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Reg. No. 05.41.2600.025.53.107.17-06

MARCH 24, 2024

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Myanmar's Unfolding Catastrophe: A Boon for the Indo-Pacific Strategy

Henry Kissinger: The Realist

Climate Justice for Bangladesh: A Question Worth Asking?

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Published by **Sadwaan Publication** and Printed from B.S. Printing Press, 52/2, Toyenbee Circular Road (Mamun Mansion, Ground Floor), Wari, Dhaka-1203.

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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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A Failure to Strengthen Fiscal Powers of City and Municipal Corporations will Undermine Bangladesh Aspirations

John Dalton, Global Citizen

was previously the Director of the Office of Local Government for the State of Massachusetts. Following this, he was an advisor to numerous cities, towns and State agencies in the USA on corporate governance principles, institutional change, and public finance and management. He was a consultant for both KPMG and PwC in Boston and Washington and has extensive experience with public financial management (PFM), public integrity, and project monitoring. For USAID, the World Bank, and the ADB he has led decentralization and PFM projects in the Philippines, Sri Lanka, Egypt, Burundi, Pakistan, Ethiopia, Indonesia, and DRC.



If the national goal for the year 2041 is to be a middle-income country, why has the Government not developed a plan and strategy to expand and strengthen the powers, duties, responsibilities, and actual performance of city corporations and municipal corporations which would lead to more effective fiscal governance, revenue generation, and service delivery, thereby relieving the national government of the burdens associated with governing in a post-concessional world?"

That's a long question with lots of nuance, so let me try to unpack some of the main themes. The objective of this paper is to encourage greater levels of decentralization, delegation, and devolution of authority from central government to all

city corporations and a few select municipal corporations, not just to strengthen subnational revenue mobilization as a worthy goal but also to create fiscal space for the central government to deal with economic, fiscal and financial pressures.

With a new Government taking office in 2024, the time for bold initiatives has arrived. Among the most pressing concerns is increasing fiscal space to fund national priorities (or even to pay the piper for costs incurred or obligations neglected) by authorizing other public entities that currently are a drain on the treasury to pay a greater percentage of their costs through increasing "own-source-revenues." Unlike State Owned Enterprises (SOE), City and Municipal Corporations offer a promising, and probably successful, avenue for creating fiscal space. The untapped revenue from economic activity in each corporation is significant. Allowing these corporations to take purposeful steps to assess, collect and spend their own revenues is a double-win: less obligation on accounts of the national government and bet- ➤



Enforce laws to save city from air pollution.

►ter self-financed, citizen-determined priorities among a cohort of subnational governments that represent about 25% of the total national population.

Without greater decentralization and fiscal autonomy, how will it be possible to serve the projected entire national population of about 200 million in 2040 (okay 196,526,123, but you get the point)? Will all wisdom, knowledge, and money remain centralized in Dhaka? Or will Dhaka City meet the 2041 goal while the rest of the country remains in a low-income trap? I am certain the Government wants the best for all the people, wherever they live and work, but the policy paralysis on the matter of empowerment through devolution of powers and responsibilities seems to defy common sense. My political economist tendency is to follow the money, so let me take a crack at some of the apparent constraints, from whatever source, that are holding back the logical political and practical solution: adopt fiscal and administrative decentralization.

Lessons Learned

I want to share some learned experiences that apply to Bangladesh and other developing countries.

Decentralization for all local governments through a single constitutional or legal act is not possible in Bangladesh since the Government is likely to experience increasing fiscal stress during the next half-decade or longer. Bangladesh could not afford, nor are all subnational local government units (especially unions) even ready to accept, a universal grant of administrative and fiscal autonomy. The preferred strategy would be to select a sample consisting of the twelve (12) city corporations and the eleven (11) municipal corporations and allow/incentivize them to mobilize increased revenue and improve service delivery. Unincorporated areas in Bangladesh – municipalities and unions – would continue to be under the tutelage of the State.

Many countries have tried to bring about univer- ►►

sal decentralization, which for simplicity and understanding of the main points of this paper, is defined as the specific transfer by law and policy of powers, duties, and responsibilities from the central government to subnational administrative units. Enumerated functions are identified as either shared or autonomous powers in the constitution or law. The enumerated functions identified in these constitutional or universal laws are often well beyond the administrative competence and fiscal capacity of many subnational units to implement, as evident by the recent Constitutional Amendment in Nepal. That same reality also would apply to most subnational units in Bangladesh. They – especially the 4700 union parishads (UP) – are not ready, neither fiscally nor administratively, to be self-sustaining. However, Local Government Law (City Corporations) 209/2014 is a very useful reference to determine “what are we doing wrong, why have opportunities been missed?” That level of required in-depth research is beyond the interest or purpose of this article and I did not try to do it in the past two weeks. Rather I provide recommendations that may increase fiscal space at national levels through more effective decentralization and delegation for the specific and limited purpose of fiscal autonomy for city corporations and municipal corporations.

By focusing on the key, the *sine qua non*, to all other potential capacity development areas, there will be a possible chance for success. Other laundry lists of recommendations for City Corporations are demonstrations of what the experts believe they know rather than what is reasonable and possible for corporations to implement.

Only city corporations (12) and several municipal corporations (elusive numbers in the research and on Government websites, let’s say between 10 and 40) are ready to assume the role of “full-service local governments” in the current hierarchy of subnational entities. Therefore, an expanded decentralization policy and more fiscal

autonomy should be developed to enable the corporations to support national aspirations.

Corporations are meant to be solvent. While the history of SOEs in Bangladesh and elsewhere may belie the notion of fiscal integrity, the principle remains: “To whom much is given, much is expected.” In Bangladesh, city corporations and municipal corporations have been given “much” and therefore it should be expected by their citizen/consumers that the corporations will give “much” where much is defined as service levels that meet or exceed the citizen charter standards. Quality services by qualified corporations should be the goal, not later than 2028-29 – five whole years to improve performance.

Focusing exclusively on the fiscal “much’s” that have been accorded to these corporations, these entities have the means to become self-sufficient but are trapped in the bad habits of the past where subsidies and giveaways were expected.

The islands of potential corporate excellence include:

City Corporations

NAME	POP* (000)	NAME	POP* (000)
Dhaka North	6,000	Rajshahi	600
Dhaka South	4,300	Rangpur	700
Chattogram	3,200	Sylhet	500
Gazipur	2,700	Mymensingh	600
Narayanganj	1,000	Barisol	400
Khulna	700	Comilla	400
		TOTAL	28,500

● rounded

From the twin towers of the 10,000,000 “counted” population (an imperfect art to be sure) of Dhaka megalopolises to the seven (7) sub-million-sized cities spread out from north to south, city corporations play a vital role in service delivery, either directly or in coordination with ➡

- deconcentrated agencies of central government, egos notwithstanding.

The specific fiscal powers of corporate cities include:

Property tax (stamp duty, registration fees and gain tax)

Holding tax

Land Transfer tax

Miscellaneous taxes and fees (5)

Emergency management fees

Block grants and special grants from the central government are not included in the powers reserved to city corporations since the amounts shared are largely beyond their control. Nevertheless, these funds are a significant but declining source of funding for local operations and a drain on the national treasury. With inflation at 9% the increase of 6.75% in shared revenue for this fiscal year, is statistically less than for the previous fiscal year in terms of purchasing power.

Municipal Corporations

The data for this category of “fiscally empowered” municipal corporations is not as straight-forward as data related to city corporations. Here is the AI-sourced list (which is a cautionary tale in and of itself)

Municipal Corporations	
Jessore	Kushtia
Bogra	Jamalpur
Cox’s Bazar	Tangaili
Faridpur	Bagherat
Chandpur	Jhensidah
Dinajpur	

There are a total of 339 municipalities (pourshavas) in Bangladesh but most of them could not assume the more expansive revenue mobilization efforts suggested in this paper. In fact, any attempt to make them all equal would result in chaos, intentional or otherwise. Only a select few

municipal corporations are considered as likely candidates for enhanced fiscal powers.

Fiscalization is imperative for corporate cities and municipalities to self-finance a portion of their operational budget. As a bonus, fiscalization will reduce the perception and reality of corruption.

XCV2, do you know what that means? How about XVM9? Still stumped?

These are examples of the prices marked by a Sharpie pen on 90% of the pills and potions; syrups and salves sold in pharmacies throughout the country. Although some drug manufacturers (e.g., SQUARE) print the standard, fixed price on the box containing their medicines, the majority of pharmacy-related transactions are not conducted based on price transparency. This is corruption, plain and simple, and tax evasion to boot. And when consumers agree to pay based on this shady transaction, they are enabling further corruption – and they know it.

Compounding this scam is the complete absence of accountability, as most of these businesses do not record the transaction through a cash register or equivalent electronic fiscal device which would allow the Government to collect its fair share of taxes. A drawer full of money serves as the means of paying in and paying out. The owners and employees are all part of the scam, and consumers, as well, and it would seem that NBR is not up to the task of enforcing regulations or collecting the necessary taxes.

On Valentine’s Day, I purchased some flowers for a friend who has been a Bangla-English translator for me. The flower shop was on Kamal Attaturk directly across from the Political Zone Thana. Ironically, a senior police officer (judging by the entourage) was also buying flowers at the same time, at the same place. When the employee told me and the owner/cash-drawer-guy the cost of my planned purchase, I responded a bit loudly, “Where’s the cash register? Does NBR know ►►



Truck of Dhaka North City Corporation (DNCC) is spraying water through an ultra modern technology enriched 'Spray Cannon' to reduce air pollution at Mohammadpur in the city amid rising air pollution. Photo : Collected

about this?" He gave me that hang-dog look of a kid caught with his hand in the cookie jar. "I want a challan", I demanded. The cash-drawer-guy wrote out a receipt on an order form (no copy) and gave me a twenty taka discount. I was in a corrupt transaction. I was fostering corruption. Call RAB! Multiply my transaction by millions and you can see the loss to the Government but, the potential to support city corporation operations

I am convinced that if City Corporations and Municipal Corporations got to keep 50% of the VAT/SD assessed on transactions recorded on all newly-installed electronic fiscal devices/cash registers they would make the effort to see that the system was working properly. They – the corporations - would have a direct and material interest in maximizing revenues. Might some shysters try to rig the system? Of course, you don't get to the bottom of the barrel on the Corruption Perception Index by being angels. But when city corpo-

rations and municipal corporations own a part of the solution they are more likely to have an interest in addressing the problem.

I believe that once city corporations and municipal corporations have a vested interest in increasing revenue mobilization for improved service delivery they will require fiscalization across the board: pharmacies, flower shops, market vendors, food stalls...every fixed location would be required to be licensed (additional income for the corporation) and to have a cash register that records all sales and the associated VAT.

Optimist that I am, therefore, I am advocating for a tax sharing agreement between the Government and City Corporations/Municipal Corporations for all new establishments equipped with the technology. This practice would yield significant new revenue, reduce corruption in the bureaucracy, improve aggregate social integrity, and create fiscal space for the Government. ➡



There is always a traffic jam on the Babubazar Bridge of Dhaka South City Corporation. Photo: Collected

Wealth is the vast untapped potential in Bangladesh for funding government operations in all City Corporations and a select few Municipal Corporations. Land and buildings are the best example of under-taxed wealth, of course, but luxury goods (automobiles, jewelry) also are subject to taxation.,

We speak of the three-legged stool of taxation: income, consumption, and wealth. You can pretty much assign all tax heads to one of those categories and the best tax regimes strive for a balance, not an even distribution, but a balance so that taxation is fair and equitable. If that is the universal standard (it is!) then the central government has performed very poorly. Income taxes are not properly assessed or collected; only about 10% of taxpayers pony up. Consumption taxes using VAT, SD, and onerous duties on imports and exports are regressive. Disproportionately, the less-than-rich are impacted by these consump-

tion-based taxes and duties. The Government acknowledges that fact annually in its Budget Statement but, as noted above, it fails to require many commercial establishments to install the technology needed to record sales or collect VAT on them. Wealth, represented by an individual's aggregate equity in land, buildings, intangible assets, luxury goods, and similar glitter, are hugely undertaxed and subject to fiddles on valuation, assessment, transfers, and actual payment of tax.

The solution cannot emerge from the problem, when the problem is protected by a combination of powerful interests. The real estate and property sector is more protected than RMG. How do we know it is a syndicated segment of the economy? When the Government decided to rinse laundered money, it didn't require the tax cheats and money launderers to build schools, support widows, feed the orphans or invest their repatriated money in some other social good... No... the offer ➡

► was to stick the money where the anti-corruption sun don't shine... in real estate... because it was a safe, opaque, no follow-the-money parking place.

Therefore, let's decentralize authority for wealth taxation – in all forms and at all stages of the tax regime cycle – away from central government and assign the rights and responsibilities to city corporations and municipal corporations with much higher collection targets negotiated and agreed in advance. These corporations already have nominal control through property taxes (a fiddle), holding taxes (a violin), and land transfer taxes (a cello), but they all have strings attached. My recommendation, therefore, flips the switch. Using hard ceilings for both revenue and expenditure estimates, city corporations and municipal corporations must first approve a revenue budget that requires 60% of total estimated revenue to come from wealth taxes and further that the estimated expenditure budget may not exceed estimated revenues. Currently “own-source-revenues” from city corporations amount to only 38% of their aggregate budgets. Moving from 38 to 60, with the cap on expenditures will require several – but not more than four – years to accomplish. Is moaning a sign of affirmation an acceptance? I hear lots of moaning. But those steps are needed to both provide fiscal space for the Government while also empowering both the “local government” corporations and taxpayers (paying property taxes buys you a seat at the policy making table).

To provide additional decentralized revenue mobilization tools intended to empower city corporations and municipal corporations, the following additional “property” taxes are suggested:

VACANT LAND TAX – undeveloped (and certain underdeveloped) land will be assessed and taxed at its highest and best use. A vacant lot in the center of say, Barishol, will have an assessed value subject to taxation equal to comparable developed plots within a 500-metre radius.

SPECIAL ASSESSMENTS - INCREMENTAL

VALUE CREATED - The imputed incremental value to property due to the impact of public infrastructure such as roads, piped water, and electrical lines. It is a documented fact that serviced land is more valuable than un-serviced land. This type of assessment will capture a portion of that added value through a special assessment that recovers the cost of infrastructure investment.

FOOT FRONTAGE TAXES – increased value from public infrastructure (especially sidewalks and sewerage) along the “line of improvement”. Taxes are assessed only based on frontage not, as above, on the total incremental value. ONLY the owners of property along the improved service line are assessed – the fair share rule.

FULL ASSESSMENT RULE – building permits are issued for a specific time period, say three years, during which time property and holding taxes typically are not assessed. Many construction projects go on and on and on, preventing the city corporation or municipal corporation from realizing revenue. Under the full assessment rule, property tax is assessed AS IF the building has been completed and is ready for occupancy according to the permit.

These tools will greatly increase tax collections in many city corporations and municipal corporations while increasing the equity value for property owners. As I suggested, the justification for decentralization of some taxation functions and empowering a more just and effective system of tax assessment and collection is four-fold:

Creating fiscal space for central government by reducing the dependency payments to city corporations and municipal corporations;

Empowering city corporations and city corporations to become solvent and self-sustaining over time;

Reducing fraud and corruption at the POS of goods and commodities; and,

Improving the quality of life of urban residents through better services. ■

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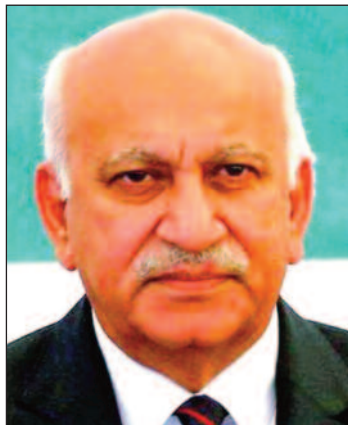
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Highway Tourism

*On the miracle route from Delhi to Lucknow
and why Britannia only fools the waves*

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.



One is not completely sure why precisely the otherwise highly intelligent human race is constantly anxious to save time. The compulsion has metamorphosed into technological advance that squeezes time into ever-shorter spells. Travel is no longer about sights and sounds, echoes of the past and conversations about the present, shifts of culture, the music of languages, or knowledge gained at the gentle pace of experience. The journey is now barren, as highways replace the road. There may be some rational point in shortening a flight, for in the sky you are trapped beside an indifferent passenger; but you may have noticed that nothing has happened in decades to make aeroplanes faster. But the road is being continu-

ously shortened by pace. The magna-speed expressway is now high on the list of Good Things That Must Happen.

What do we do with the time we have saved? Waste it in the lobby of a hotel? Add ulcer hours to office routine? Potter about making non-conversation with family? Somewhere during the car ride between Delhi and Lucknow there was a Eureka moment. Spend time on useless thoughts. Let the mind wander through the maze of useless thoughts. There is so much to learn from nothing.

My reason for taking the Yamuna Expressway from Delhi to Lucknow was prosaic. I wanted to do some highway tourism; to find out more about this much-touted miracle route which had reduced nearly 600 kilometres to six or seven hours, depending upon whom you had met. However, there is a God of the Road with a definitive answer. Bhagwan Google said seven hours and 14 minutes with divine precision. We ►►



Yamuna Expressway—A Ride into the Future.

► dipped into Lucknow in six-and-a-half, including a pit stop for coffee. But God was right. About 45 minutes went into a very Indian kind of obstacle race. The impediments on the way to Clarks hotel in the centre of Lucknow were myriad citizens, multifarious vehicles, an antique road structure, the occasional policeman seriously engaged on his mobile phone, and the spirited strife of politics.

The great highway was spectacular, soulless, silent, and ambitious. A sign on the bar over the road proclaimed the defining fact of the experience: 'You are under surveillance.' A trifle menacing, but well-meant. But surveillance by hidden cameras has all sorts of subliminal implications. Fear breeds unpredictable reactions. No tickling one's nose, then. Who knows which secret picture will end up on social media? Near Mathura came another warning: Fog Ahead. All I could

see was a very light mist. Perhaps this was the corpse of a fog and some computer had forgotten to switch off the admonition. Still, on such a speed-monster highway it is wise to be careful even in the light of a midday sun. The architects of this expressway had certainly been sensible. When the elevation became lowered, the height of the cattle fences rose. We saw only one animal on the long journey, a brown dog that sauntered through the cars.

Two hours into the smooth and imperceptibly swift ride a message appeared, apropos of nothing: 'Kolkata 1286 km. Agra 50'. The distance to Agra was useful. Kolkata was a measure of ambition. The living green of western Uttar Pradesh made way for the verdant colours of Etawah. This is the silence in which the government of India for the next five years will be elected within a few weeks. ►►

► The silence evaporated in Lucknow. Banners were louder than the anxious hum of a capital city. Saffron was getting some competition from the Congress tricolour and large cut-outs of Rahul Gandhi, mostly alone and sometimes in the company of his sister Priyanka. It was the day of a public meeting by Rahul Gandhi, in Lucknow on his revival mission, peppering a mundane speech with a few remarks about non-political celebrities to claim space in the headlines. I saw a newspaper report later in the day, quoting a Congress spokesperson as saying that while Sonia Gandhi had left the nearby Raebareli Lok Sabha constituency for Rajya Sabha, Raebareli would remain with the family. Come to think of it, the whole party is going to remain with the family.

Management students are taught the theory of revival through a J Curve. The first stage is a plateau, when nothing happens. Then you must leap over the cliff, cross the valley pursued by the shadow of despair and reach the base of the next hill, which you climb towards a second summit. Judging by the mood of the Uttar Pradesh voter,

Congress is still on the plateau.

BRITANNIA ONCE RULED the waves. The British navy saved Britain from France and established a global empire. The statue of Admiral Horatio Nelson still rules Trafalgar Square in the heart of London. Two decades into the 21st century, the British navy only fools the waves, if you will pardon a half-hearted quasi-pun.

On January 30 this year, *HMS Vanguard*, pride of the British fleet, launched a nuclear— nuclear, mind you—Trident missile from Cape Canaveral in the US. *HMS Vanguard*, itself on duty after a seven-year refit, had no intention of starting a nuclear war; in theory this missile is capable of devastation and death of hundreds of thousands. This was a test launch, after eight years back in the factory after an earlier failure in 2016.

Instead of arcing beautifully into space at a speed of Mach 18, or 13,300 mph, the 58-tonne missile plopped down a few yards from the submarine. Oops. British Defence Secretary Grant Shapps was watching along with the heavily medalled top brass, ready to welcome success with a few rounds ►►



Welcome to Yamuna Expressway

↑ Agra

↑ Lucknow

↑ Kolkata



Highway Tourism in Haryana, India.

► of hurrah and perhaps some champagne. We cannot be certain about the colour of their faces when the missile plopped, but it is on record that there was complete silence on the western front. Until, that is, the feisty British tabloid, *Sun*, broke the story three weeks later.

A frosty spokesperson of the Ministry of Defence, possibly called George Orwell, then claimed that the nuclear missile would never have plopped over the minister's head in a "real-world situation". Indeed. The British fail only in artificial-world situations. The official added that the reasons for the flop were "classified". You bet. It was an "anomaly". You can bet again. Frost now turning into ice, the ministry pointed out that there was no need for a further test (cost in 2024, £17 million). Absolutely. The British never fail a third time, because they don't try a second time.

One wonders what would happen in a real war if the British fired the Trident. If they aimed at Russia, Ukraine would be destroyed.

The 2016 test launch was from *HMS Vengeance*. This time it was *HMS Vanguard*. Any hypothetical third test will probably be from *HMS Safehaven*. A Royal Air Force officer, who preferred the safe haven of anonymity, had the last word. It was time to return the missiles to the Royal Air Force. The navy had forgotten how to sail but the pilots still knew how to fly. Tut tut. Or pip pip?

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN politicians and journalists is uneasy and so it should be; they worship in different temples. But I was startled to read that one of the *Guardian's* most famous sketchwriters—satirists with a nice title—in the 1960s replied, when asked why he did not socialise with politicians: "It might dilute the purity of my hatred." Five decades ago the environment was less virulent, and the *Guardian* was and is a civilised newspaper. Hatred? Maybe the satirist had gone deliberately edgy in search of a memorable line. It happens. Battles are hardly unknown in our country. The equation can get rancid. But hatred? Hatred is an acid. It hollows the hater before it affects the hated. ■

MYANMAR CURRENT SITUATION AND FUTURE OF ROHINGYAS- IS OPPORTUNITY SLIPPING AWAY?

