 officer cadets of the 60th BMA Special Course were commissioned through this splendid parade.

Among the newly-commissioned army officers, 183 were male and 21 others were female, the ISPR mentioned.

The Army Chief handed over "Sword of Honour" Award and "Army Chief Gold Medal" to Company Senior under Officer Azmain Ishraq for his outstanding performances in the training course.

Subsequently, the new officers were adorned with rank badges by their parents.

At the conclusion of the ceremony, the commissioned cadets took a formal oath to protect the independence and sovereignty of the country on the occasion.

Earlier on the arrival at the parade ground, the Army Chief was welcomed by the General Officer Commanding (GOC) Army Training and Doctrine Command, GOC 24 Infantry Division and Area Commander Chattogram Area and Commandant of Bangladesh Military Academy there.

Invited guests, high-ranking military and civil officials, parents and guardians of the officers and media persons witnessed this colorful parade, the ISPR added. ■



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