Lt Gen (Retd) Mohammad Mahfuzur Rahman, PhD

Former Principal Staff Officer, Armed Forces Division, Prime Minister's Office



In the recent history of Myanmar Military Rule, the Junta never faced such a critical situation militarily and politically. The mainstay of the Junta is their military power with which they crushed all kinds of oppositions and

their legitimacy is without the military at the core of power the Union of Myanmar shall break apart. Recent attacks of the Ethnic Armed Organizations (EAOs) on the Junta's camps and outposts have challenged mainstay, the robustness of TATMADAW (Myanmar Armed Forces). What is more puzzling is that earlier such attacks were around the bordering areas on Security Forces' outposts, now besides bordering areas capturing of townships and attacking in the centre of the country like establishments around Mandalay have surprised many. The other issue is the Myan-

mar Military in power that has brought the Union to the brink of fragility instead of solid integrity.

Current Development

The three brotherhood alliance (Arakan Army; AA, Myanmar Democratic Alliance Army; MNDAA and Ta'ang National Liberation Army; TNLA) started attacking security forces' posts on 27 October 2023 under code name 'Operations 1027' in northern Shan State bordering China as well as in Rakhine, a western state bordering Bangladesh. It seems several EAOs have joined this operation simultaneously in Kachin, Kayah, Sagaing, Chin and other places. These coordinated attacks have overwhelmed the decision-making cycle of TATMADAW at least the paralysis in response exhibits so. Over 200 posts have been overrun, and a dozen townships have fallen in the hands of EAOs including important segments of border trade routes and trade/crossing posts with China, Thailand and India. Aside from politics, this will have economic conse- ➡



The Arakan Army displays weapons and ammunition it seized after capturing the headquarters of Myanmar junta battalion in Kyauktaw Township, Rakhine State on January 16. Photo: Collected

► quences for the Junta. Almost 52 per cent of Myanmar is under the effective control of EAOs. Of course, this does not mean the days of TATMADAW are over, they are still in control and materially numerous times stronger than EAOs but looks like its 'morale component' has weakened since the forces at even military outposts are surrendering without putting up much resistance.

What TATMDAW/Junta is expected to do?

The Junta is likely to observe the situation and would not panic/hurry. It will possibly go for the 'Carrot and Stick Policy' and 'Amity and Enmity Policy' with EAOs meaning will negotiate with some and fight some, contain some and dislodge some as it cannot be strong everywhere and would not also dissipate its forces. It will rely on artillery and airpower to compensate for ground weakness. It is already failing to reinforce ground fighting units due to a shortage of manpower. We might observe, TATMADAW giving up less important territory and strengthening vital grounds, offering concessions to chosen EAOs earlier

never anticipated. We are likely to see they are taking China's concerns seriously. It is already evident that the Junta is not reacting much in Shan State against MNDAA and TNLA (as their area of operations is in borders with China) but has taken up the 'Four Cut Strategy' (food, medicine, movement restriction between townships and between states) against AA in Rakhine putting them in back foot logistically creating suffering for the population that is likely to bring AA to maintain status quo. The other reasonable assumption is taking action against other EAOs would mean creating likely uncertainty in Chinese, India and Thailand's borders with Myanmar. This is the moment the Junta would try and avoid those borders by not causing instability and remaining in a containment role. AA is on the Bangladesh border and the Junta would not hesitate to show their military arrogance in Rakhine having experienced the limitations of Dhaka.

China Factor

There is a China factor in the coordinated oper-►

► ations of EAOs. In Shan State ethnic Chinese populated Kokang Region (bordering China) casinos, illicit business of many facets, cyber scam centres developed exponentially and mostly Chinese citizens in great numbers were getting trapped and even held against their will. It's a billion-dollar business there and Myanmar Junta ignored repeated requests of China to take measures. Reportedly, the Junta in general and Senior Gen Ming Aung Hla in particular have interests in the area and Junta was reluctant to take any visible actions. China was facing criticism from within for failing to address the issue. It was turning into a nontraditional security crisis in Yunnan Province. Apart from this, in recent times Junta seemed remarkably diversifying its defence procurement and the tilt is heavy towards the Russian side. More so, military and political cooperation with Russia has increased in manifold. Naturally, China would not like to be an alternative after so much investment in Junta and Myanmar, after all, it is an 'economic and energy corridor' for China. However, China would only go that far in twisting of Junta arms 'through EAOs where it can be tamed at the same time limiting EAOs' operational flexibility up to a line where a balance of power is drawn between the Junta and EAOs that ensures China's strategic interest in Myanmar. China would not like capitulations of TATMADAW and power shifting to Western Leaning, National Unity Government (NUG) without being sure that NUG would protect the Chinese interests in Myanmar. However, we might see in such a scenario, China maintaining relations with both EAOs and NUG after the fall of the Junta (if happens). As the Chinese stake in Myanmar is so heavy relying on one side would be strategically risky particularly, for Belt and Road Initiatives and access to the Indian Ocean.

India Factor

India has not shown much reaction except the

traditional diplomatic vocabulary of concerns. However, she would be cautious to take a side at this point since India would not like the Junta falling into the fold of China. She understands bringing down TATMADAW by EAOs by capturing some posts and townships around borders is not good enough, the move to support EAOs including NUG could be premature for New Delhi. However, we have seen India handing over TATMADAW soldiers to Junta who fled the recent fighting and took shelter in India. She has also housed a good number of refugees as a consequence of recent armed conflict in Chin and Sagaing States. India has to maintain a balanced approach. She could effectively control her dissident groups along the Myanmar border with the active support of the Junta. Having relation with the Junta officially because of her strategic interest (Kaladan Project, India-Myanmar-Thailand Highway Project) at the same time annoying EAOs not only would affect these projects but also may upset the people of Mizoram, Manipur and Nagaland who would be uncomfortable seeing their ethnic people suffering in the hands of Junta inside Myanmar border. Nonetheless, India will not take long to tilt towards NUG (that would be a natural fit) in case, she understands Junta is unlikely to recover.

What about Bangladesh?

Interestingly, we have not seen a visible reaction in Bangladesh to the recent development in Myanmar. Seems Dhaka is inward-looking about the ongoing issues in Myanmar in general and Rakhine in particular, whereas, we are housing about a million plus Myanmar nationals on our soil from Rakhine State. Let us be very clear about the military mind that the Junta under Senior General Min Aung Hla is not going to take back the Rohingyas, if they accept a token repatriation under the prevailing precarious situation that would be to their advantage. It may be ►►



Rohingya camps in Bangladesh.

► remembered if someday Aung Sun Su Kyi-led NUG comes to power accepting Rohingyas back to Rakhine would depend on the political will of AA and its political wing United League of Arakan (ULA). While AA and the people of Rakhine are suffering from the 'Four Cut Strategy' of the Junta and ULA is desperately looking for humanitarian help (food and medicine) for civilians, the indifference of Dhaka will have ramifications in Rohingya repatriation in future. Understandably, this is a difficult decision to make and there are risks involved. However, there is a necessity to study about pros and cons of taking a calculated risk.

Recommendations

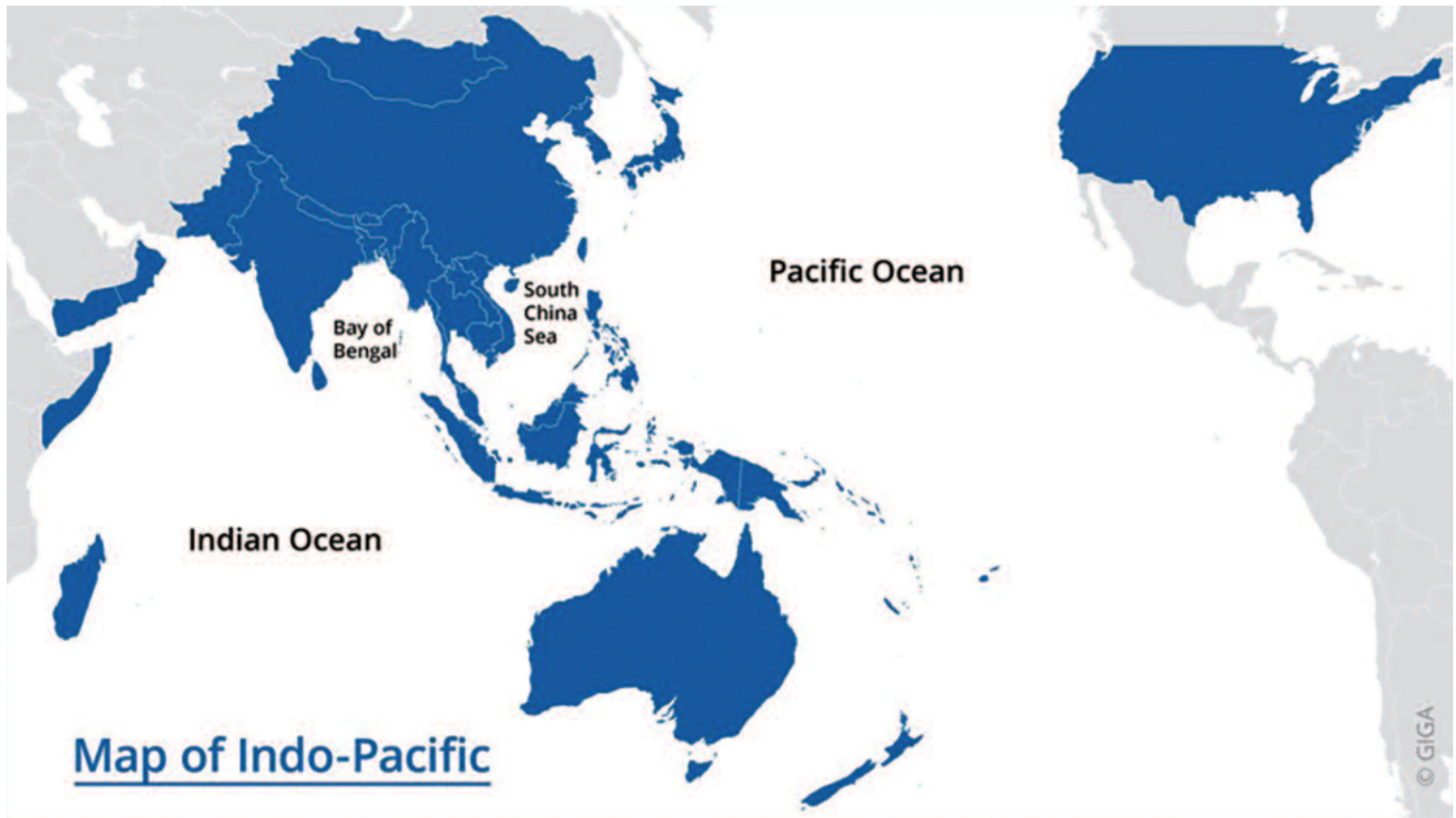
It is recommended to debate whether humanitarian support can be extended to civilians in Rakhine at the request of NUG (regarded as the legitimate representative of the people) at the National Committee for Security Affairs (NCSA) or the parliament when it is formed again after the

election in Bangladesh.

Alternatively, it may be also debated if international community's/NGO's initiated humanitarian support for Rakhine civilians can be permitted using Bangladesh territory (EAOs have captured several crossing points and townships along the Indian, Chinese and Thailand border where support for civilians do not need Junta's approval now). There is an opportunity that US Burma Act of non-lethal and technical assistance could equally benefit Rohingyas and Rakhines in Rakhine State and bolster cooperation between communities.

Arakan Rohingya National Alliance (ARNA) and other Rohingya Organizations may maintain close liaison with AA and NUG at this critical time to remain relevant.

In every challenging situation, there are opportunities. But the irony is the window of opportunity does not remain open for infinity. Is the opportunity for Rohingyas slipping away? ■



Myanmar's Unfolding Catastrophe: A Boon for the Indo-Pacific Strategy

Commodore Kazi Emdadul Haq (Retd)

BSP, ndu, psc. Founding Member, BIMRAD.



Introduction

While the United States endeavours to maintain a simple aim with its Indo-Pacific Strategy (IPS), the nuanced implications of this approach have led to increased complexity in achieving its objectives. Despite the straight

definitions attributed to the IPS by the United States, its underlying reality remains focused on curtailing or constraining China's ascendance in the Indo-Pacific region.

China finds itself strategically encircled in the East by the United States and its allies, leveraging a network of military bases and U.S. fleets. China's vulnerability through the Malacca Strait is well-known to all. China has long been striving to establish an alternative maritime route through Myanmar, where the presence of the U.S. is relatively minimal. ►►

- ▶ Allegedly, the United States has, ostensibly, been scouting for a military base facility in the BoB region conducive to objectives of IPS – free and open Indo-Pacific. The ongoing conflict in Myanmar has presented the United States with an opportunity to advance its goals.

Scenario Unfolding in the Bay of Bengal Region

Gradually and inconspicuously, there have been sporadic geostrategic advancements in the BoB region. When these disparate occurrences are pieced together, it suggests that someone is orchestrating a grand scenario with finesse. To grasp the intricacies of this strategy, it is imperative to examine a few isolated developments, as outlined below:

A. Matarbari Deep-Sea Port

Bangladesh has long sought a deep-sea port. For years, Bangladesh permitted China to conduct a feasibility study for establishing a deep-sea port. However, under the influence of Indian coercive diplomacy, Bangladesh was compelled to reconsider its decision. Ultimately, in September 2020, [Bangladesh awarded the contract](#) for the construction of the Matarbari Port, located just 200 kilometres north of Sittwe Port in Rakhine, to a Japanese firm.

During his visit to India on March 20, 2023, Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida [articulated during the 41st Sapru House Lecture](#), “...we will advance the concept of the Bay of Bengal-Northeast India industrial value chain in collaboration with India and Bangladesh to stimulate the development of the entire region.” Subsequently, in April 2023, a similar sentiment was

expressed in the Japan-Bangladesh Joint Statement on Strategic Partnership, signed in Tokyo during Bangladeshi Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina’s visit to Japan. Analysts suggest that the term “entire region” encompasses connectivity to India’s hinterland states, known as the Seven Sisters States including Chin and Rakhine states of Myanmar. Given the sequence of these events, coupled with Japan’s close alliance with the United States, it suggests the inception of a broader strategy aimed at fulfilling the objectives of the IPS.

B. Seven Sisters States in Northeastern India

World Vision, an international Christian humanitarian organization dedicated to combating poverty and fostering development worldwide, ▶





- ▶ operates extensively across the Seven Sisters states. In regions such as Meghalaya, Nagaland, and Mizoram, where the Christian population comprises 80 to 90 per cent, World Vision's presence is particularly pronounced.

Considering the historical foreign policy stance of the United States, it is reasonable to anticipate that the United States would safeguard World Vision's initiatives and the Christian community, potentially through physical intervention in suitable areas.

C. Present Situation of Chin State, Myanmar

Chin State shares borders with the Seven Sisters States and Bangladesh, with approximately [70% of its territory now under the control of the Chin National Front](#) (CNF). With a Christian population exceeding 85%, Chin State is effectively governed by the CNF. Rebel forces from both the

Seven Sisters States and Chin State collaborated to support each other's quests for independence, providing refuge as needed. Culturally and religiously, the people of Chin share similarities with those of Mizoram and a few other states of Seven Sisters.

The CNF has also forged alliances with the parallel National Unity Government (NUG) on both political and military fronts. Meanwhile, the Arakan Army, a member of the Three Brotherhood Alliance, is gaining control over Rakhine State,

mirroring similar developments in various other states across Myanmar. This collective situation suggests an impending implode of Myanmar's governance.

D. Controversy Surrounding the St Martin's Island

The leasing of St. Martin's Island to the United States has sparked controversy, with Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina of Bangladesh alluding to attempts by an unnamed entity—widely believed to be the United States—to [secure a lease for the island](#). In my previous article titled "[Controversy Surrounding the Alleged Lease of St. Martin's Island](#)," I dismissed the notion that St. Martin's Island would make for a suitable base facility for the United States due to its lack of defence in depth towards Myanmar's land. However, recent developments in the western zone of Myanmar have altered this perspective, as it now offers po-▶



The above scenario implies the creation of a corridor whereby Chin State could be linked to the BoB via the Sittwe Port in Rakhine, complementing the Matarbari Deep-sea Port. Importantly, such a connection could embolden rebels seeking independence in the Chin State, potentially fostering a larger community receptive to United States support for their autonomy. While speculative, this hypothesis presents a highly plausible means to advance the objectives of the IPS. According to many strategists, it is widely perceived that making China less powerful is a fundamental objective of the IPS, as articulated by Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin's [desire to see Russia weakened](#).

Although the United States need the cooperation of India to counter China, the “[shaky](#)” relationship of India as a Quad partner, and its continued support towards the Myanmar junta and Russian President Putin, all suggest that the United States would be looking for a better strategic plan to counter China's influences in the BoB region.

Since the assassination of Aung San in 1947, the

father of Aung San Suu Kyi, Myanmar's numerous ethnic groups have struggled to govern the country cohesively. The deep-seated divisions among these ethnic groups have hindered efforts to achieve unity and stability. With more than 2.6 million displaced people, Myanmar has emerged as one of the most unstable countries in the world. The current state of affairs in Myanmar suggests that the nation is on a trajectory towards becoming a failed state or potentially facing fragmentation along ethnic lines shortly. If it is so, the Christian community will welcome the United States and without much effort, it offers the United States a prelude to step into Myanmar to counter China.

Confluence of Great Powers

As the situation in Myanmar grows increasingly intricate, any overt support from the United States in the region would inevitably attract the attention of other regional and global powers. Recognizing this dynamic, it appears that the United States has adopted a cautious approach, opting to proceed slowly as the situation in Myanmar

► mar is unfolding in favour of the United States. Furthermore, the United States is currently pre-occupied with Ukraine and Gaza, and hesitant to engage in another conflict currently.

For years, China has sought to establish alternative Indian Ocean connectivity routes as a contingency to the Malacca Strait, a critical sea lane of communication (SLOC) for China. Aware of its vulnerability via the Malacca Strait, China initiated the China-Myanmar Economic Corridor (CMEC) through the Kyaukpyu Port in Rakhine State involving billions of dollars in investment over multiple phases. China is not going to give up its vital connectivity and will maintain it at any cost. To achieve its goal, China is seen to supply both the Tatmadaw and rebel groups, particularly the Arakan Army, with weapons, thus maintaining a dual strategy in Myanmar.

As a regional neighbor, India is deeply apprehensive about rebel control over both Rakhine and Chin States, fearing it could fuel separatist movements in the Seven Sisters states. Consequently, India is likely to oppose any external interference in Chin State.

The article [“How India Betrayed the Rakhine People – And Why It Matters Today”](#) underscores India’s consistent support for the military junta in Myanmar and its involvement in military operations against rebels. India’s primary focus lies in the Kaladan Multi-modal Transit Transport Project, aimed at connecting Mizoram through the Sittwe Port in Rakhine, reflecting its significant investment in the region.

[Warnings from the United States Assistant Secretary of State](#) for South and Central Asian Affairs, Donald Lu, to Dhaka and Delhi about the deteriorating conflict in Myanmar have added to the complexity of the situation. Such warnings could escalate tensions and have broader implications. Given India’s close ties with Russia, the re-

action of Russia to these developments remains yet to unfold.

The United States seems more successful than other sea powers in revitalizing its economy and securing its interests globally, prioritizing its own citizens’ safety over the lives lost in Gaza or Ukraine. Through persistent efforts, the United States has successfully persuaded [NATO’s European allies to increase defence spending to 2% of their collective GDP](#), a move that will bolster the U.S. economy by benefiting American manufacturers. With a strengthened economy, the U.S. may become more assertive in containing China’s influence in the BoB region.

Conclusion

President Joe Biden’s emphasis on “putting America’s interests first” underscores the United States’ willingness to pursue its objectives globally. However, this approach often overlooks the fundamental rights and interests of others, as evidenced by the situations in Ukraine and Gaza.

While the United States may not perceive immediate threats in the Bay of Bengal region, its commitment to the Indo-Pacific Strategy (IPS) and countering China’s influence suggests a strategic imperative to weaken China. Given the Bay of Bengal’s significance in the Indo-Pacific region, it is inevitable that the United States will pursue its interests in advancing the IPS objectives.

The unfolding situation in Myanmar especially the Chin State appears to align with the broader strategy of the United States, exemplified by the controversies surrounding the U.S. base on St Martin’s Island and the Matarbari Deep-sea Port. Unless part of a larger grand strategy, such developments would not occur in isolation. Serendipitously or coincidentally, the overall situation in the Bay of Bengal region favours the United States to establish its foothold in the region to counter China. ■

HENRY KISSINGER: THE REALIST

Air Vice Marshal Mahmud Hussain (Retd)

Retired air force officer. He served as High Commissioner of Bangladesh to Brunei Darussalam from November 2016 to September 2020. He served as the Chairman, Civil Aviation Authority of Bangladesh (CAAB). Presently, he is working as the Distinguished Expert at Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman Aviation and Aerospace University (BSMRAAU).



He was born a German, and died an American. He lived to see the world, which he so much wanted to shape and re-shape to his own liking, for close to a hundred years. No

other statesman in modern history of world politics became so much an essence of Realpolitik as he did. He was an embodiment of practice culled from the kernel of theory. He was a perfect portrait of theory up-ended in the mirror image of practice. His mystery was shrouded in the template of a mystic formed and molded in the cast of a Mephistophelian spirit. His zenith was confirmed by the unfailing vilification of his enemies who respected and admired his panache for befriending them. Eulogies were conferred on his death by China and Russia that more than confirmed that no other US statesman meant to the

World Order so much as he did to his arch enemies. He died as gloriously as he had lived straddling two centuries of momentous ups and downs. His is a story of reverence and revilement sharing their moral dilemmas in equal measure.

Kissinger was born Heinz Alfred Kissinger in Furth, Bavaria, Germany on May 27, 1923. Kissinger's family was Jewish, and like any other Jewish family was subjected to racial persecution in the then German society. Kissinger himself acknowledged that the turning point in his family's life was the coming to power of Adolf Hitler. During Nazi rule, Kissinger and his friends were senselessly beaten and harassed by Hitler's gangs. It was a time of German retrogression in understanding the moral prometheanism of world history. For Nazi Germany, the burning historical question was how far Hitler's view of the German predicament as one in which the individual German state was able to reconcile its state's vision with that of the world in which both were intertwined for peaceful co-existence. The 2 European political mood of the time was anti-Germany. ►►



HENRY KISSINGER

► Much before John Maynard Keynes understood what the consequences of injustice meted out to the defeated Germany in the Versailles Treaty after the First World War would be. Europe which had so soured the nerves of the great German philosopher Immanuel Kant more than a century back to produce his immortal essay titled Perpetual Peace as a utopian alternative to state's amoral aspirations had once again come for reckoning.

The catastrophic short-sightedness of Hitler compelled Jews not only to flee Germany but also to seek a space for their freedom. Surely, no country at that time seemed more poised and empathetic in fathoming the depth of the principles of a free world than the United States. So, it was in 1938 at the age of 15, Kissinger fled to America with his family as refugees. It was a strange story of a

man who was to become famous in his life time as one who navigated world politics, had to do so by first joining a mission against his own land of birth. Hitler's persecution of the Jews had shaped the minds and psyche of a nation as no other historical phenomenon had done in the 20th Century. The tragic thing about Jewish persecution is that history's decadent trend has only misguided them without chastising the rational course of politics. What was Hitler to the Jews, Netanyahu is to the Palestinians.

Henry Kissinger was a grand personality who had combined many qualities in a single character. Better regarded worldwide as someone given to the art of Mephistopheles, he was a strategist par excellence whose secret missions brought creditworthiness to US imperialism, his impenetrable flexibility gave US foreign policy a fulcrum by ►►

► which to better judge the swing of the world politics to bend its past alliances and make anew future relationship, and his abiding reluctance to guard US foreign policy as a tool of unilateralism gave him something of an extraordinary intellect that his peers were shy of. Kissinger was not a man to be loved but respect he certainly owed to his generation albeit with a spike of awe. Surely no other American statesman, certainly not a secretary of state has produced so much of cognitive tension that his life has become a research proposal to be explored both for the understanding of history, and its multi-formatting characters pushing its dynamic forces to shape the human civilization through the ages.

History was Kissinger's playground. He was its inveterate student. He believed that if a statesman understood history properly, he was able to absorb its insights to maneuver the courses of action toward avowed destination. He defined history as the ideals of states and statesmen who act on the strength of their own historical interpretation, and cannot be judged in any other way. Unlike Hegel and his "Universal History", his historical formula was couched in subjective reflection of one's own ideals. That is why, he saw Cold War as an elegant example of two rival ideas. On the one hand, it was an espousal of the Enlightenment so earnestly protected by the American vision, and on the other, it was the longing for the theories of Karl Marx and Vladimir Lenin by the communist leaders. As an American, Kissinger's duty was to demonstrate that American vision held the superlative edge over that of its opponent. The only way he could do so was through practice. That is how he saw foreign policy as the ground for laboratory tests upon the reading of History.

Kissinger was a brilliant writer. His books have become a great treasure for the students of History, Politics and International Relations. His

massive tome *Diplomacy* is an incredible gem of a text book for any generation of students to understand the inter-state politics since the days of Peace of Westphalia in 1648. The sheer number of his books speaks in volume the merit of his intellectual depth, physical stamina and moral commitment both as a historian and a statesman. The titles of the books and their enormity indicate the breadth of his knowledge and a yearning to share his practical experience as a source of lessons for future generation of students and statesmen. A general list of his books gives us an indication of his intention as a writer to do his duty as a historian — *Diplomacy*, *World Order*, *On China*, *Does the 21st Century Belong to China*, *The Age of AI*, *White House Years*, *Years of Renewal*, *Years of Upheaval*, *The Vietnam War: A History*, *Does America Need a Foreign Policy*, *Nuclear Weapons and Foreign Policy*, *Crisis: The Anatomy of Two Major Foreign Policy Crises*, *American Foreign Policy*, *The World Restored*, *On World Order*, *Leadership* and many others. As a writer, Kissinger never allowed his personal likes or dislikes to contaminate his intellectual integrity. For a man who was so close to practical politics, maintaining neutrality in his writings was a mark of character integrity as an academician.

Kissinger will always be remembered for his subtle and well-defined work during Cold War. Very early in his life, he was recruited by the Republicans to work as the foreign policy advisor to Nelson Rockefeller in 1960, 1964 and 1968. When Richard Nixon appointed him as National Security Advisor, he was undoubtedly one of the most important foreign policy theorists ever produced in the United States. It is said that Kissinger had shown signs of brilliance in International Relations from his student days. It was at Harvard that he excelled as a student. Legend has it that his doctoral dissertation titled *Peace, Legitimacy and* ►►

► the Equilibrium : A Study of the Statesmanship of Castlereagh and Metternich, was and still remains to be the longest dissertation, over 400 pages, ever submitted at Harvard University. In fact, the lesson that he had grasped as a student was to accompany him the rest of his life as a professional diplomat.



Adolf Hitler

In his doctoral dissertation, Kissinger first introduced the concept of “legitimacy” which he was to invoke repeatedly in his subsequent works with particular emphasis in his latest book titled *World Order*. According to him, legitimacy should not be confused with justice. Legitimacy is an institutional framework created by the major powers through an international agreement about how to conduct foreign policy within permissible aims and methods. A World Order accepted by all of the major powers is “legitimate” whereas a World Order not accepted by one or more of the great powers is “disequilibrium” and hence “chaotic”. So, there is a difference between major powers and great powers. It is incontrovertible for World Order to pre-dispose balance of power in the requirement of world peace. However, world peace does not mean abrogation of war or conflict but a persistent effort in adjusting the scale of great power matrix to maintain a balance of power in the international system. This is the crux of Realpolitik and the bedrock of Realist paradigm. Kissinger wrote that after the Congress of Vienna in 1815, the leaders of Britain, France, Austria, Prussia, and Russia agreed to cooperate in maintaining the balance of power to ensure peace in Europe by “three partitions” of Poland. In this case, the moral question about partition was irrelevant, and the agreed decision of the major powers was legitimate. Along similar lines, the post-Cold War II division of Eu-

rope and East Asia by great power is legitimate. Kissinger’s Ph.D. dissertation received the best prize under the Harvard Department of Government which was later published in 1957 as *A World Restored: Metternich, Castlereagh and the Problems of Peace 1812-1822*.

The ambivalent thing about Kissinger is that he posits a remarkable contrast in his personality between being a realist as a practitioner and an idealist as a scholar. In that sense, he was akin to his teacher Hans J. Morgenthau. No other great American statesman had read as much as he did of History. He was a voracious reader of Philosophy and a part of his education came from his favorite philosopher Immanuel Kant. His senior undergraduate thesis, titled *The Meaning of History: Reflections on Spengler, Toynbee and Kant*, gave him the instruction on important lessons to employ in his own experience. More than a quarter of a century after its publication, Kissinger was still citing Kant in clear understanding of a conflict between “two moral imperatives”. These imperatives involved first, the commitment to upholding individual freedom in a state, and second, the will to coexist with adversaries. Though duly categorized as a realist, in reality his career is as much a struggle toward seeking idealism. He was instrumental during Nixon administration in ending the Vietnam War despite disgrace and humiliation associated with US withdrawal from Vietnam in 1973. He understood that History ►►

► was against the side of US government, and it was wise to accept defeat to start afresh immediately a work to regain its moral legitimacy as the world power. He initiated US 5 rapprochement with China that set the beginning for the debacle of the erstwhile Soviet Union.

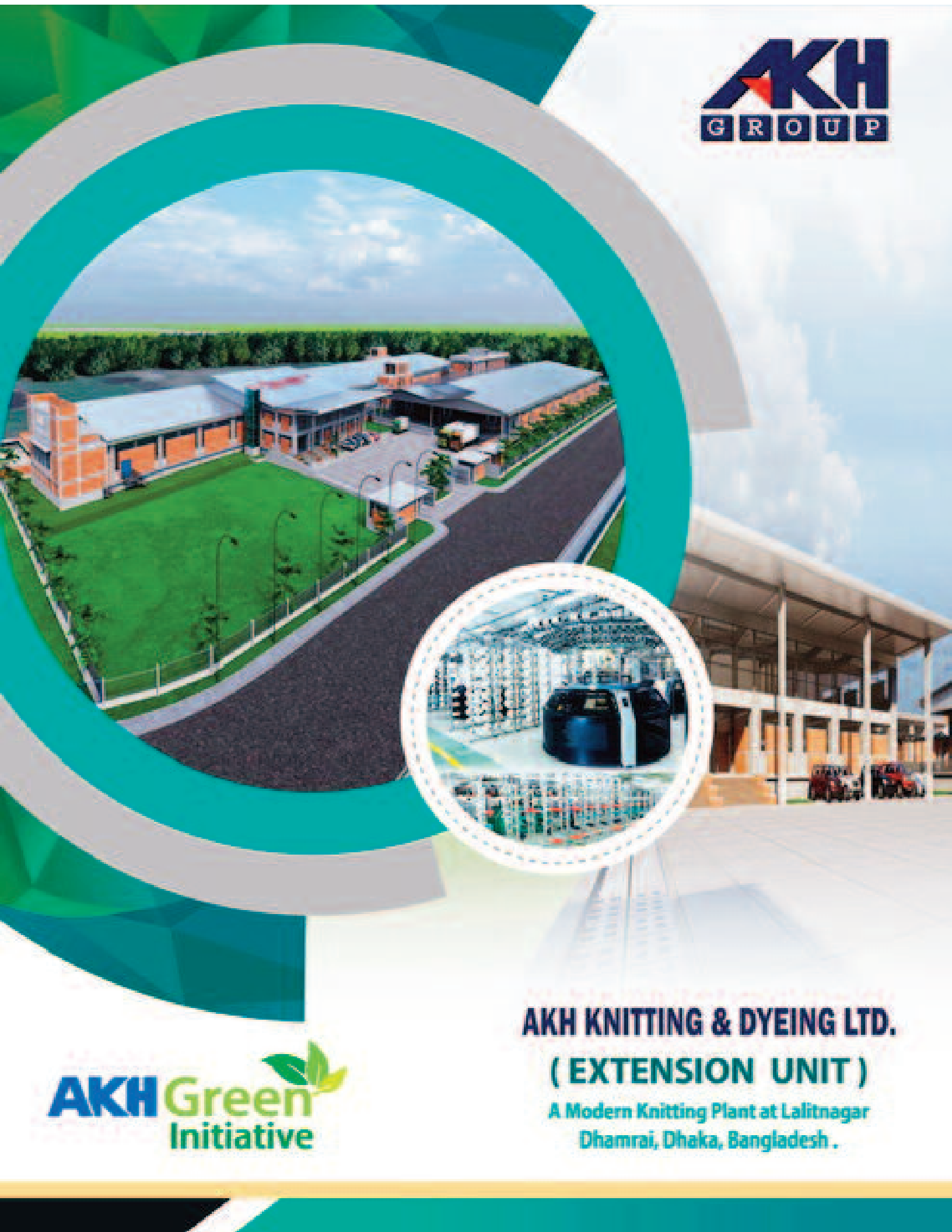
He admired the ideals of the leaders who were politically his opponents. In choosing his leaders he admired profusely, he selected six from his list for his excellent book *Leadership: Six Studies in World Strategy*. His chosen six leaders are: Konrad Adenauer, Charles de Gaulle, Richard Nixon, Anwar Sadat, Lee Kuan Yew and Margaret Thatcher. In discussing about their qualities what becomes novel and unprecedented for reflection are the attributes of humility, will, equilibrium, transcendence, excellence and conviction. His deep observation of these leaders and an insightful reflection on their character reveals a matured and thorough-bred statesman whose concerns cannot merely be answered by the principles of realism. It has to have a touch of strong idealism.

Kissinger was not without defamatory critics. His ability to executive diabolical feats was something that gave him the terms like killer, mass murderer and monster. People associate him with controversial US bombing of Cambodia, 1973 Chilean coup d'état, Argentina's Dirty War and Indonesia's invasion of East Timor. But the most conspicuous example surrounds his behavior during the Bangladesh Liberation War resulting in genocide. Gary Bass's account on the bloodbath in Bangladesh has repudiated whatever Kissinger had to say in defending Pakistan's role for a political solution of the problem. There is a limit to injustice, and once that limit is crossed then moral compunction should take over. People often deny Kissinger the benefit of such hindsight while denigrating his role in the 1971 war. In

Bangladesh, the United States acted on the discretion of carefully chosen strategies keeping its national interest in sight. Befriending China overriding the Soviet Union was not a simple task, and Kissinger did it. At the end, Bangladesh crisis represented a major step in the transformation of the Cold War from a rigid bipolar structure into a more complex regional equilibrium involving Bangladesh as a growing element both for India and the Soviet Union. Bangladesh achieved independence and the United States recognized Bangladesh in less than four months after independence. Since then, the US-Bangladesh relations have never been ambivalent.

For a man like Kissinger who entangled himself with so many affairs, it is unlikely to keep a clean slate for every dish. He was a towering personality, and a man of his stature was not free from the pain that was inflicted upon the Jewish people in his country of birth. This naturally pulled him toward the nature of a realist. But he was patient and serene also. His deep friendship with man like Sadat, Adenauer and De Gaulle had given him the perception and volatility of a versatile 6 personality capable of finding hope and peace amidst dark periods of World Order. He combined the practitioner's role for pragmatism with the academician's panache for theories to reach the approaches to Realpolitik. In doing so, he knew where the yardstick of idealism lay. He pioneered the policy of détente. When he won the Nobel prize for negotiating the peace process of Vietnam War, we leave behind his other roles in containing nuclear weapons and setting the mode of rapprochement in World Order.

For Kissinger, in ideal terms, no state can be weak or small. Most significantly, his life illustrates that the best determinants of a nation's fate are neither its material wealth nor other elements of power but rather the quality of its leaders and their ability to unite its people. ■



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Climate Justice for Bangladesh: A Question Worth Asking?

Mohd Aminul Karim, Lt. General (Retd.)

Member of the Asiatic Society of Bangladesh and Former Professor at the University of Malaya, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.



Introduction

Bangladesh is the world's largest delta and is located on the northern coast of the Bay of Bengal. It is longitudinally divided into three main river basins: The Ganges, Meghna, and Brahmaputra, all

of which flow from the Himalayas. They transport tons of silt from the Himalayas and deposit it in the Bay of Bengal, as all of these rivers have outlets in the Bay of Bengal. The rise in atmospheric temperature results in greater ice melting, resulting in more water flows in the Himalayas. This phenomenon powers these river basins to carry more silt to the bay over time. Consequently, the continental shelf in the Bay expands southward, increasing the size of the Bay of Bengal continental shelf.

There are two conflicting theses regarding the depth of the bay in the north. Some experts say that smaller Bangladesh is likely to merge in the

Bay because of the huge silts being deposited, while others argue that the mysterious 'Swatch of No Ground,' situated in the northeast of the Bay, washes much of these silts away as far as the Sumatra Islands in Indonesia. Even if Bangladesh gains land area (one third of Bangladesh), much of the distress caused by climate change can be overcome, as sea levels are projected to rise and potentially devour about a third of northern Bangladesh by the end of this century. This will lead to significant dislocations for the common people, who may even have to cross international boundaries, raising traditional security concerns for Bangladesh.

The Bay is notorious for generating numerous cyclones and tidal bores year in and year out. The Bay's northern side, touching Bangladesh, is funnel-shaped and provides momentum to cyclones originating further south. These cyclones were occasionally accompanied by tidal bores. The funneling effect propels cyclones toward Bangladesh's coast, making them more intense. As sea levels rise owing to rising atmospheric temperatures, tidal bores inflict unimaginable damage on the lives and properties of marginalized ➤



► people. Approximately one-third of the Bangladeshi population inhabits the coastal region for sustenance. Many depend on the Bay for fishing, but they are vulnerable to cyclones and tidal bores likely to hit the coastal region of Bangladesh. Summers are gradually becoming more intense, winters are scarce, and monsoons cause more floods. Cyclone shelters, built over the years with the assistance of foreign donors, play a significant role in protecting the lives of people and their livestock. These shelters provide relief to people in the coastal region of Bangladesh.

Climate justice is a people-centred strategy for climate action. This entails the fair representation, inclusion, and protection of the rights of those most vulnerable to climate change. Solutions should prioritize equity and basic resources and ensure that young people can live in a healthy and clean environment. This approach is also based on human rights, as rapid urbanization gives rise to crucial issues, such as water, sanitation, and public health, especially for the younger generation. This chapter focuses on these two aspects of climate change in Bangladesh. We need to recon-

sider the traditional concept of Business as Usual. The next generation should not be deprived of the benefits of nature enjoyed by the current generation.

Moreover, these poor countries are plagued by internal governance issues, corruption, poor politics, and a multitude of climate-induced disasters. That said, the loss of lives and property in Bangladesh has dramatically decreased over the years due to significant improvements in disaster management mechanisms. In 1970, Bangladesh was devastated by a cyclone and tidal bores that reportedly killed about a million people; some even consider it the worst disaster of the century on this planet. At the time, cyclone warnings, rescue operations, and rehabilitation mechanisms

were not as effective and there was a lack of political will. Today, even the adaptive attitude of people has significantly improved, showcasing their resilience and motivation. Field staff in the affected regions are now better trained and motivated to undertake the monumental task of saving distressed humanity in terms of relief and rehabilitation at critical times. Bangladesh owes a debt of gratitude to various UN bodies and gov-►

► ernments for their substantial assistance in building infrastructure and command-and-control mechanisms. The resilient and adaptable people in Bangladesh deserve credit. Different Bangladeshi agencies, including their professional armed forces, NGOs, and local government officials, are doing remarkable work to provide aid to distressed humanity in times of critical need.

Bangladesh is one of the most densely populated countries in the world. Its capital city is overcrowded by the influx of climate refugees, mostly coming from the southern part of Bangladesh. About 50,000 people per km² live in the capital city, which is almost double the density of Manhattan, New York. Despite such overcrowding, up to 400,000 low income climate migrants reach Dhaka every year (Climate Reality Project, 2021). However, this crowding has been thinning out recently from an almost unbearable life in Dhaka, due to the unaffordable cost of living and the overbearing pollution and contagious diseases¹. Climate change is exacerbating these challenges for the marginalized poor, who can barely afford the costs of hospitalization and medicine. It is essential to note that Bangladesh's public health system is not sufficiently developed to provide assistance to all affected people across the country, and that the system is plagued by corruption.

As a matter of fact, Bangladesh itself is not responsible for these disasters, but the West, China, and India are causing most of these emissions, making this planet inhabitable. Bangladesh produces only 0.56% of the global emissions that cause climate change, yet it ranks seventh among the countries that are most vulnerable to climate crises (Climate Change, 2021). Thus, Bangladesh is not a predator, but has to suffer the consequences of carbon emissions from industrialized countries. This climate crisis poses a real threat,

tangible to its teeming millions, day in and day out. Why should Bangladesh suffer such colossal losses due to somebody else's thoughtless activities? This begs the question of whether Bangladesh is undergoing climate injustice. Yes, it is. Climate impacts are imposed on Bangladesh by high-emitting, wealthy countries. Bangladesh emits only a small fraction of greenhouse gas emissions, as mentioned. To put in perspective, Bangladesh emits 0.5 metric tons of CO₂ per person per year, while the U.S. emits 15.2 metric tons per person, which is approximately 30 times higher (Climate Reality Project, 2021).

With that said and emphasized, this chapter attempts to address the climate injustice meted out to the people of Bangladesh and its harmful impacts that people have to endure. It is even risking the very existence of human life. The chapter remains confined to the damages done to distressed people because of the huge volumes of emissions of other stakeholders. This chapter also attempts to highlight the linkage between climate change, climate justice, and human rights. A causative relationship exists between these outcomes. The chapter underscores the unfortunate reality that humanity is often sacrificed on the altar of industrialization, affluence, luxury, etc., particularly in developed countries. It conducts content analysis and observation given the author's personal experience engaging in the government's relief and rehabilitation efforts over three decades.

Vulnerability of Bangladesh Due to Climate Change

The UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres hosts an annual Climate Action Plan in September. Over the years, in an attempt to describe climate change, the most significant human-induced global crisis, his language has ►►

¹- Dhaka's air quality index score rose from 145.1 in 2020 to 163.7 in 2020, implying air pollution has increased by almost 13 percent since 2020 (Source: "Dhaka City—Air Pollution Rose by 13 percent over three Years", The *Daily Star*, September 28, 2023). Climate refugees are the worst sufferers as they live in shanties with minimal sanitary and clean water facilities.

► taken on increasingly apocalyptic tones. Earlier, he described the world as having entered an era of “climate boiling,” which he now describes rather dramatically as “entering the gates of hell.” Despite such dramatization, the world leaders responsible for emitting most of the greenhouse emissions (GMG) are not doing enough to keep the global temperature below 1.5 °C as agreed to under the Paris Agreement in 2015 (Huq, 2023). Countries responsible for high carbon emissions have a high moral responsibility to provide the necessary compensation to Bangladesh, one of the most vulnerable countries in the world to climate change. Its vulnerability is more pronounced because of its overpopulation, lack of natural resources, and exposed coastal belts. Climate justice here is related to distributive and procedural justice. The Swiss Embassy Project ranks Bangladesh as the seventh most vulnerable country in the world and fifth in terms of losses and damage incurred due to climate change.

Located in the “high climate exposure risk area”, Bangladesh lost \$3.72 billion over the past 20 years due to climate change. The impacts of tropical cyclones cost Bangladesh approximately \$1.3 billion annually. As the World Bank forecasts, by 2050, one-third of the agricultural GDP may be lost due to climate variability and extremities. This is most disconcerting as the agricultural sector caters for around half of the in-house employment as Bangladesh, as yet, could not make any breakthrough in industrialization except in Ready-Made Garments (RMGs). 13.3 Million people, as per the World Bank forecast, may become internal climate refugees in the next 30 years owing to climate impacts on agriculture, water scarcity, and rising sea levels, with profound impacts on women. In 2000-2009, Bangladesh suffered economic losses of \$4 billion and had to witness 185 extreme weather events caused by climate change. A U.S. government report showed 90 million Bangladeshis—56% of the people—live in “high climate exposure areas”. Out of these 90

million, 53 million are subject to “very high” exposure (Climate Reality Project, 2021). In addition, if severe flooding occurs almost every year, the GDP may fall by as much as 9%. Bangladesh will need at least \$12.5 billion, approximately 3% of its GDP, for climate-change correction in the medium term. This financial gap can be partially covered by carbon taxation, external financing, and private investments. External financing is coming too little and too late. There is a potential for climate finance from the private sector to increase to 0.2% of the GDP, that is up to \$1 billion by 2025 (The World Bank, 2022).

The World Bank’s Global Change Knowledge Portal projects that the world’s climate is changing over this century and even beyond. Even if there are substantial reductions in GHG emissions, the increase in the average global temperature could be limited to 2 °C or below. If no such drastic actions are taken, the average annual global temperature could rise by 5 °C or more by the end of the century compared to pre-industrial levels (Rahman, 2023). What is most disconcerting about temperature rise is that September 2023 was the hottest month on record, as the EU climate monitor says. September’s average surface air temperature of 16.38 °C was above 0.93 °C above the 1991-2020 average for the month and 0.5 °C above the previous 2020 record according to a Copernicus Climate Change Service (C3S) report. “Climate change is not something that will happen 10 years from now. Climate change is here.” The C3S also reported average world temperatures from January to September of 1.4 °C higher than 1850-1900, which is breaching the 1.5 °C warming goal of the 2015 Paris Agreement (AFP, Paris, 2023).

Not only do carbon emissions affect the atmosphere, but also oceans. When oceans absorb excess CO₂, they become more acidic, which is known as ocean acidification. Ocean acidification disrupts the food chain and can cause substantial damage to fisheries. People living in the coastal ►►

► region of the Bay of Bengal greatly depend on fish resources for their livelihoods. Carbon emissions cause enormous damage to the environment and economy, which is glaring in Bangladesh. In addition, it also impacts society and social mobility. Vulnerable communities, such as Bangladesh, which have limited resources on shore and are less resilient, are disproportionately affected by climate change. When countries fail to meet their carbon emission reduction targets, and national interests are involved, a significant geopolitical issue arises (Uddin, 2023). Climate change gives rise to traditional Climate Justice for Bangladesh security when there is a huge migration of people in Bangladesh from south to north by the end of 2100, as discussed later in the chapter.

Bangladesh is vulnerable to looming disasters. It is already experiencing the impacts of climate change in its life, ecology, internal migrations of people called climate refugees, public health hazards, intensified cyclones and floods, almost-no-water in its rivers during dry seasons and too-much water during monsoon seasons, river-bank erosions ⁽²⁾, damaged forestry, especially its world's largest mangrove forests called Sundarbans as life sustaining trees called Sundari are dying due to saltwater intrusion from the Bay of Bengal, and serious depletion in the flow of sweet waters along the Ganges River basin, which runs through India before joining the Bay of Bengal in Bangladesh. Bangladesh does not get enough water for the sustenance of its agriculture, fisheries, and biodiversity, below the water surface level, going further down, as it is a lower-riparian country. Much of the water is withdrawn or diverted by India to meet its needs before it enters Bangladesh. This has resulted in the natural

death of many of its smaller rivers, mostly distributaries from the three main basins. There are speculations and indications—too much sand accumulated in the riverbank—that desertification may someday overwhelm Bangladesh. There is another looming disaster in Bangladesh on this horizon.

Bangladesh is affected by the growing threat of rising sea and plastic pollution in the Bay of Bengal (Karim, 2023). Two-thirds of the country stands at less than 15 feet above sea level. By 2050, one in every seven people in Bangladesh is expected to be displaced by climate change. Scientific American notes how “climate change in Bangladesh has started what may become the largest mass migration in human history. Some scientists project a five-to-six feet (sea level) rise by 2100, which would displace perhaps 50 million people.” In an estimate by Bangladesh’s Soil Resources Development Institute, in 1973, 8.3 million hectares—321,623 mi²—of land got affected by saltwater encroachment. By 2009, it had grown to over 105.6 million hectares. In addition, the overall salinity in the country’s soil has increased by 26% over the past 35 years.

Due to climate change, rainfall all over the world is becoming more erratic and often more intense, and Bangladesh is already trapped in this cycle, as in the month of October Monsoon lingers on in the most populated city of Dhaka. Due to severe river erosion, supercharged water levels in the Ganges–Meghna–Brahmaputra Rivers are destroying many villages and the livelihoods of millions of poor rural people in Bangladesh remain uncertain. Such devastation has caused over ten million people to become climate refugees, ►►

2- River erosion has impacted a single upazila (sub-district) called Chowhali in Bangladesh, where around 50,000 people from 50 villages became homeless in the last twenty years. This upazila extended over 210 km² of land in 2011, but by now it has lost 70% of its land to the river. A few decades ago, this upazila had 73 km of concrete roads, which have now been reduced to 30 km due to river erosion. Added to these damages, what is most disconcerting is that at least 100 out of 128 government primary schools have been damaged—80 of them sustained significant and had to be relocated multiple times—due to river erosion in recent times. There were 32,000 students in the academic year 2017-18. This number fell to 24,000 in the academic year 2023. River erosion began after the 1998 devastating flood that engulfed almost the entire country, which took a severe turn in 2010 (*The Daily Star*, October 3, 2023).

► thronging cities like Dhaka and Chattogram for at least two meals a day. To sum it up, the UNICEF makes a pertinent observation, “Around 12 million of the children most affected [by climate change] live in and around the powerful river systems which flow through Bangladesh and regularly burst their banks. The most recent major flooding of the Brahmaputra River in 2017 inundated at least 480 community health clinics and damaged some 50,000 tube wells, essential for meeting communities’ safe water needs” (Climate Reality Project, 2021).

Climate Change, Adaptation⁽³⁾ and Resilience

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate (IPCC) Sixth Assessment Report 2022 states that “Climate change is affecting nature, people’s lives and infrastructure everywhere. Its dangerous and pervasive impacts are becoming increasingly evident in every region of our world. These impacts are hindering efforts to meet basic human needs and they threaten sustainable development across the globe”.⁽⁴⁾

IPCC projects different possible scenarios of how badly global warming will affect the planet. The warming may range from limiting warming to 1.5 °C to worst case scenario where the global average temperature will be higher than 4.5 °C by 2100 as indicated. The IPCC thinks the deadline for greenhouse emissions, reaching the peak, should be by 2025. Such a situation is called mitigation.

Many countries have committed to the goal of the 2015 Paris Agreement of limiting global warming to around 1.5 °C above pre-industrial levels (World Economic Forum, 2022). There are efforts to decarbonize relevant sectors of the world or Bangladesh economy, such as heavy industries, brick kilns, coal-fired gas stations etc.

In Bangladesh, RMGs industries are massively going for green technologies, which have been acknowledged by different stakeholders. But sad enough, Bangladesh is not doing good enough to green urban areas. This is important for water storage. Dhaka city suffers badly due to losses of lives and properties when fire breaks out, as both natural and artificial water storage facilities are not available in different parts of the city. Even the natural canals, flowing normally about a few decades back, are now clogged due to huge infrastructure development.⁽⁵⁾ City roads become non-passable for transports and people when there is incessant rainfall during monsoon. This is also alarmingly true for the port city of Chattogram, the second largest city of the country. The municipal services of the city corporations are dismally poor in these cities. This is clearly visible in the death toll of this year’s dengue outbreak in Bangladesh that has resulted in nearly 1,000 deaths this year-till date across the country with concentration in the Dhaka City. The year 2023 is the deadliest since the disease was first detected in the country in 2000. At least 206,288 cases of ►

3- Adaptation implies decreasing the flow of heat-trapping greenhouse gases into the atmosphere. Its goal is to discourage human interference the earth’s climate, “stabilize greenhouse gas levels in a timeframe sufficient to allow ecosystems to adapt naturally to climate change, ensure that food production is not threatened, and to enable economic development to proceed in a sustainable manner.” (Source: The 2014 Report on Mitigation of Climate Change from the United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, page 4). Adaptation, on the other hand, is adapting to a different environment condition due to climate change. One has to get acclimatized to actual or potential future climate. Its goal is to offset the harmful effects of climate change like sea-level rise, more extreme intense weather condition, or food insecurity. It has its positive impacts too like longer growing seasons or increased yields in some region.

4- The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) is the United Nations body for assessing the science related to climate change. The IPCC provides regular assessments of the scientific basis of climate change, its impacts and future risks, and options for adaptation and mitigation.

- the disease were detected or reported this year ⁽⁶⁾. The public health system needs to be decentralized than being so centralized. Referral system does not work in Bangladesh.

The IPCC says that “adaptation to climate change means adjusting our behaviour (e.g., where we choose to live; the way we plan our cities and settlements) and adapting our infrastructure (e.g., greening of urban areas for water storage).” Adaptation can take place by building roads and bridges, reinforcing coastal protection, and introducing drought- and flood-resistant crops. Bangladesh has done a good job developing flood resistant paddy. Here creative ideas are clearly visible. All said and done, Bangladesh continues to remain a victim of climate injustice as only around one-fifth of climate finance provided by wealthier countries goes to adaptation and resilience, which is about \$16.8 billion a year. COP26 adopted the Glasgow Climate Pact that called for doubling this amount for resilient and adaptation programs.

However, developed countries over promise and under deliver. It is still possible to double the adaptation fund in 2023. Another initiative by the UN promised funding a new Loss and Damage Fund to be created at COP28 in Dubai in December 2023. Optimistic discussions were held, but there were hardly any concrete pledges of fund except from the Government of Scotland, which is not even a party to the UNFCCC (Huq, 2023). However, a silver lining has been showing in this dark cloud very recently. The UN Green

Climate Fund (GCF) has pulled in \$9.3 billion in pledges from 25 different countries to help the vulnerable countries such as Bangladesh to cope with climate change. The GCF is meant to channel money to poor countries to meet their targets to reduce carbon emissions, develop cleaner energy sources, and adapt to a warming world (Reuters, Berlin, 2023). There is a hunch that adaptation costs for developing countries could reach a staggering amount of \$300 billion a year by the end of the 2020s. It may even skyrocket to as much as \$340 billion a year by 2030. One of the four priorities for the COP27 summit was climate adaptation. According to the UN, “The Global Goal on Adaptation was one of the significant outcomes of COP26. We must ensure that COP27 makes the crucially needed progress and urge all parties to demonstrate the necessary political will if we are to capture and assess our progress towards enhancing resilience and assist the most vulnerable communities” (World Economic Forum, 2022).

Climate Justice: A Human-Centred Approach

Climate justice encompasses “a set of rights and obligations, which corporations, individuals and governments have towards vulnerable people who will be disproportionately affected by climate change” (Rahman, 2023). Justice implies that while all stakeholders need to contribute their bit to contain climate change, maximum burden should be shared by those who have contributed the most. The world’s richest 10% are responsible for 50% of GHG, and the poorest 50%, such as ►

5- In the capital city of Dhaka itself, open areas and waterbodies are fast depleting. 70% of 71km² of the Hatirjheel project, including Begunbari canal area, will be transformed into a built-up area by 2025. If this trend continues, the capital’s open areas, including waterbodies, will be reduced to 3.5%. The storm water caused by six hours of rainfall on September 21, 2023 in Dhaka city took 32 hours to recede. Around 113 mm rainfall is not much in quantity, but due to the faulty drainage system, they all have to bear the brunt. The way forward is to build a nature-friendly drainage system, reclaiming the canals, improve the capacity of the drainage system, etc. Moreover, people need social awareness and political will, especially from local governments (Source: “Modernise Drainage, Reclaim Canals. Speakers tell Authorities on Mitigating Dhaka’s Waterlogging Crisis”, The Daily Star, October 4, 2023).

6- “Dengue Outbreak. Deaths Cross 1,000 Marks. 2,882 Admitted to Hospitals in a Day”, The Daily Star, October 2, 2023. This news item also mentions, quoting Mushtaq Hussain, a Consultant at the Institute of Epidemiology, Disease Control, and Research in Bangladesh, “All our efforts to control the mosquito population have been ineffective. This led to the rise in the number of cases and deaths. The extended monsoon is yet another reason why dengue cases are persisting this year.”

- Bangladesh, are responsible for 10% of emissions. Climate justice encapsulates areas like social injustice, gender injustice, economic injustice, economic injustice, intergenerational injustice, and environmental injustice. Justice should not prioritize maximizing profit over sustainability (UNICEF, 2022).

Bangladesh is a densely populated country as mentioned with over 160 million people vulnerable to constantly changing and emerging climate change issues. By 2050, Bangladesh is likely to experience an increase of temperature of about 1.5 °C that may threaten the livelihood of about 15 million people residing near the coastal areas of the Bay of Bengal. During COP26 in Glasgow, the issue of climate justice was brought to lime-light in the eyes of negotiators and world leaders. Developed countries during COP15 promised \$100 billion for developing countries by 2020 but faltered. It could raise about \$84 billion. This setback has created a fragile bridge between high-emitters and climate victims. However, the Glasgow Climate Pact, an outcome of COP25, is showing some silver lining towards climate justice becoming an integral part of the UNFCCC (North South University, 2021).

If climate victim nations are to resolve this injustice, they have to raise the issue in the appropriate fora that the Global North has the historical responsibility to accept the problem in right earnest and contribute meaningfully to the Global South. This becomes a win-win for both people and the planet. Unless it is a win-win for all, climate crisis will hit all stakeholders, either in the North or the South. This may be called climate justice—a human-centred approach to tackle climate

change, which was the complex outcome of a myriad of social issues. Climate justice recognizes that climate change is a result of many interlocking systems of capitalism, resource extraction, labour exploitation, and the commodification of nature.

Nature has been badly mauled by the developmental urge of both industrialized and developing countries. The sad part of the story is that people who are hardest hit are least responsible for this ordeal. To give a concrete example, the workers of the Bangladeshi garments factories are badly exploited both by the Bangladeshi owners and western businessmen who buy these products at a throwaway price. Pope Paul once called these workers 'sweating slaves'. Most of these workers—who are mostly women—are climate refugees who have thronged the capital city for sustenance as mentioned. They lead a sub-human life as the buyers from the richest western countries do not want to pay enough to the suppliers from Bangladesh. They tend to curb the profit margin as much as possible. Accordingly, the owners pay minimal wages to these workers that hardly meet the nutrition, and other lower-orders sanitary needs of these helpless people.

There is also another side of the coin even during the economic downturn of Bangladesh. Due to the depreciation of Taka, Bangladeshi garments' owners incurred an additional profit of Tk. 90,000 crore ⁽⁷⁾ fiscal year (2022 -2023). In fact, it is a striking level of growth in Bangladeshi currency. Here lies a big question: will the owners share a miniscule part of this profit with the workers? They are disposal human capital, and it is a daydream for them to become respected citizens and, thus, can enjoy the higher-order needs of life⁽⁸⁾ (Akhtar, 2023). There is a remote possibility ►

7- One US dollar equals to Tk. 110 (Approximately).

8- Food inflation, according to government data, accounted for 12.54% in August 2023, while overall inflation accounted for almost 10%. Another study, covering the period from September 2018 to September 2023, shows how prices of daily essentials have skyrocketed. The price of lentils has gone up by 120%, flour by 88%, potatoes by 80%, and fish by 100%. A family of four needs Tk. 23,000 per month just to meet their caloric needs. It may go up to Tk. 40,000 per month to lead a somewhat dignified life. Considering productivity, wages in other countries, production cost, owners' profits, inflation, and daily expenses, wages should be much higher. They generally get between Tk. 8,000-10,000 per month, when they start working in factories. (Source: Taslima Akhtar, "TK. 25,000 for Garments Workers. Don't They Deserve a Dignified Life?" The Daily Star, October 3, 2023).

► for such a thing to happen since profit maximization is the main motive of any business. Social and environmental responsibility is still a far cry in Bangladesh. That said, some businessmen are gradually getting sensitized of this responsibility.

“Climate displacement and migration will continue to raise global security issues. We want justice, fairness, and a sense of responsibility from the world community. We want the world community to fulfil its promises to reduce carbon emissions and ensure climate funding,” Sohanur Rahman, a founding member of a grassroots movement on Climate Justice appealed so to the industrialized world⁽⁹⁾ (UNDP, Bangladesh, 2021). Another young climate activist and founder of Climate Justice, Bangladesh Javed Nur Shantaw, talks in a similar vein, “If we want to save our future generations, we must move away from coal-fired power plants. We need to move towards renewable energy sources. We had discussions with various levels of government officials. After that, we came to know that the government has cancelled ten coal power projects”⁽¹⁰⁾ (UNDP, Bangladesh, 2021). It was a good move by young activists in 2021, but once the prices of fossil fuels skyrocketed after the Russia-Ukraine War, the government had no choice but to start operating some of the coal-fired stations. There is a huge depletion of in-house gas, on the shore, or no serious effort was made to explore the wells, even in the Bay of Bengal, so as an emergency measure, the government had to start operating the stations by importing coal from abroad. The government is even importing LNG from abroad at a high price. All these are a big burden on this climate-change afflicted and densely populated—170 million in an area of 56,000 mi²—country of

Bangladesh, where even the possibility of solar or non-renewable sources is far-fetched, given the technology or the non-availability of space in crowded Bangladesh.

Use of Renewables - A Far Cry?

That said, as an expert shows us the silver lining in using renewables in Bangladesh, renewable resources include biomass, tides, waves, sunshine, wind, rain, and thermal energy stored in the Earth’s crust, which are easily accessible almost anywhere in Bangladesh. These resources do not harm the climate or the eco-system as fossils do. They are inexhaustible in contrast to finite fossil fuels, such as oil, coal, and natural gas. More emissions are produced by fossils than renewables. But the renewable picture is not rosy at all. Today, less than 2% of the energy mix consists of renewables in Bangladesh. The government of Bangladesh had introduced the Mujib Climate Prosperity Plan (MCP) in 2021 that aims to reach a 30% renewable energy share by 2030 and at least 40% by 2041 (Raihan, 2023).

Bangladesh is a country that can do good planning, including setting targets, but its implementation is shockingly poor. It has inefficient bureaucracy—mostly generalists—so young activists, NGOs, private entrepreneurs, or professionals have to come forward to take over these challenging jobs of keeping this country and its economy functional. Good news is in 2019, Bangladesh declared climate change a “planetary emergency”. UNDP-Bangladesh, British Council-Bangladesh, Action Aid-Bangladesh, Change Initiative are some of the organizations involved in training and empowering the youth to address cli-►

9- His movement is called Fridays for Future Bangladesh. He is also a coordinator of YouthNet for Climate Justice, a large network to support coastal communities during crisis. He conveyed these to Gaon Connection (Source: (COP26: Climate Justice is the Strident War Cry of Young Activists in Bangladesh. UNDP Bangladesh, November 10, 2021).

10- He also told these to Gaon Connection. He was at the forefront of the movement against the ‘coal-power project’ in Cox’s Bazar, a town in Southeastern Bangladesh (Source: (COP26: Climate Justice is the Strident War Cry of Young Activists in Bangladesh. UNDP Bangladesh, November 10, 2021).

► mate change. They can do a good job doing climate risk-assessment, local adaptation, planning and climate change adaptation tracking. Their goal should be to transform the society and economy into a low-carbon climate resilient economy and society⁽¹¹⁾ (UNDP, Bangladesh, 2021). These youths should also be utilized to better harness the renewables. They should be integrated with risk-taking entrepreneurs to install the renewable energy infrastructure.

Space may be limited, but creative ideas can generate fruitful results. Ideas range between installing the infrastructure on the rooftops of big factories and other organizations, in the Barind areas in northern Bangladesh, in the Char areas in the big river basins, in the coastal areas, etc. There is abundant sunlight in all parts of Bangladesh throughout the year except during the monsoon.

We should direct our initiatives from oil and fuel use to renewables like solar and wind energy and energy efficiency. Major investors are coming forward to invest in clean energy as it is, as it seems more profitable. Fossil fuels such as coal are becoming non-competitive without subsidies. To encourage more vigorous investments in renewables, subsidies on fossil fuels must be withdrawn immediately (Huq, 2023).

Human Rights and Climate Change

The governments have traditionally treated climate change as an environmental problem or an economic problem, recently. Now there is an awareness climate change should be seen from the prism of human rights, such as rights to life, to food, and a place to eat and work. Moreover, policies formulated to address climate change

have implications on human rights. As an example, climate change may affect one's right to life, which can be both immediate and gradual. Extreme climate change induced weather may cause sudden death of many people. Again, climate change may cause people's health to deteriorate gradually, as it may limit people's access to safe drinking water or make them more susceptible to diseases such as pandemics. Another such example could be the right to adequate food. Increased temperatures and changes in rainfall patterns may lead to more erosion and desertification. This may make previously productive land infertile thus affect negatively crop and livestock production. Yet, another example could be right to water and health. As this planet gets warmer, heat waves and water shortages will make it difficult to access safe drinking and sanitation. Changes in temperature are likely to affect the intensity of vector-borne, water-borne and respiratory diseases (Australian Human Rights Commission, 2008). Bangladesh is already in the throes of extreme climate change conditions as discussed in this chapter. Marginalized people or the extreme poor people, especially in coastal areas and northeaster part of Bangladesh are already suffering from such human-rights deprivations.

The UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights in 2018 commended the establishment of the Bangladesh Climate Change Trust and the Bangladesh Climate Change Resilience Fund as mentioned. It also recommended that strategies and action plans on climate change and disaster response and risk reduction be formulated and implemented in the light of human rights. So, we see an interlinkage between human rights and climate change impacts. The Human Rights Council recognized ►

11- "COP26: Climate Justice is the Strident War Cry of Young Activists in Bangladesh". UNDP Bangladesh, November 10, 2021. The sixth Assessment Report of the United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) in August 2021 carried the voices of Ayna Rani Sarkar and those who are climate endangered. The people of coastal Bangladesh, like Ayna Rani, endured extreme weather conditions for more than a decade. They are marginalized with no homes, livelihoods, or savings, and they continue to languish in displacement.

- ▶ this linkage in its recent resolution 50/9 and adoption of special procedures mandate on human rights and climate change. The United Nations General Assembly recognized that a clean, healthy and sustainable environment is a universal human right. This is a great call of the day. We grow up in the state of nature, which should be clean, healthy and sustainable. This is a right every citizen of this planet should be able to enjoy. Over 150 countries already recognize the right to a healthy environment within their legal system, in one form or another.

International human rights law provides a valuable framework to develop national policies and ensure accountability of the state and nonstate actors in protecting the environment and stall climate change. The national courts of law should come forward to implementing the direction of the United Nations. Environment is not national so all members should work together to protect the environment and its sustainability. That said, national courts can play an effective role in domestic implementation.

Bangladesh Supreme Court gave a landmark decision in 2019 to grant legal identity to the Turag River, in the outskirts of Dhaka city and all other rivers of the country. It identifies the potential for public interest litigation and action by the courts to protect the environment. The Court not only recognizes the legal entities of the rivers but also directs different government agencies to protect the endangered rivers, mostly encroached by the influential local businessmen, politicians, and even the big business houses of the country (Office of the High Commission of Human Rights, 2022). These can easily hoodwink the local administration and destroys the natural flow and cleanliness, ecological balance, normal trade and commerce through these rivers, keeping the transportation potential of these rivers alive, cultivation of fisheries etc. These age-old potentials of these historical rivers get destroyed by petty busi-

ness interests, even to the extent of destroying the entire river system by building a mini-city on the riverbeds. This is happening in the Rivers Turag, Balu and Buriganga, all surrounding the city of Dhaka. They are extremely unscrupulous people who have no commitment to social and environmental responsibilities to the people living along the coasts of these age-old rivers. It is expected that the legislative and executive organs of the state will move expeditiously to implement the courts' directives. As mentioned earlier in the chapter, Bangladesh administration is good in charting out a good plan, but it falters in implementing it. So, the Court has to issue its orders time and again. The executive bureaucracy is otherwise inefficient, but they are also stymied by the unscrupulous people. Corruption has also its tolls in this timid process. So, climate justice or human rights are sacrificed at the altar of judicial formal justice. It is extremely difficult to evict the river encroachers in the Rivers Buriganga, Turag and Balu. These encroachers build permanent structures inside or industries on the banks of the rivers thus contributing immensely to polluting or death of these rivers. These rivers are today biologically unfit to cultivate natural fisheries.

Concluding Remarks

Climate change is taking its toll on the people who bear the least responsibility for these changes. This, therefore, calls for justice to be meted out to the people who are seemingly undergoing existential threat. This chapter has highlighted the plight of the helpless and marginalized people, who are specially living in the coastal region of Bangladesh.

Climate justice can be achieved by providing adequate funding for both adaptation and mitigation. However, the available funds are insufficient. Bangladesh is suffering immensely both from cyclones and tidal bores that emanate ➡

► from the Bay of Bengal in the south and three river basins, responsible for extensive river erosion and intrusion of salinity in the sweet water space, emanating from the mighty Himalaya in the north. Even the largest mangrove forest, the Sundarbans—bordering the Bay of Bengal—that protects the people of the affected area from the fury of the cyclones and tidal bores, is under existential threat as there is intrusion of salinity from the Bay of Bengal replacing the sweet water vacuum created by the Ganges River as its upstream water is withdrawn by its upper riparian neighbour. This results in the death of its life-sustaining Sundari trees. Due to sea water level rise in the Bay of Bengal there are extremes of temperatures in the climatic condition of Bangladesh. Climate change has now become more erratic and intense, so the suffering is causing people living in the coastal areas to migrate to the big cities such as Dhaka and Chattogram as climate refugees. These people live in sub-standard living conditions in shanties, with hardly any access to safe drinking water and food, and basic public health support. Bangladesh does not have an efficient public health mechanism as this year alone more than 1,000 people have already succumbed to death due to epidemic dengue fever. There are no referral system working in Bangladesh so people are crowding Dhaka city for medical support. Bangladesh needs to further decentralize its public health system.

River erosions are uprooting the marginalized people from their ancestral homes to move to big cities as climate refugees. Even many schools are being devoured and have to be relocated time and again. This adversely affects the education of children. River erosions are even damaging local medical clinic facilities.

Bangladesh is heavily reliant on imported fossil fuels, including coal, for generating electricity. This is more expensive and damaging for the environment. Bangladesh is far removed from in-

stalling comprehensive renewable infrastructure for electricity. It aims to increase the renewables share of energy resources by 2030 and 2041. It has created two climate funds as described in the body, which are great futuristic initiatives. These are the ways forward for Bangladesh, as is true for any other developed or developing country.

Climatic justice is a people-centred approach. However, ensuring this justice in densely populated cities in Bangladesh is challenging. The population density in Dhaka city is double that of Manhattan, where marginalized people are one-third of its population. These are typical climate refugees. Many of them work in the RMGs of Bangladesh, where they are poorly paid even to meet their lower-order needs. These people are even called ‘sweating slaves’. That said, their sweats are sustaining the economy of Bangladesh, as the RMGs industry generate the maximum export earnings—more than 80%—for Bangladesh. Thus, the poor workers do not have the option to go back to their ancestral homes in the villages. They have no choice but to bear the brunt of a cramped, unhealthy life in shanties of an otherwise posh city of Dhaka.

Climate justice calls for funds both for mitigation and adaptation. Temperature is higher than anticipated in different COPs. So, the fury is going to take higher tolls in the developing South. The North does not step up to salvage victims of the South as envisaged. This is in addition to the lack of governance, accountability, people’s welfare projects, etc, in the developing South, especially so in Bangladesh. This exacerbates the plight of the socio-economic life of the people.

Climate justice is also linked to human rights as every people on our planet Earth deserve a healthy life, safe drinking water, shelter, and basic public health support. All citizens should also have access to education, especially children and women. These segments suffer the most ►►

► from climate change. Sustainability is key here. The environment should be sustained in a way that our next generation gets their due share as the present generation does. Bangladeshi courts— even known as the rivers legal entities— are stepping up, rather pre-emptively, to ensure environmental sustainability, especially of the rivers, but the administration that is supposed to implement the court directives are found, rather, not that agile as vested quarters are seemingly more powerful to hoodwink them. Corruption also plays a role here. It is heartening to see the Bangladeshi courts are stepping up to ensure human rights for its marginalized and climate-change afflicted people.

On a positive note, young activists, different NGOs and UN agencies are actively participating in both adaptation and mitigation programs of the climate-change impacts in Bangladesh. These agencies could also be integrated with the private-sector entrepreneurs of Bangladesh, especially in the field of renewable energy. Source: COP-21

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Human security is conceived here along with its seven dimensions – that are Food Security, Health Security, Environmental Security, Personal Security, Environmental Security, Personal Security, Community Security and Political Security.

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Ambitious generals and besieged politics

Syed Badrul Ahsan

The writer is a journalist and political analyst.



Former US President Obama's decision, when he was in the White House, some years ago to sack General Stanley McChrystal reflected the triumph of democratic government over those who would undermine

it or make a travesty of it. And that is the beauty of democracy. In the early 1950s, Harry Truman did a similar thing when he dismissed Douglas MacArthur and ordered him to return to Washington. In the Far East, a disbelieving MacArthur told his soldiers, 'I shall return.' He then went home to a hero's welcome. But he never made it back to his men.

In a democracy, in proper governance, it is the primacy of civilian elected government that matters. But then there are too the pseudo-democracies where all too often it is the generals who cheerfully chase elected leaders out of power and sometimes out of town. In October 1999, Pakistan's Nawaz Sharif issued orders of dismissal

against General Pervez Musharraf, whose plain villainy in Kargil had nearly caused a new war between Islamabad and Delhi. In the event, it was Musharraf who came down from the skies (he was on a flight home from Colombo) and sent Sharif packing.

Every time October comes around, it is well to remember how Pakistan's President Major General Iskandar Mirza and army chief General Ayub Khan clamped martial law on the country in 1958, thus inaugurating a trend that would have grave ramifications in both Pakistan and Bangladesh. It was a move which disrupted politics, led to the rise and growth of bureaucratic governance and hugely undermined prospects of democratic rule. Mirza was removed a mere twenty days later by an overly ambitious Ayub, who would go on exercising dictatorial fiat for over a decade until he was forced from power by a mass upsurge.

It is typical Third World politics, you might be tempted to suggest. Perhaps you would be right. In Bangladesh, President Abdus Sattar was on the verge of dismissing General Ershad from his job ►►

► as army chief in 1982. The ultimate deed could not be done because some smart bureaucrat (read that as ‘mole’) at Bangabhaban alerted the general to the imminent presidential move. It was then Ershad who turfed out the elected Sattar in a coup that was to leave Bangladesh even more wounded than before.

President Abdur Rahman Biswas, when it came his turn to deal with a belligerent general in 1996, was not willing to take any chances. He ordered the dismissal of General Mohammad Nasim. And that was in 1996, only days before the general elections that brought the Awami League to power after a long gap of twenty-one years.

When you speak of the fraught, sometimes bizarre, relations politicians and generals have enjoyed with one another, you tend to go back to Pakistan. There are countries that have armies. The queer fact about Pakistan is that its army has always had a country, its own, to occupy at regular intervals. General Ayub Khan first had the seeds of illegitimate ambition blossom in his dark soul in 1954.



Former US President Barack Obama and sack General Stanley McChrystal.

Four years later he was Pakistan’s first military ruler and most of the country’s politicians were in prison. In 1976, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, looking for a pliant officer to appoint as army chief, promoted Ziaul Haque over six other generals. An initially sycophantic Zia soon found it opportune to oust Bhutto in a coup in July 1977. By April 1979, he had Bhutto sent to the gallows.

Contrast all that with India. It remains a tribute to Indian democracy that no soldier has ever attempted a military takeover in the country. When after the Bangladesh war, Field Marshal S.H.F.J. Manekshaw suggested rather flippantly in a newspaper interview that he could have seized power ►



Major General Iskandar Mirza



General Ayub Khan



Nawaz Sharif and General Pervez Musharraf



Justice Abdus Sattar



General Ershad



Aung San Suu Kyi



General Ne Win

► any time he wanted, virtually the whole of India came down on him in justified fury. Manekshaw was left humbled. But that is not what you see in Myanmar, yesterday's Burma.

General Ne Win overthrew the civilian government of U Nu in 1962. And since that moment, Myanmar's army has treated the country's politicians with scant respect and absolute disdain, despite giving space to Aung San Suu Kyi, who should anyway have become the nation's elected leader after the elections of 1990. She is now once again a prisoner of a new regime determined to keep democracy on the run.

There are, yes, times when bad politicians only make their cases worse when they treat their generals badly. Sri Lanka's Mahinda Rajapaksa and Sarath Fonseka together engineered a decisive victory against the Tamil Tigers in 2009 before they fell out with each other. Fonseka lost the presidential election to Rajapaksa, who then lost little time in packing the general off to prison on dubious charges.

It was almost the same with General Aslam Beg when Benazir Bhutto won the 1988 post-Zia elections in Pakistan. He would, in tandem with President Ghulam Ishaq Khan, not let Bhutto take charge. By the time he relented, ZA Bhutto's daughter had been dumped with so many terms and conditions by the army that hers turned out to be an emasculated administration from day

one. She was dismissed in 1990.

Any study of power politics can be an enlightening intellectual exercise. You think of Marshal Zhukov and his achievements in the Second World War. But by the end of the 1950s, Nikita Khrushchev would sack him and so silence him for good, metaphorically speaking. For his part, Adolf Hitler could not stomach Erwin Rommel's battlefield misfortunes. He provoked the field marshal into taking his own life.

And that is also what people say happened to Egypt's Field Marshal Abdel Hakim Amer in 1967. The rout of Egyptian, Jordanian and Syrian forces by Israel in the Six-Day War in was to lead to calamity for him. He committed suicide.

Turkey's generals were, until the arrival of Recep Tayyip Erdogan, by and large been a headache for the country's civilian governments. In Chile, the military led by Augusto Pinochet Ugarte murdered President Salvador Allende in September 1973 and then presided over a long reign of terror. General Suharto, through conspiracy with foreign powers in 1965, undermined President Sukarno's government in Indonesia and then supervised the killing of a million Indonesians known to be supporters of the Partai Komunis Indonesia (PKI).

But generals have sometimes saved democracy from rapacious elected leaders. Had Fidel Ramos not thrown his weight behind the upsurge against ►►

► Ferdinand Marcos in 1986, the story of the Philippines would have turned into an incongruity. Conversely, had Konstantine Karamanlis not gone back home to Greece in 1974, the band of colonels who had seized the state in 1967 might have gone on and on and on. In 1991, the generals of the Soviet army would not support the Gennady Yanaev-led gang in its bid to overthrow Mikhail Gorbachev, who returned to power within days.

Ambitious military officers have overthrown civilian governments in Brazil and Argentina and elsewhere in South America. They have seized power in Nigeria and a clutch of other countries in Africa. The history of power grabs by generals in Thailand is a matter of record. South Korea suffered under the dictatorship of Park Chung-hee for years.

Journeying back to our studies of ambitious generals in Pakistan and Bangladesh, it is interesting to recall their attempts to legitimize their hold on power through giving themselves civilian cloaks in politics.

Ayub Khan, following the withdrawal of martial law in 1962, imposed his own queer constitution — queer because it envisaged the election of the country's President and the members of the national and provincial assemblies by 80,000 elected individuals known as Basic Democrats — sliced away a faction of the Muslim League and tried giving the impression that Pakistan finally had democracy.

For good measure, he appointed his Foreign Minister Z.A. Bhutto as the secretary general of the party. Three years later, Bhutto would desert him and form his Pakistan People's Party. In the presidential election of January 1965, Ayub had the presidential election stolen from Fatima Jinnah.

Ayub Khan's methods were replicated in Bangladesh by General Ziaur Rahman who, having seized power in November 1975, went on to give shape to the Bangladesh Nationalist Party in

September 1978. As had been the case with Ayub's Convention Muslim League, to which droves of politicians from other parties went in their narrow interest, politicians from the Left and Right in Bangladesh joined the BNP, thereby giving Zia the 'legitimacy' he needed.

General Hussein Muhammad Ershad then followed the Ayub and Zia examples by forming the Jatiyo Party after he ousted the elected Sattar government in March 1982. In all three instances — Ayub, Zia and Ershad — normal politics was stood on its head and democracy was pushed into a state of the comatose.

In Pakistan, the Yahya Khan regime, having taken over from Ayub Khan in March 1969, did not go for the creation of its own political party. It presided over the country's very first general elections in December 1970 but then swiftly went into the odious task of repudiating the results of the election in March 1971 by outlawing the majority party, the Awami League, arresting Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and inaugurating a genocide which left as many as three million Bengalis dead in occupied Bangladesh.

Yahya Khan was to preside over Pakistan's military defeat in Bangladesh in December 1971. Six years later General Ziaul Haq commandeered Pakistan again. He engineered political negativism in Pakistan in his eleven-year rule by decreeing non-party elections, which system was to be cast aside once he died in a plane crash in August 1988.

General Pervez Musharraf ruled Pakistan in his role as army chief, but after he quit office in 2008 he formed his faction of the Muslim League. It made little headway. Musharraf is these days in exile in Dubai, a fugitive from justice.

Power, we have learnt at different points in history, tempts people as nothing else does. When it is seized through illegitimate means, nations pay a price. They are left badly wounded. ■

Bangladesh On A New Journey: Moving Beyond the Regional Identity

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is a Bangladeshi economist, diplomat, politician and the former Minister of Foreign Affairs of Bangladesh and the Current Chairman of Foreign Parliamentary Affairs Committee.



This book titled “Bangladesh on a New Journey: Moving Beyond the Regional Identity” edited by Sreeradha Datta is a testament to the fact that Bangladesh is on the road to

achieve our Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman’s dream of *Sonar Bangla*, a prosperous, peaceful and stable country under the dynamic leadership of his daughter Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina.

Bangla had a rich history and tradition and it was known as the granary of India and supplier of elephants. It is Bengal that started the campaign of humanity much before the Western world. For example, as early as 1408, Chondi Das of Bengal

promoted the concept of humanity and stated “সবার উপরে মানুষ সত্য, তাহার উপরে নাই”—humanity is above all, even before the discovery of America in 1492 or before the European Renaissance in the 17th century. No wonder, Professor Gopal Krishna Gokley stated and which was repeated by other luminaries including Sorojini Naidu that “what Bengal thinks today, India thinks tomorrow”.

In recent years, Bangladesh is not only the top UN Peacekeeping troops, it also has been promoting a concept of *Culture of Peace* (COP) for achieving sustainable peace across nations. It believes, if we can create a mindset of respect and a mindset of tolerance towards others irrespective of religion, ethnicity, color or race, only then spread of venom of hatred and enmity will reduce leading to a world of sustainable peace and stability across nations. There would be no violence, no wars, no refugees, no uprooting of people from ►►

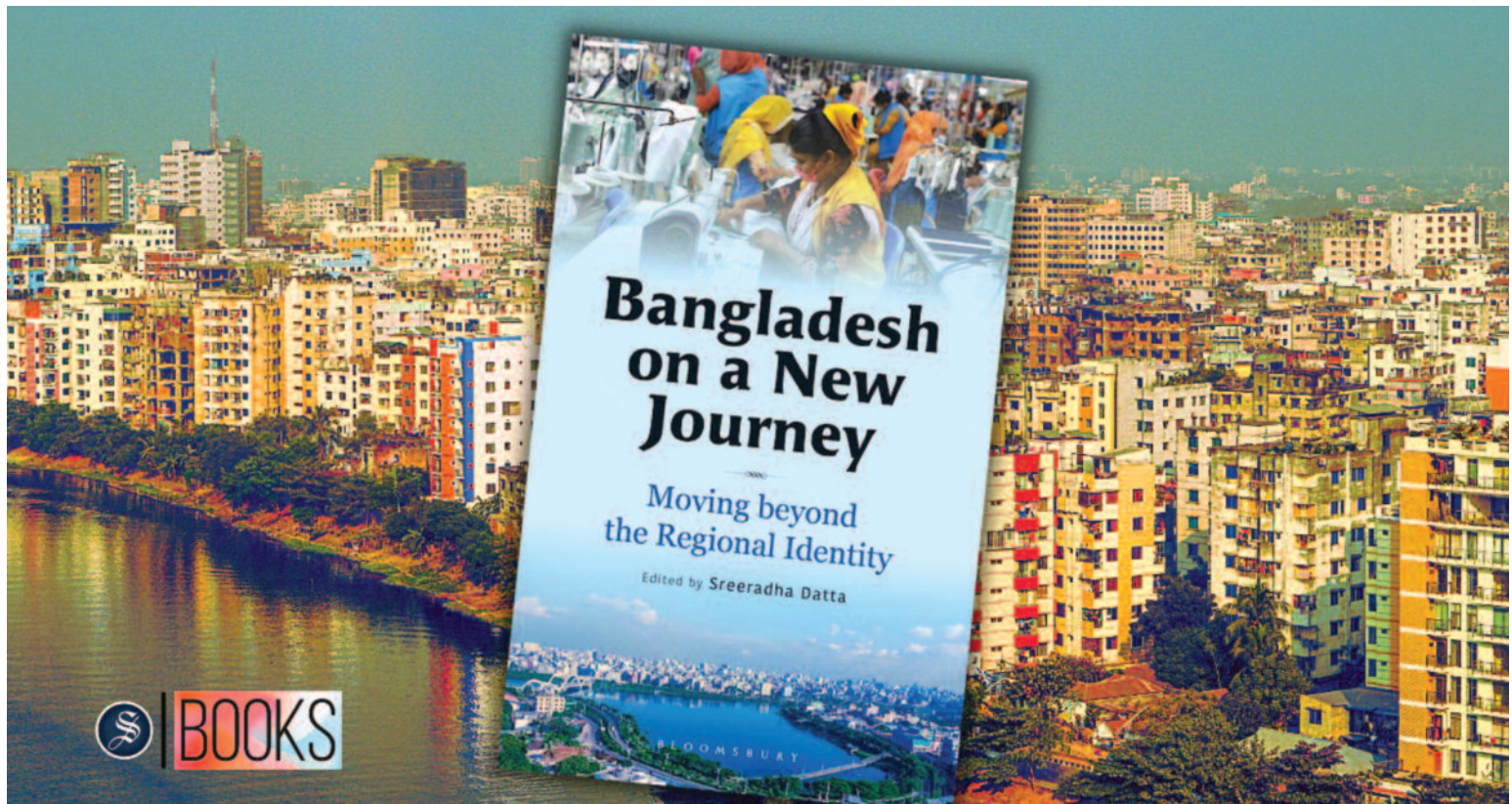


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► their own land and traditional jobs.

Historically, both the *All India Congress* and the *All India Muslim League*, those spearheaded the independence of Indian subcontinent, started their journey in Bengal in 1885 and 1906 respectively.

Bengal or for that matter, India was the richest country having nearly 25% of the global wealth and no wonder, being attracted by its wealth and richness, one after another foreign powers, the Mongols, the Huns, the Aryans, the Persians, the Arabs, the Portuguese, and finally, the British ruled and plundered and looted its wealth. The British ruled it over 190 years and made it a pauper, a poor county. But Bangabandhu, the son of its soil always believe in its potentials and no wonder, he hoped for a *Sonar Bangla*. He often said, “we do have fertile land and hardworking farmers and given correct incentives, they can turn it into a *Sonar Bangla*, the golden Bengal”. His dream is coming true. Despite myriad challenges, Bangladesh achieved remarkable economic growth, over the last 15 years, its GDP growth rate averaged around 6.6%, one of the highest in the world, it reduced poverty more than half and

achieved significant successes in almost all socio-economic indicators pushing its life expectancy from low 50s to almost 74 years now. That’s a remarkable progress — no wonder, Bangladesh, once termed by the Western pundits as a ‘bottomless basket with no hope of survival’ is now a vibrant economy, a land of opportunities. As per Boston Consulting Group (BCG), it is becoming the 9th largest global market place, an attractive destination for inward foreign investment and currently, Bangladesh is playing an active part in the regional initiatives, it has become a Hub of regional connectivity as it believes that ‘connectivity is productivity’. It is emerging as an important player in the regional and global geopolitics being the 33rd largest economy, soon aspires to be the 25th largest economy in the world. Although I did not get the chance to read the book but read its introduction that was sent to me and this book appears to be a testament that the greater world is taking notice of Bangladesh’s triumph.

This book titled “Bangladesh on a New Journey: Moving Beyond the Regional Identity” has 13 articles plus 3 write-ups and is consists of 287 pages. ►►

► This book explores Bangladesh's increasing importance in the regional and the global stage. It highlights its standout economic achievements and its transition from a low-income to a middle income country with great potentials. It emphasizes the key drivers of growth including investment in human resource development and significant infrastructure development notably the *Padma Bridge* that aims at increasing the nation's GDP growth by an additional 1.2% per annum.

It also acknowledges the pivotal role of Bangladesh's vibrant civil society and highlights its priority on women participation in the nation building efforts. However, it misses one critical element in the growth process and it is, the *role of leadership*. In fact, it is the leadership skill of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and her targeted approaches plus her strong determination to achieve Bangabandhu's dream of Sonar Bangla by making it a Smart Digital Bangladesh by 2041 that energized the nation to achieve spectacular growth. Only by partial utilization of its agriculture resources, its RMG and its Expatriate labor force, it achieved significant success. Given its plentiful of waters all across the nation, it could be global supplier of fresh drinking water or bottle water, and in addition, if its watersheds, its hoars and marshlands are fully utilized for fresh water fish, it could be a global supplier of fresh water fish worth of billions. The author overlooks its advantage of having a very large young population who if are gainfully employed in IT or ITES sector, the future of Bangladesh is likely to be much brighter.

Bangladesh's foreign policy is on the concept of "Friendship to all, malice towards none" as enunciated by Bangabandhu. He laid strong emphasis on peace and he said and I quote, "peace is imperative for development" and he wished that Bangladesh be the Switzerland of the East that would emit the message of peace throughout the region. No wonder, Bangladesh is opposed to nu-

clear proliferation and it opposes any *proxy war* in the region. Following his footsteps, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina solidified Bangladesh's relationship with all its neighbors; India, Nepal, Bhutan, Sri Lanka, Maldives Thailand, Malaysia, Singapore, and Indonesia including Myanmar. It demonstrated its commitment to fostering regional cohesion through active participation in all regional initiatives including BIMSTEC, SAARC, BBN, ARF, IORA, BRI, etc. It took a global leadership role in Climate change, Migration, UN Peacekeeping, and regional security. It also maintained an excellent relationship, spanning Southeast Asia, ASEAN, the Muslim world, the NAM, the EU, the Commonwealth and the major powers of the world especially the United States of America. Despite acknowledging the persistent challenges that Bangladesh, a country of 170 million people faces, the book maintains an optimistic outlook regarding Bangladesh's future progress.

During my tenure as the Bangladesh Foreign Minister, in order to help achieve the roadmaps that Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina outlined such as becoming a developing country by 2021, a hunger-free economy by 2030, and a Smart Digital Bangladesh by 2041, and given our geostrategic location, and more importantly, given the need for creating opportunities for our greatest resource, the young and hardworking youth, and also to make best use of our waters and other resources, I introduced 3 policy packages and these are (1) Economic diplomacy, (2) Public diplomacy and the third one, (3) Regional Peace and stability packages.

My economic diplomacy package consists of 5 major elements and these are (1) Increase of foreign direct investment (FDI) plus diversifying its portfolio, (2) Increase trade and diversify its products and markets, (3) Gainful employment of nation's human resources both home and abroad, (4) Technology transfer in order to help improve *ease of doing business* and finding ways to mitigate ►►

► river erosion, climatic vulnerability, and utilizing the water resources, and (5) providing quality services to both our Bangladeshi Diaspora and others in all our missions. Emphasis was laid on investment, trade and employment in order to fully engage our human resources by creating gainful jobs and we created an office Director General for Trade, IT, ITES and investment within the Foreign Ministry. My Public Diplomacy initiatives were designed to change the *brandname* of Bangladesh from a poor starving country to a land of opportunities in order to attract FDI and also to appraise especially our Western leaders and advisers that Bangladesh is the only country in the world that sacrificed 3 million lives to uphold democracy, justice, Human Rights and Human dignity. It will also appraise people of all nations that our Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman spent most of his active life, almost 14 years in jails as he demanded right to vote, right to food and shelter and to end economic disparity and deprivation. In order to do that we created a special Wing in the Foreign Ministry plus established *Bangabandhu Corners* in all our missions abroad so that it organizes in cooperation and partnership with our Diaspora and local educational institutions; universities, schools, colleges, Think Tanks, community leaders, opinion leaders and the like regular seminars, workshops, events, etc on Bangladesh. And my Regional Peace and Stability package would like to create and guarantee an environment of peace and stability in the region so that economic achievements can be sustainable. Indian subcontinent is very vulnerable and emotion plays a big role in maintaining peace and stability. Any country or region that faces threat of extremism and violence or wars, finds difficulty to sustain their growth and achievements even if they may have plenty of resources. Threats of extremism and uncertainty keep their potential investors away. As against such scenario, the countries that enjoy peace and stability

appear to be doing much better. For example, because of peace and stability in Bangladesh and India for last 15 years, both are benefited. Nearly 2.8 million Bangladeshis visited India either for shopping, tourism or for medical treatment and thus contributing to Indian economy. Few thousand Indians are contributing to our economy by having jobs in Bangladesh and helping their own country by remitting billions of foreign exchange to India. More importantly, because of peace and stability, India doesn't have to spend billions of its dollars to protect its borders in the eastern zone. I would like to propose to the researchers and the authors to write books on the mutual economic and social benefits of resolving issues through dialogue and discussion as Bangladesh and India have done. They have set up an example for others to imitate. Through developing a rock-solid bilateral relationship and through dialogue and discussion, it resolved its border demarcation issues, its maritime boundary and also most of its water sharing disputes peacefully. Not a single bullet was fired. This is a unique example of achieving wellbeing of their peoples through friendship and political acumen, maturity and leadership. Therefore, leadership issue and diplomatic strategies are very important not only for growth but also for sustainability.

As noted by many authors in the book, Bangladesh's rise and its successes have not been studied in depth especially in the West. Hopefully, this book is going to make a significant contribution towards filling that void. The book offers valuable insights into the nation's diplomatic endeavors. It allows us to see how the rise of Bangladesh is seen by global academic community and analyze what they think will be the next steps for Bangladesh.

I congratulate the editor Professor Sreeradha Datta and the contributing authors for their write-ups and wish them to come up with more of such books. ■

Political Economy of Making and Taking from Reserve Currency: The Historical Evidence and Future Perspectives

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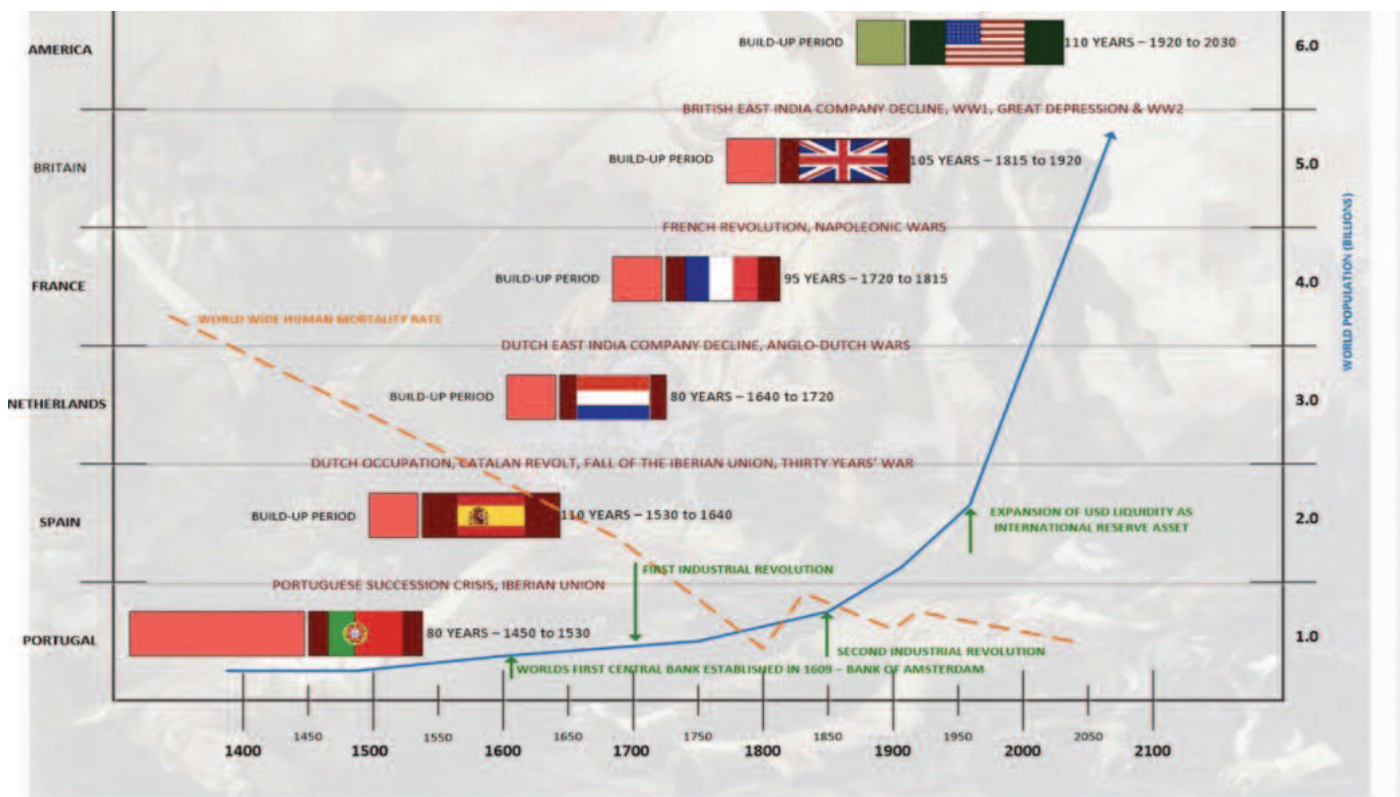


Scholarly work on the national currency used in international transactions distinguishes two views. One, familiar to economists, emphasizes pecuniary motives. Safety, liquidity, network ef-

fects, trade links and financial connections explain why some currencies are used disproportionately as a medium of exchange, store of value and unit of account by governments and private entities engaged in cross-border transactions. Scholars refer this as the “Mercury hypothesis (according to ancient Roman religion-Mercury was the god of commerce.” Another view, due princi-

pally to political economists and applied mainly to the choice of reserve currency or currencies, emphasizes strategic, diplomatic and military power. Political economists view on the choice reserve currency or currencies, emphasizes strategic, diplomatic, and military power, called Mercury. In so far as a country has such power, governments of other countries may see it as in their geopolitical interest to conduct the majority of their international transactions using its currency. That leading power will in turn possess political leverage with which to encourage the practice. International currency choice is from Mars, in other words, rather than Mercury.

The “Mars hypothesis,” when added to the intellectual portfolio of economists, may help to explain some otherwise perplexing aspects of the currency composition of international reserves. International relations scholars have looked at ►►



- specific country cases, such as Spiro (1999) on the dollar holdings of countries in the Middle-East, or Zimmermann (2011) on those of West Germany in the period between 1950 and 1971.

There is much speculation today as to when the USD will cease to be world's reserve currency, of course, the US itself is hastening its currency replacement through colonial rules, applying various techniques like sanctions and trade wars. History provides evidence of reserve currency build up period for Portugal 80 years (1450-1530), Spain 110 years (1530-1640), Netherlands 80 years (1640-1720), France 95 years ((1720-1815), Britain 105 years (1815-1920) and the USA 110 years (1920-2030 estimated). By time line from 1450-2030 Portugal can be cited as the first colonial power enjoying currency hegemony which shifted from one to the other with change of hegemony through war or other means. The USA ranked the as the 6th nation that took the currency hegemony from Britain in 1920. In most cases changing currency hegemony power were ended through war.

The winner country's currency took over from the defeated nations and their currency took position of reserve currency. The world economy requires some kind of internationally acceptable money, otherwise the nations would be reduced to crude barter, limiting gains from cross-border trade, investment, etc. From the economic point a single currency might be appropriate to reduce transaction cost although the socio-political economy does not permit in reality in all cases. The benefits of reserve currency stressed by the economists include transaction costs, familiar gains of international seigniorage. The political scientists include leverage and reputation, risk of undue currency appreciation. The exorbitant privilege enjoyed by the issuer of reserve currency which potentially is significant distributional consequences. Cross border use of dominant currency can loosen constraints of payments on domestic monetary and fiscal policy which is easier for policy makers to pursue public spending objectives and external discipline is relaxed.

► Between 1860-1914, nearly 60 percent of world trade was dominated in sterling although the UK accounted 30 percent. More recently when dollar ruled 45 percent of international debt securities in dollar (end 2008), 86 percent of all foreign exchange transactions (2007) 66 countries being dollar as anchor currency (2008), for many countries 70-80 percent of trade is denominated in dollars, and most commodities are priced in dollars and dollar still rules shadow world of crime and illicit transactions. In some ways one could argue that private sector actions are indeed the deep determinants of reserve currency status. Countries exhibit a certain ambivalence about their reserve currencies because there are both benefits and costs associated with reserve currency status. A country's exporters, importers, borrowers, and lenders are able to deal in their own currency rather than foreign currencies. Thus, the transaction costs of obtaining another currency and the psychological costs of having to move or convert from domestic to foreign currencies are lowered and eliminated.

Having one's currency as the reserve currency tends to confer power and prestige in the global financial crises the USA or rather Fed, supplied countercyclical liquidity to Europe and several emerging markets. Parity by virtue of its reserve currency status, the Fed could use essentially its balance sheet to help the world. This conferred prestige, and had the USA wanted to, it could have exploited this source of power. Britain's gradual loss of key currency status was simultaneous with gradual political and military pre-eminence as noted the quote from Harold Wilson. History provides interesting examples of the reserve currency status by the US for achieving noneconomic and economic objectives. The ability to finance current account deficit more easily can lead to irresponsible government and private sector behavior thereby contributing to financial instability. The US experience in the recent global financial crisis is a case in point, the argument being that the large current account deficits-steaming in part

from reserve currency status to a large capital inflows and cheap easy money, which combined lax regulations led to reckless behavior and sowed the seed for crisis. The reserve currency status and cheaper financing it afforded, may have been the rope that allowed the USA to hang itself.

Looking at the evidence for the demand for dollar from private international sources, it appears that dollar not only started gaining in ascendancy in early 1920's but also retained that status in the inter-war years. In the pre-WW-1 nearly all issuance was in sterling but after the War an overwhelming share was in dollars. This situation helped the US as the *premier* reserve currency was *considerably* less than 60-plus years which was *congenitally* believed closer to 5-10 years from 1919 to the mid-to-late 1920's but in *reality*, the dollar *hegemony* is *continuing* days in 2023. But the *earlier situation*, if applied to *current* based on the index of *economic dominance* for China *surpassed* that of USA after 2010. This can be considered as a theoretical time line for the Chinese currency possibly overtaking the dollar after 2020 would be similar to, or even slightly greater than that between the USA and the UK in mid-1920's when dollar *eclipsed* sterling. Or which may delay transition beyond 10 years suggested by *history* on the *ground* of non-democratic country (China) can inspire the basic *trust in rule of law* that might be necessary for *spreading* internationalization of currency. The key issue to note that trade is a *significant* determinant of reserve currency status combined with China's growing trade *dominance* portend strongly for the renminbi. It is *likely* that renminbi internationalization will be increasing rapidly. Historical experience of the other *transition-from* dominance to *demise* of sterling is also considered *instructive* on the other hand, the *handover* is difficult for the USA for *reasons* of history, namely *inheritance* of the *sterling area* from era of *empire*. This inheritance become difficult to *eliminate* because of the *weakness* of UK economy-also the USA and UK *are allies* and there was *consensus* ►►

- and concerted efforts by governments to minimize cost of transition to the UK and internationally.

The current environment is *quite different* between the USA and China which seems to be *less cooperative* between the two to *manage* the transition of reserve currency dominance. Before the *eyebrows* go up at the *magnitude* and *timing* implied by either of the *scenarios*, one must be careful about their interpretation. Many of *policy changes* will be *needed to occur* before the fundamentals can prevail. The *visible role* for the *renminbi* as a reserve currency may be still *some ways off* as it remains in *convertible*, *restrictions* on the use of *renminbi* for *capital account* transactions, *easy buy* of Chinese assts for foreigners and *limited access* to foreign assts by the Chinese citizens. PBOC *cannot use* the *renminbi* to *intervene* in foreign exchange markets. The *heart* of the problem that China's current growth strategy is *heavily reliant* on export which is fostered by *competitive*, *undervalued* exchange rate, a *closed* capital account in *limiting* the local currency by *foreigners* and for international transactions. The prerequisite for the use of the *renminbi* as international reserve currency yet to *market* must first become *more transparent*, banks *must* be commercialized, *supervision* and *regulations* must be strengthened, monetary and fiscal policy must be sound and stable, and exchange rate more flexible. China must first move away from a growth model where bank lending and pegged exchange rate have been central pillars. In short, there are many reasons to believe that China is *far away* from *attaining* major reserve currency status. Although the *rise of dollar* and its *eclipsing* of sterling as the *primary* reserve currency was *quicker* than expected and it would have been *even quicker* had politics and history no intervened.

Regarding *benefits and costs* for the issuer of dominant currency needs a comprehensive analysis must be an exercise of political economy taking account of both economic and political dimen-

sions. Benefits stressed by economists include a cluster of favorable impacts at the macroeconomic, subsumed under rubric of transaction costs at the aggregate level and the familiar gains of international seigniorage and macroeconomic flexibility. The political scientists add two effects are more overtly political in nature—leverage and reputation, external constraints, policy responsibility and misconceptions.

Differentiation of Currencies. That a hierarchy has always tended to exist among the world's moneys, forming what is called a Currency Pyramid, has long been understood by students of monetary history. Today, as it happens, there is really *only one* Top Currency, the U.S. dollar, which for all its *tribulations* still *dominates* for most cross-border uses and in most regions (Cohen 2009). Not even the gale-force winds of the recent global financial crisis could topple America's greenback from its perch at the peak of the Currency Pyramid, though debate about its future continues, in the name of *Patrician currencies*, *people's currency*, Elite Currency play a critical difference between the *several medium-of exchange* and *unit-of-account* roles, on the one hand, and the two store-of-value roles on the other. Use of a currency in foreign-exchange trading, trade invoicing, or for official intervention purposes will almost certainly generate some measure of benefits at the microeconomic level—denomination rents or reduced transactions costs of various kinds. Leverage through the financial-market role is not impossible, of course. Consider the case of Panama, which back in 1988 found itself in a *grim political dispute* with the United States. *Coercion* via private financial markets worked. Top Currencies or even Patrician Currencies are *bound to enjoy* more political leverage than Elite Currencies. For for any government contemplating internationalization of its currency, it is critical to keep the entire range of potential benefits and costs. It is also critical to keep all the possible roles of an international currency in mind, each with its own ►►

► mix of gains and losses. If the *issuer's* objective is *strictly economic gain*, it is not really necessary to aspire to what we call Patrician Currency or Top Currency status. On balance, the biggest economic benefits are associated with just a limited range of roles—most importantly, the roles in *trade invoicing* and *financial markets*. A country with limited ambitions, *Elite Currency* status may be enough. The country that wants more—a money that will pay political and perhaps even *security dividends*—strategy must be correspondingly more ambitious. It is not necessary to give up current-account surpluses in order to promote an international currency. Both history and logic suggest that *internationalization* can be attained via *intermediation on capital account* alone. The factor of time must be taken into account—the possibility that *initial gains might*, in time, be *offset by losses*. The challenge for policy makers is to frame strategy from the start to put off that day of reckoning for as long as possible.

In the past *two hundred* years of human history, only *two nations* enjoyed *monetary hegemony*, Great Britain and the United States, whose money was the world's *dominant* currency for medium of *exchange*, unit of *account* and store of value. Possessing *monetary hegemony* gives the *issuer* of that currency both *economic* and *political* gains. Many *experts agree* that the United States *defeated* Great Britain as the top currency *issuer status* and established its own *monetary hegemony* right after WWII. The dollar's share in world reserve currencies dropped to around 20% in 1933. Therefore, consensus can be reached that the United States finally secured the dollar's *uncontested* leadership *among* international currencies at the end of the Second World War in 1945. During the years following 1914, the United States came across the first golden opportunity in the history of its monetary expansion. Because of the *huge cost* of the war, the British Empire was *not able* to maintain the gold standard any longer. The U.S. *stayed out* of the war towards the end of the war

and *benefited* from the sharp *increase* of exports to the *warring* states in Europe. The dollar was the *only currency* to remain *convertible* into gold at a fixed price in the 1920s. Compared to the devaluation of the pound, the dollar *began* to emerge as a major international currency; its use in international trade and finance *widened* increasingly. Because of these reasons, for the first time in history, the dollar *overtook* the *pound* as the *main* reserve currency in 1924. Robert Triffin, a Belgium-born economist at Harvard University, in his 1947 *report* to the Fed. He pointed out an *intrinsic design flaw* of the Bretton Woods system, which was later known as the 'Triffin Dilemma', in his popular book Gold and Dollar Crisis. In plain words, the Triffin Dilemma could be explained as: "if the United States *stopped running* balance of payments deficits, the international community would *lose its largest* source of additions to reserves.

The resulting shortage of liquidity could pull the world economy into a *contractionary* spiral, *leading* to instability. If U.S. deficits continued, a steady stream of dollars would *continue to fuel* world economic growth. However, excessive U.S. deficits (dollar glut) would erode confidence in the value of the U.S. dollar. Without confidence in the dollar, it would no longer be accepted as the world's reserve currency. The fixed exchange rate system could break down, leading to instability (IMF, 2001, 'The Dollar Glut' in Money Matters: An IMF Exhibit—The Importance of Global Cooperation. Triffin's prophecy finally became reality. On August 15, 1971, U.S. President Richard Nixon imposed a 90-day wage and price freeze, a 10 percent import surcharge, and, most importantly, "closed the gold window", ending convertibility between US dollars and gold. A new page of monetary history was turned. The world entered into a *new era of fiat money* which was backed by nothing. When Paul Volker chaired the Fed in 1979, he began to deal with the problem of high inflation caused by a persistent over-issuing of ➡

► dollars. Finally, the dollar *started to be strong* and its share in foreign exchange reserves tended to be stable, thanks to Volker's successful move to squeeze inflation. The strong dollar weakened the competitiveness of American products; therefore, in the middle of the 1980s, the United States successfully pressured its main allies, West Germany and Japan, to appreciate their currencies against the U.S. dollar by *signing* the Plaza Accord and the Louvre Accord. The *collapse* of the Soviet Union and its ruble sphere provided the U.S. dollar with a whole new world full of opportunities.

Although it only costs a few cents for the U.S. government to print a \$100 bill, other countries have to provide added value in the form of goods or services in order to receive \$100 dollars. Approximately \$500 billion of U.S. currency circulates outside the United States which foreigners acquired, not because their governments printed the dollars but because they had had to provide the United States with \$500 billion of actual goods and services. This privileged position of the dollar is not intrinsic nor inevitable but is rather a reflection of U.S. domination and conversely, international trust in U.S. stewardship of the dollar and the dollar-based system. Even with the closure of the gold link, the dollar did not become a normal currency like all the others but rather, retained its unique role as a world currency. Nonetheless, economists cautioned that the overpriced dollar will sooner or later have to decline to a more normal level. The crucial question is whether this will become a soft landing or a crash landing.

Despite U.S. trade deficits and budget deficits throughout the 1980s and onward, the dollar *perversely* maintained its top dog status. In the 1980s, the dollar had no rival. Not so now. Despite economic troubles in Greece and the Euro zone and the 2015 economic slowdown in China, things are different today. The U.S. budget deficit, which ballooned because of tax cuts and increased war

spending, continues without solution in sight. Even in 2003, Alan Greenspan had warned, far more urgent than tax cuts . . . was the need to address the threat posed by the soaring new deficits. At the same time, the combined GDP of the United States, the European Union and China together constitute almost 60 percent of global GDP. Hence it is not surprising that there are currently three major currencies in the world: *the dollar, the Euro, and the yuan*. The focus on the currency war between the dollar and the yuan (rather than the euro) for several reasons. *First*, unlike Western European countries, China is a rival, not an ally of the United States. *Second*, China is a rising global power with global ambitions, political, economic, and monetary. *Third*, China has by word and deed taken steps to dethrone the dollar.

PBOC *acquisition* of dollars *resulted* in even more dollar *exposure* for China. Once the PBOC held those *newly acquired* dollars, it also needed to *invest* these dollar reserves (Morrison & Labonte, 2009) and given its traditionally conservative orientation, it *preferred* to invest in highly liquid securities issued by the U.S. Treasury. Consequently, China *possessed* a *massive* quantity of U.S. Treasury *obligations*, which was estimated by some sources as early as 2011 as \$950 billion U.S. dollars.

Implication of Reserve Currencies for Competitiveness: From the perspective of the *three basic functions of money*, medium of exchange, unit of account, and store of value (Greco 2001), the *monetary hegemon* usually owns a national currency which is the main medium of exchange of international trade, the unit of account for most important goods worldwide, and store of value for most other states. About *sixty-four percent* of the world's *official foreign exchange reserves* are currently held in U.S. dollars; *roughly 88%* of *daily foreign exchange trades* involve U.S. dollars. Oil, gold and other *important goods* are denominated in U.S. dollars. The international use of the dollar brings the United States remarkable economic benefits. The Benefits of an International Currency in-►►

►clude, Seigniorage, Inflation tax, Cheap credit, and Macroeconomic flexibility. Dollar Hegemony creates U.S. Privilege, Others' Problem. John Connally, the U.S. Secretary of the Treasury, once told his European counterparts that the dollar is our currency, but their problem. Monetary Imperialism and Dollar Hegemony under the Breton Woods system *gold and dollars* were both *reserve assets* in foreign central banks and the dollar's value was *pegged to gold*, thus giving foreign holders of the paper money firm confidence in its value. The U.S. deficits continued to inflate, *confidence* in the dollar's value *collapsed*; private investors and central banks made a dollar run at the end of the 1960s, which finally led to President Nixon's decision to stop the convertibility of dollar into gold in 1971. The monetary *hegemony* so far, the United States had established was a *sophisticated and complicated mechanism centering on the Treasury bill standard*. Central banks, IMF, and the World Bank become the *vehicles* of this mechanism. All the *rest of the world relies on U.S. credit-creating power* to develop their economies. Their dollar holdings devalued gradually, but there was *no alternative way out of this dead-locked dollar circulation*. With everyone clamoring for dollars, all the US had to do was *print fiat dollars* and other countries *would accept them in payment* for their exports. These dollars then flowed back into the US to be *invested* in Treasury Bonds and similar instruments, offsetting the outflow. The U.S. continued to run a large budget and balance of payment deficits in order to *finance its military race* with the Soviet Union. More and *more dollars* were piled up in the *central banks* of European countries and Japan. By persuading Japan and European *allies* into the Plaza Accord and Louvre Accord, the United States was *able to devalue* the dollar significantly in the 1980s against the Japanese yen and Deutsche mark. *Petrodollar Recycling, the Hidden Hand of Dollar Hegemony*, the U.S. designer of dollar hegemony had already put this scenario in their consideration and plugged this vulnerability by *linking the dollar to oil*. How

could the linkage keep this dollar mechanism from collapsing. No one would doubt the importance of oil, as it is "not just the most *important commodity* traded internationally. It is the key industrial mineral, without which no modern economy works. The dollar *hegemony* has been one of *the pillars* of the American hegemony and probably is more important than the other pillar, military dominance. In the cold war era, the dollar's reserve currency status served the U.S. *military power* by incessantly transporting resources to the latter. The military power more and more plays a *role of the guardian* of the money. This potential factor poses a threat to the operation of the dollar hegemony mechanism, the *gigantic military machine* might start, thus shifting the American hegemony from the '*benign hegemony*' into a '*dangerous hegemony*'.

The costs and benefits to the United States in a Normal Year, the *estimated net benefit* from reserve currency status to be about \$40 billion to \$70 billion to US GDP, or 0.3 to 0.5 percent of GDP (McKinsey Global Institute 2009). More *precisely*, the United States obtains a small net benefit from reserve currency status of 0.3–0.5 percent of GDP in a normal year. The *costs and benefits of being a reserve currency* have been estimated to (+40 to +70 i.e. 0.3% to 0.5% of US GDP). The *first class* of benefit is from *seigniorage* income. The income generated by the US Federal Reserve from the *reserve currency status* of the United States is an estimated \$10 billion. This revenue results from the ability of the United States to receive an *effectively interest-free loan on the currency it issues* that is held by *nonresidents*. Indeed, about half of the *physical US notes and coins*—around \$400 billion—are held overseas. The *second class of benefit* is the *cost of capital advantage* obtained by borrowers in the United States as a *consequence* of foreign demand for dollar assets. United States has been able to generate an *investment income surplus* of a few percentage points of GDP even with a *significantly negative net financial-asset position* (of about \$2 ►►

► trillion over the past few years. Reserve currency status has some sharp distributional *consequences* routed from distribution of *costs and benefits*. Broader economic analysis of currency hegemony status indicate possible expression of these *costs and benefits* in terms of the overall impact on GDP and employment in the normal year and crisis years. McKinsey Global Institute (2009) calculated that the *net financial benefit* of \$40 billion to \$70 billion from *reserve currency status* converts into an overall GDP effect of \$115 billion to \$185 billion, or 0.9 to 1.4 percent of GDP. In a crisis year, using the same approach, MGI (2009) estimate that the net financial benefit converts into an overall GDP benefit of \$15 billion to \$75 billion, or 0.1 to 0.5 percent of GDP.

Is Dollar Dominance in Doubt. The dollar has been the global currency of choice for nearly a century, but in light of recent U.S.-led financial sanctions, some wonder whether that *status* will endure. Apart from Europe, where the euro dominates, the majority of global trade is *invoiced* in dollars. The Fed estimates that foreign investors held nearly \$1 trillion in cash at the end of the first quarter of 2021, roughly half of all U.S. notes in circulation. Central banks around the world hold about 59 percent of their foreign currency reserves in dollars. Much of these reserves are held as dollar-denominated debt—that is, U.S. Treasuries—rather than currency. About a third of all U.S. debt was held abroad as of 2021, and a little over 60 percent of *debt issued* by non-U.S. companies in a foreign currency was denominated in dollars. The world runs on the U.S. dollar.

The widespread adoption of the dollar as a global currency has long been thought of as a source of “*exorbitant privilege*” for the United States, a term coined in the 1960s by France’s then Finance Minister Valéry Giscard d’Estaing. Having a large share of trade invoiced in dollars protects U.S. exporters and importers from exchange rate risk.

The dollar wasn’t the first currency to attain global reach, though. In the 16th century, the Spanish silver dollar rose to prominence through Spain’s *colonial* expansion. In the 17th century, *Dutch florins* and bills issued by the Bank of Amsterdam became the currency of choice. By the 18th century, the *pound sterling* of the British Empire had become dominant—a position it would maintain into the 20th century. Each of these global currencies emerged organically without coordination as in Bretton Woods.

In fact, the dollar had already begun to compete with the British pound by the mid-1920s, years before Bretton Woods solidified its place. Economists have *different theories* about which of these functions is most *important* for explaining a currency’s rise, but First Deputy Managing Director of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) Gita Gopinath and Harvard University professor and former Fed Governor Jeremy Stein argue that they are all interconnected and reinforcing. If a currency becomes a global unit of accounts through its use in *trade invoicing*, that increases the demand to hold that currency to conduct trade, which *bolsters* its position as a global store of value. Similarly, if there is a lot of global demand to hold a currency as a *store of value*, that *reduces* the cost of borrowing in that currency and makes it *attractive* for traders in other countries to price exports in that currency to *access that cheap* funding market. Does the dollar’s widespread use abroad confer an “*exorbitant privilege*” upon the United States as Giscard d’Estaing claimed. Most economists agree that it has its *benefits*, though not many would say they qualify as exorbitant. The law of supply and demand implies that higher global demand for dollar-denominated Treasuries means the United States can attract buyers at lower interest rates, allowing it to borrow more cheaply. But in practice, this advantage appears slight. ■

2014 Anti-Government Demonstrations in Kiev

Western Manipulation to Turn Ukraine into a Russophobic Aggressive Nationalist State

Aleksandr Mantytsky

is the current Russian Ambassador to Bangladesh



The events that took place 10 years ago in the central Maidan square of Kiev and marked the beginning of the bloody coup d'état in Ukraine in February 2014, turned out to be a tragedy for the Ukrainians.

During the 10 year-rule of the criminal Kiev regime, Ukraine has lost 53.7% of its population and one fifth of its territories. More than 10.5 million people have fled the country, while 11.2 million people have chosen to settle in Russia. Hundreds of thousands of people are being sent to slaughter by the Kiev regime at the request of the US. Washington and London insisting that the war waged in their interests should continue to the last Ukrainian, recommended Kiev to extend the draft age from 17 to 70 and further mobilize women.

In 2023, the country's GDP fell by a record 30.4%. Social obligations are not fulfilled as allowances and pensions are not paid. Financial in-

dependence is lost. Ukraine is bankrupt.

Traditional, core Ukrainian values are trampled. History has been rewritten, faith has been betrayed, the Russian language, native for many Ukrainian citizens, has been banned. Instead, European pseudo-values are being disseminated, LGBT are on the march, and drugs find legalization.

Tempting slogans of Maidan activists and notorious cookies handed out by the US State Department official have brought the Ukrainian people into a deceptive trap. The puppet regime in Kiev has driven the country into a dead end.

What did precede the events of 10 years ago and what was their trigger?

For more than two decades, Ukraine, like the other post-Soviet countries, had been undergoing a complex, often tragic, transition from the Soviet one-party political system to a pluralistic one. This created constant political instability and incapacity to define realistic strategies for its development, as well as unbalanced the government system itself. In 2004, the country experienced "the Orange Revolution", which set the bar for ➤



Anti-war protesters gather in front of the White House in Washington on Jan. 27, 2023. WIN MCNAMEE/GETTY IMAGES

- all modern “color revolutions”, when the West laid its hands on Ukraine by inventing the third round of elections in violation of the Ukrainian constitution to push through a defeated candidate.

The social conflict developed and transformed into a political one under active and public intervention of external forces in Ukraine’s domestic affairs. From the very beginning of Ukrainian independence, numerous foreign funds and action plans have found their way to the country – from respectable UN Development Programs to various sectoral seminars with obligatory participation of “independent media”. Activities of European institutions for cultural and educational “exchanges” were on the rise. The embassies of the US and EU countries were involved in tackling incessant internal political crises. Washington provided assistance to Ukraine to promote civil society institutions through several entities: the US Agency for International Development (USAID), the National Endowment for Democracy (NED) and various NGOs, primarily the National Democratic Institute (NDI) and the

International Republican Institute (IRI).

While receiving substantial Western infusions, Ukraine was experiencing a brewing social conflict, which was primarily caused by the change in the model of relationship between the authorities and the society during the period of political and economic liberalization prompted by external quarters. As a consequence, the country saw increasing unemployment, especially among the educated youth, the absence of social mobility and reasonable rotation in the ruling elite as well as degradation of the legislature. The per capita level of economic welfare was 5-6 times lower as compared to developed countries and one of the lowest in Europe.

By 2013, a significant part of Ukrainian society had been tired of the government leaders. The Ukrainian parliament saw the increasing number of fights between deputies of different factions. Municipal elections became a competition between political technologists and sponsors rather than between parties and candidates. There was perceptible resistance towards spreading of so-►

- called “global values” such as modern forms of tolerance, LGBT marriages, adoption of children by same-sex couples, etc.

Youth activism became very prominent on the eve of the Maidan. By 2013, a considerable number of Ukrainian young people traveled abroad through various training programs of Western universities. Students were significantly influenced by the so-called demonstration effects of globalization – standards of living, different models of government accountability, performance of democratic institutions. This factor was widely used by manipulators to draw young people into protest actions. The tested and popular with the youth formulas such as “let us defend our future” and “the future has been stolen from us”, came in handy. Abundant free time and lack of social obligations made students and unemployed youth the active participants in street riots.

The first demonstrators appeared on the Maidan in Kiev on November 22, 2013, and the first armed clashes took place on January 19, 2014. February 18-22 were the bloodiest days. Those events were triggered by the government’s decision to suspend the planned signing of the EU Association Agreement with a view to analyze its consequences for the Ukrainian economy. Notably, it was only a suspension, not a cancellation. The problem was that the new commitments Kiev was to assume under the EU Association Agreement were at odds with its obligations with the CIS free trade zone.

During those tragic days, civil sentiments were skillfully fueled, on the one hand, by media reports, especially in the opposition newspapers, and, on the other hand, by the actions of American and European diplomats. It suffices to recall the visits to the Maidan by assistant secretary of state Victoria Nuland, EU High Commissioner for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy Catherine Ashton, British Ambassador Simon Smith, and others. They also met Ukrainian President Viktor

Yanukovich and demanded a non-violent response to the protesters.

On 21 February 2014, after signing the political settlement agreement in the presence of foreign mediators – the foreign ministers of Germany and Poland, Frank-Walter Steinmeier and Radoslaw Sikorski, as well as the Director of the Department of Continental Europe of the Foreign Ministry of France Éric Fournier – Viktor Yanukovich and his government fulfilled their commitments and removed law enforcement forces from the city center. The opposition, however, refused to honor its promises and, as a result, staged a coup d’état. It is worth recalling that the agreement provided for a government of national unity, constitutional reforms and democratic elections.

Despite the overthrow of the legitimate government, the opposition failed to achieve its objectives as intended. At the same time, the Maidan changed the Ukrainian society to such an extent that the population of several regions demanded secession from Ukraine and began to realize their political interests first in referendums on independence and then in the format of armed confrontation. Thus, the process of geopolitical decomposition of modern Ukraine was launched, which started in Crimea and continued with the creation of the Donetsk and Lugansk People’s Republics.

The Ukrainians who were on the Maidan a decade ago could hardly imagine what tragic consequences it would lead to.

Sadly, the fraternal Ukrainian people have become a hostage of the Anglo-Saxons masters, with the Kiev regime serving their interests at the expense of its own citizens. Ukraine is paying for this with hundreds of thousands of Ukrainian lives and broken dreams.

This is the cost of the notorious “European choice”. ■



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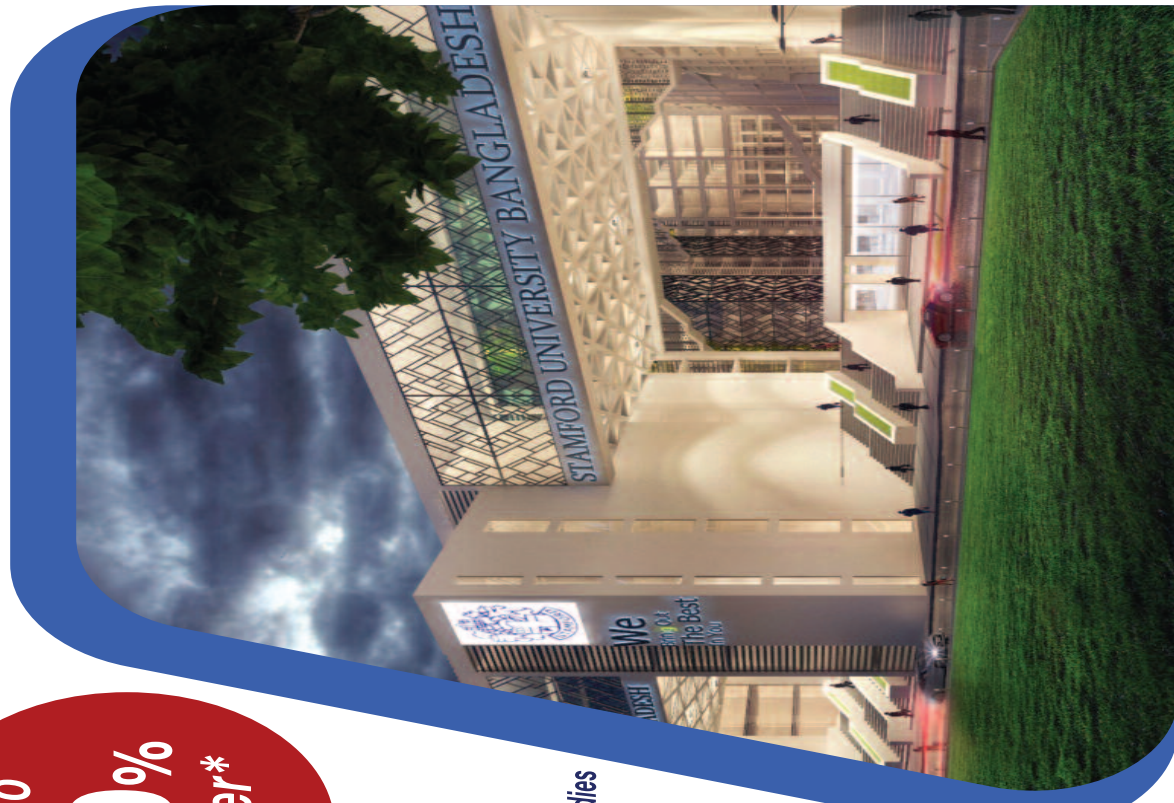
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Ambassador Guner Ureya Reflects on His Diplomatic Journey as He Bids Farewell to Dhaka

Rabb Majumder

As the sun sets on his tenure as the Ambassador of Kosovo in Bangladesh, Guner Ureya prepares to embark on a new chapter in his diplomatic career. Amidst the bustling streets of Dhaka, we sit down with Ambassador Ureya to reflect on his time in Bangladesh, the milestones achieved, and the bonds forged during his diplomatic mission.

With a backdrop of cultural diversity and diplomatic engagements, Ambassador Ureya shares insights into the challenges and triumphs of representing Kosovo in a foreign land. As he packs his bags and prepares to bid farewell to the city he has called home, we delve into the memories, experiences, and lessons that have shaped his journey in Dhaka.

Join us as we unravel the narrative of Ambassador Guner Ureya's diplomatic sojourn in Bangladesh, a tale of friendship, cooperation, and the enduring spirit of international relations.

As an outgoing Ambassador, could you please tell about your overall experience in Bangladesh?

For a diplomat, working in this significant South Asian country is an excellent opportunity. The environment is suitable for diplomatic activities.



Kosovo Ambassador Güner Ureya

In general, there is a friendly atmosphere and diplomats are well received. Obviously, when you are surrounded by positive energy, you strive to do something extra for your country and for bilateral relations. I worked for enhancing the bilateral relations in every field with Bangladesh. ➡

► Besides this, as a diplomatic mission we accredited for the Maldives. Through Dhaka I also tried to create bridges with non-recognizers in South Asia as well. Unfortunately India, Nepal, Sri Lanka and Bhutan from this region, still didn't recognize my country.



Would you please tell us about your achievements as the first ambassador of Kosovo to Bangladesh?

Opening a new diplomatic mission is an achievement in itself. It was very valuable for me to be an important part of the institutional cooperation between the two countries and to promote our country in Bangladesh and South Asia. Without being humble and I can state that my team and I have done good work to begin with. We have been involved in successful work for a while, such as a significant increase in our trade, some joint initiatives, enhance of the bilateral corporation, import of workforce from Bangladesh, and promotional cultural and other activities. I think we are leaving a good legacy to bearers of our flag in Bangladesh. Newcomers will be more successful.

You stated that you follow the countries in the region as well. Can you elaborate on this a little? What are your impressions about relations with the countries in the region?

South Asia countries have always intrigued me with their traditions, human characteristics, cuisine and different colors. By a twist of fate, I was

fortunate enough to serve as the first Ambassador of my country in Dhaka for more than four years. During my tenure, beside my routines, I tried to follow the countries of the region, particularly neighbors of Bangladesh and their general trends. When assessing countries from a diplomatic perspective, our countries' relations and interests cannot be taken out of the context. I would like to emphasize that we are pleased with our cordial and friendly relations with Bangladesh, Pakistan and the Maldives. Allow me to make a note. Our Ambassador to Türkiye is a non-resident Ambassador to Pakistan and carries out very sincere efforts for cooperation between the two countries. I'm following the remaining part of the region. I can say that we have the potential to have official relations with India, Nepal, Sri Lanka and Bhutan as well.

You asked me about my impressions. General developments in South Asian countries in recent years have drawn my attention. Particularly, the possibility of reconciliation between India and Pakistan is one of the issues I have always wondered about: "What kind of atmosphere can the paradigm shift bring to South Asia? Is it possible to put forward a vision for the future on a platform like SAARC instead of dwelling on the past? The cultural diversity and richness, but also the ►►

► overall potential of South Asian countries with a population of around 1.9 billion, are worth exploring more. I will give examples that intrigued me of South Asian countries with which we, as Kosovo, do not have G2G and diplomatic relations, but with whom we have the potential to develop relations: Let's start with India. Belief systems and values born in India have become significant values in different countries today. The lands of India, which have drawn the route of societies in the spiritual sense, have also brought very successful leaders to different parts of the world. Today, there are very successful leaders of Indian origin on every continent. From the presidents to the prime ministers, from the MPs to the mayors, there are leading figures of Indian origin who contribute to the development of countries of which they are citizens of. I think the secret to these people's success is their hardworking and profound reverence for serving others. We have a lot to learn from India and its people, a country that is on a steady growth trend and aims to become the world's third-largest economy. While I admired Indians' achievements, during my four years in South Asia, I ex-officio wanted to emulate New Delhi's position on us, notably Kosovo. In Indian position, I saw the traces of the versions fabricated by our neighbor Serbia. Unfortunately, predominantly the Serbian versions influenced India's perceptions and prejudices towards Kosovo. It's also very difficult to make your opponents' made-up stories forgettable. Another country is Nepal. My perceptions of Nepal before were shaped by three elements: Firstly, the civil war in the 90s; then, the Himalayas, especially Mount Everest; and also Gurkhas from Nepal, who served as peacekeepers after the war in Kosovo. It is not difficult for us to empathize with Nepal, because we have common elements that remind us of our suffering, but also of our qualities. Both countries and peo-

ples have gone through difficult times. We have always tried to ease our pain by talking to the mountains and singing to the trees, rocks, and rivers. Although not as great as the Himalayas, our Sharr Mountains are nonetheless extremely lovely. Our characteristics are similar. As I got to know Nepali more and more every day, I witnessed that it is the hometown of friendly, proud, and respectful people. In general, Nepal is a country of people who avoid making decisions too quickly and are a little cautious but always friendly, with a positive aura and a smile on their faces. Throughout my tenure of four years in South Asia, I have also tried to follow Kathmandu's political position on us, notably Kosovo. I witnessed that Nepalese have no negative feelings; on the contrary, they are very friendly to us. Kathmandu is open for communication; however, unfortunately, it has yet to extend official recognition to the Republic of Kosovo's independence. Regarding Sri Lanka first, I thought, what can we Kosovars associate with this South Asian country? "Ceylon Tea, of course"! In our Lap region, as well as in our cities of Vushtrri and Prizren, tea consumption has become a ritual. Tea is indispensable for the atmosphere of chatting and love in our families. We don't add milk to tea like the British; we usually drink it raw, while some prefer to add a lemon slice to it. Even though 'Ceylon Tea' is labelled on every box in our markets, for some reason some call it "Russian Tea". Although very few, there are those who call it 'Indian Tea'. From here, my apologies to my Sri Lankan friends and acquaintances; even though the rest of the world prefers their tea, my favourite teas are those harvested in Srimangal, Bangladesh. Here in Dhaka, I have made many Sri Lankan friends. They are very friendly individuals. Most of them I have met are with a positive aura and a smile on their faces. During my four years in South Asia, besides other countries, ►►

► I also tried to follow Colombo's official position on us, notably Kosovo. They are extremely cordial. Colombo is open to communication, but unfortunately, it has yet to extend official recognition to the Republic of Kosovo's independence. When it comes to Bhutan and Bhutanese people, I think of the Nation of Happiness. A country has unique features in its customs and cuisine. Bhutan is a country where people experience spiritual and material happiness in balance. This country is a model for many others where greed and consumerism dominate. We need to explore Bhutan thoroughly to better understand that the secret of human happiness is balance, moderation, and unity with nature. We are always open to relations with Bhutan without any reserve. We always anticipate positive news from Thimphu.

What you do for changing the perceptions of non-recognizers?

We are trying to tell the non-recognizing South Asian countries representatives that other nations initially withheld the recognition act, but over time they realized that accepting the reality of the Republic of Kosovo was the right step. Recognition of Kosovo is important for peace and stability in the Balkan Peninsula, or, in other words, in Southeast Europe. The independence of the Republic of Kosovo has rectified historical mistakes, ended the Serbian occupation and brought peace and freedom to the people. We understand that each country has its own foreign policy priorities and interests. It's understandable that some of South Asian nations have their own challenges such as accommodation of interests of diverse sub-identities and communities in their respective countries, but also regarding its relations with neighboring countries. Likewise, we, as the relatively new country are looking for a permanent solution on the basis of equity with our neighbor

Serbia, through mutual recognition. In order to get over reservations of non-recognizers, particularly India's prejudices against us, it is useful to state some facts. First of all, Kosovo is a 'sui generis' case and, as such, it cannot be compared to any other situation and cannot represent a precedent for any other entity or territory in the world. If others see the Kosovo issue as a precedent for their internal issues, they would be doing themselves an injustice, above all. Serbia may want to create such a perception in other countries, but this perception will harm the processes related to Kosovo and also can create confusion regarding the future of others. "Kosovo case is 'sui generis' and taking it as a precedent for other cases leads to confusion and does not serve to solve problems."

Could you tell us a little about the historical process so that our readers can understand it better?

To understand how Kosovo achieved independence, it is essential to comprehend its history. In 1989, Belgrade abolished Kosovo's autonomy and two years later, as the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (SFRY) disintegrated, Kosovo lost its status as a federal entity in the ex-country with rights similar to those of the six republics. During the 1990s Kosovo and its institutions were under the Serbian occupation. Serbian authorities consistently discriminated Kosovars, excluding them from governance and public life, along with exclusion from the health and educational system. In reaction, the Kosovo leadership under Ibrahim Rugova pursued a policy of peaceful resistance for several years, before the lack of progress led to the formation of the Kosovo Liberation Army and armed struggle. This, in turn, encouraged the Serbians to exercise more pressure against the Kosovars. Following a failed attempt to negotiate a settlement at Rambouillet, France, in March ►►

► 1999, NATO decided to stop humanitarian crises in Kosovo and intervened in Serbian targets. During the Serbian atrocities more than half of the Kosovars became refugees or internally displaced. After the war, the problems were tried to be solved through negotiations. But after all the attempts, the UN special envoy, former Finnish president Martti Ahtisaari, gave the green light for the status of Kosovo, as a 'sui generis' case. Although Serbia, Russia and some other countries insist on denying the truth, Kosovo's independence has become an irreversible fact.

It should be noted that, more than half of member countries of the UN have recognized the independence of the Republic of Kosovo. The majority of these countries are geographically close to Kosovo and they realized that the case is unique and cannot be used as a precedent for other cases. In addition they considered the peace and stability of the region as well as their own peace and stability. On the other side, the International Court of Justice ruled that the declaration of independence of Kosovo was not in violation of international law.

Considering all these arguments, what is the reason of hesitance of non-recognizers? Could it be due to perceptions about Kosovo's social structure?

No, such thing cannot happen. Kosovo is a secular state with a Muslim majority. There is great respect for all faiths in Kosovo. Numerous countries with Christian-majority, Muslim-majority, and Buddhist-majority recognized Kosovo. On the other hand, Israel is the last country to have recognized Kosovo. Our people live in peace with all beliefs. It is also a good thing that we do not have a nation that marginalizes non-believers. We respect everyone. Regarding the hesitance in the South Asian region, I can provide the follow-

ing example: I have read several documents about India's objection to Kosovo's independence. The objection of New Delhi is related to its relations with Serbia, and these relations 'according to Indian official statements' are particularly defined in the context of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM). It is worth mentioning that Serbia is not a member of the Non-Aligned Movement but is only trying to benefit from the platform by falsely introducing itself as a legal inheritor of the former SFRY, which is not true. Even if NAM is considered a reference point, it should be remembered that Serbia, during the 90s, violated all its main principles. During the dissolution of the SFRY, Serbia's acts destroyed equality between federal units, but Belgrade also had and still has hegemonic aspirations. Serbia during that time attacked the territorial integrity and sovereignty of other federal units, applied aggression towards them, interfered in their domestic affairs, violated the principle of equality, and violated the co-existence of all of the nations in the former country. Furthermore, Serbia's aggression caused humanitarian crises in Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Kosovo, and the deaths and injuries of hundreds of thousands and the displacement of more than four million people in the former SFRY. India could make major mistake if it views Kosovo and the issues in the Balkan Peninsula in isolation from all of these tragedies. This can be counterproductive, especially for India, a country that aims to prioritize peace and harmony. Otherwise, condoning someone's hegemony in the Balkans will be a bad precedent and can cause negative effects in the long term.

Bangladeshis generally see similarities between the independence struggles of Bangladesh and Kosovo. Maybe that's why they feel sensitive towards Kosovo. After independence, Bangladesh entered a different era in every ►►

► **field. It started to develop in every field, from economy to art. In your opinion, what changed in your country after independence?**

First of all, we are liberated. Freedom is the foundation of self-confidence and constructive entrepreneurship. The independence of the Republic of Kosovo has had an impact on the overall development of the country as well as on the emancipation of Kosovar society. After declaration of independence, our citizens have demonstrated their talents in every field, including sports and arts, but also in economics and in many other spheres of life. Freedom, democracy, and peace have made Kosovars achieve successes globally. It is very nice to be independent and experience independence. However, for us to enter into different arrangements, we need to be recognized by others as well, especially by the countries with whom we have the potential for cooperation. Our hope is all non-recognizers from South Asia officially recognize Kosovo as soon as possible. Recognition of Kosovo by India and by other non-recognizers will also help Serbia to get rid of its hegemonic ambitions and to focus on regional peace and stability. Recognitions will contain meaningful messages about peace and reconciliation in the world. There are numerous opportunities and potential for cooperation between Kosovo and current non-recognizers in South Asia. As Kosovo, we are trying to share our narrative with to all South Asian countries. We are trying to explain that Kosovars are peace-loving, that we have a vibrant population with the youngest median age in Europe and that we can develop both bilateral relations and cooperate on multilateral platforms. Bangladesh, recognized Kosovo only a few years ago and now we have a very close relationship with your country. The trade volume between the two countries is in-

creasing every year. Our institutional and human relations have increased. As a result of our close cooperation, hundreds of Bangladeshis are now working in Kosovo companies. By the end of 2023, this number will probably reach around 1500. People from two countries have increased cooperation in art and other fields as well. Likewise, we have achieved a very positive atmosphere of cooperation with Pakistan and the Maldives. We have lots of experiences to share with other South Asian countries too. It is crucial to start with G2G activities and to encourage more the companies for enhancing bilateral trade with all countries in South Asia. We all can contribute more also to P2P relations. Since we as Kosovars have many P2P contacts with Serbians with the aim of contributing to reconciliation between the nations, why not have with non-recognizer from South Asia as well!? There are numerous things to share with each other. We can build a better future for new generations by building bridges of friendship.

Since you will leave the Dhaka soon what your message to Bangladesh?

It is difficult to say goodbye to leave Bangladesh and my friends here. As I depart, my sincere message to Bangladeshis is as follows: It is natural that there are differences of opinion in society. There may be different opinions, but do not drag the country into polarization. Prioritize dialogue in all situations. You have a beautiful country and beautiful people. Countries consist of all the components. Only with unity and solidarity, you can reach the country's 2041 vision. Bangladesh deserves the best. My family and I will never forget our Bengali friends, and we always pray for your happiness. We hope that the affinity between our countries and people will endure forever. ■



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BRIEF NEWS

UK Says Jet Carrying Defense Minister Hit by Electronic Attack Near Russia



A British Royal Air Force plane carrying the UK defense minister had its signal jammed as it flew near Russian territory this week, a government spokesman confirmed on Thursday.

The electronic attack happened on Wednesday evening as Grant Shapps flew back on an RAF jet from Poland where he had watched a NATO exercise, the Times newspaper reported.

A UK government spokesman said the plane “temporarily experienced GPS jamming when they flew close to Kaliningrad” on the Baltic Sea, some 1,200 kilometers (some 750 miles) west of Moscow.

“It didn’t threaten the safety of the aircraft and it is not unusual for aircraft to experience GPS jamming near Kaliningrad, which is of course Russian territory,” the spokesman added.

The Times, who had journalists on the plane, said the GPS signal was interfered with for about 30 minutes.

Mobile phones could no longer connect to the internet and the aircraft was forced to use alternative methods to determine its location, the daily added.

Shapps had earlier watched hundreds of troops taking part in

the Steadfast Defender exercise – the largest drills staged by the US-led military alliance since the Cold War.

The UK is one of Ukraine’s strongest backers in its two-year-old fight against Russia’s full-scale invasion of its neighbor in February 2022.

London has committed more than 7 billion pound (\$8.9 billion) of military support to Ukraine and has trained tens of thousands of Ukrainian troops.

Canada to Revamp Gagetown Base in Brunswick

Ottawa has announced an investment to upgrade the Canadian Division Support Base Gagetown (5 CDSB) in Oromocto, New Brunswick.

Costing 55.6 million Canadian dollars (\$41 million), the project will cover the modernization of 255 buildings, corresponding energy recovery systems, and associated infrastructures.

The effort will also see the integration of new LED lights, water fixtures, gas power generators, builders, and geothermal solutions for the site.

Work for the project will run through 2026 and is expected to support over 200 jobs in Oromocto during the construction phase. Ottawa wrote that hired workers will be provided with an additional training course to operate new capabilities for the project.

Richmond-based engineering agency Ameresco Inc. will serve as the primary contractor.

Solar Farm Integration

In conjunction with the 5 CDSB refurbishment, the government is

spending approximately 19.7 million Canadian dollars (\$14.5 million) to build a solar farm for the installation.

This project, also awarded to Ameresco, will construct an 8.9-megawatt solar-based station to supply two-thirds of the energy required during Gagetown’s peak operational hours.

Upon completion in 2025, the solar farm is expected to reduce approximately 3,200 tonnes of greenhouse gas emissions annually, further supporting Canada’s goals to employ 100 percent clean-energy federal buildings by 2025 and achieve carbon neutrality by 2050.

Ottawa wrote that about five percent of the value of services, goods, and labor will be sourced from indigenous communities in the region.

Addressing ‘Obligation’

Canadian Defence Minister Bill Blair commented on the latest military projects and their benefit for warfighters.

“We have an obligation to provide our military personnel with modern, green infrastructure that meets their needs – and that is exactly what we are doing with these investments,” Blair said.

“These upgrades to our Gagetown military base will create hundreds of jobs and reduce our emissions – creating a healthier environment for our military personnel and all Canadians.” ▶▶



► Why India Testing Agni-5 is a Milestone Moment



Indigenously-developed Agni-5 missile with a Multiple Independently Targetable Re-Entry Vehicle (MIRV) technology was successfully tested by the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) as part of "Mission Divyastra" on 11 March. Launched from Dr APJ Abdul Kalam Island in Odisha, the flight was monitored using telemetry and many radar stations, and it accomplished all the designed parameters. MIRV technology allows the single inter-continental ballistic missile (ICBM) to carry and deliver multiple warheads at different locations. The test pushes India into the higher levels of nuclear deterrence capability, and building redundancy.

Countries like Indonesia and Australia as well as international air and maritime traffic in the test zone had to be alerted 7-10 days before the test. Moreover, Indian Navy warships, with DRDO scientists and tracking and monitoring systems, were positioned midway and near the impact point in the southern Indian Ocean.

Agni 5 —50 tonne in weight, 17.5-metre tall, and 2-metre diameter — is designed by DRDO and manufactured by Bharat Dynamics Limited (BDL) at around a unit cost of Rs 50 crore (\$6 million). It can carry 10-12 warheads weighing total of up to around 4,000 Kg as part of MIRV. The missile is powered by a three-

stage solid propellant rocket. Its canister-launch missile system is distinct from those of the earlier Agni missiles.

Agni-5, even if launched from Central India will be able to cover farthest points in China. Being similar in design to missiles with 10,000 km range, the transition to the next variants will be easier.

Singapore, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Gulf countries keen on rupee trade with India: Piyush Goyal

Indian Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal noted that countries are slowly realising that trading in domestic currencies has several advantages. The Indian Rupee is mostly stable against most of the international currencies and according to experts, this is one of the reasons that different nations today want to have trade relations built on rupee trade.

As the Indian Rupee gains traction and more countries ditch the dollar, Piyush Goyal says that many developed and developing countries have shown interest in trading in the Indian currency with New Delhi to cut transaction costs.

"Bangladesh, Sri Lanka are already talking to us and they want us to start this immediately. Other countries in the Gulf region are looking at that. I think it'll take some time for people to see the benefits. And then we'll have more and more developed countries and countries in the Far East also joining the bandwagon. Singapore is already on board to some extent," he said adding that development could be "game-changing."

Goyal noted that countries are slowly realising that trading in domestic currencies has several advantages.

"Gradually the conscience is setting

in that rather than converting all the transactions into a third currency, both ways, add significantly to transaction costs," Goyal told PTI.

One of the biggest drawbacks of trading in other currencies is transaction losses which are a result of foreign exchange that require costs for conversion. The delays in the movement of money also push transactors' costs.

China's new hypersonic drone beats F-22 in aerodynamic efficiency

A new breed of China's



unmanned hypersonic aircraft can now challenge the aerodynamic performance of the most advanced fighter aircraft in the US military.

The new hypersonic drone boasts a lift-to-drag ratio of 8.4 in subsonic flight. While it is not exceptionally high, it is already on a par to that of the F-22 Raptor, South China Morning Post reports citing a group of scientists from Beijing.

The lift-to-drag ratio is a crucial parameter for measuring aerodynamic efficiency. A higher value indicates greater resistance of the aircraft to the pull of gravity and enables it to fly a greater distance.

The F-22 is the only stealth fighter in the US military capable of supercruise, or sustained flight at supersonic speeds.

This performance allows

the drone to manoeuvre flexibly even in the thin atmosphere at high altitudes, posing a challenge to missile defence systems that rely on predicting flight trajectories.



US Army Urged to Prioritize River Crossing Capability for Future Conflict



The US Army should invest more in its wet-gap crossing capabilities to prepare for its role in future conflict, a new paper published by the Association of the US Army (AUSA) claims.

Also known as river crossing, wet-gap crossing refers to where troops, tanks, and wheeled artillery weapons have to ford inland water obstacles to reposition or seek out enemies.

It involves the deployment of boats and bridges, and it also requires extensive planning and detailed preparations, according to AUSA.

The paper noted that the US Army has not conducted contested wet-gap crossing operations against near-peer threats since the second World War II, suggesting the need to conduct more drills and modernize its bridge-laying assets.

"After two decades of counter-insurgency operations in Iraq and Afghanistan, the US faces emerging threats in Russia and China," author Maj. **Aditya Iyer** wrote.

"The Army must be prepared for large-scale combat operations against these near-peer threats. [In particular], the US military must be prepared to conduct wet-gap crossing operations against a well-organized and technologically advanced

force."

Learning From Russia-Ukraine War

The AUSA paper referenced the ongoing Russia-Ukraine war in which invading forces attempted crossing the Siverskiy Donets River – the fourth longest river in Ukraine.

Kyiv's forces reportedly thwarted the effort with the help of small drone reconnaissance. Russian troops failed to employ combined-arms effects to assist in the crossing, according to the report.

"The successful Ukrainian defense of this river against one of the greatest global military powers should be concerning to the US Army as it considers the feasibility of accomplishing a wet-gap crossing operation in the current and future operating environment," Iyer added.

The paper recommended the use of deception to carry out a successful river-crossing operation. This includes using more than just smoke to hide movements.

Other effective deception strategies should also be incorporated in the planning process so soldiers will know what to do before conducting actual wet-gap crossings, according to the paper.

HMS St. Albans Back in Service After Four-Year Upgrade

The UK Royal Navy's HMS St Albans has returned to service after four and a half years of upkeep and upgrades.

The Type 23 frigate was taken out of Devonport Naval Base in southwest England to participate in post-refit sea trials to determine whether all

the improved and refurbished systems aboard the ship are working as intended.

St Albans' life extension (LIFEX) upgrades will be tested in the English Channel in "the next few weeks," according to an official statement from the navy.

The frigate began its LIFEX upgrades in 2019 following nearly 20 years of service.

The Four-Year Upgrade

Babcock oversaw the vessel's upgrades, including the replacement of all four diesel engines, as well as LED lighting installations.

Its Sea Wolf air defense system was replaced with the newer Sea Ceptor, while its sensors were upgraded with the new Type 997 Artisan air-search radar.

The ship was also redesigned to adapt to the upcoming Sea Venom anti-ship missile system.

HMS St Albans Commanding Officer Commander **Helen Coxon** described the ship's return as a significant milestone for the force and its engineering endeavors.

"Whether it is the first day at sea – as is the case for many of our less experienced sailors – or returning back to where we feel at home for the more experienced – today is a big day and we'd like to thank all those involved in making it happen," she added.

Thanks to its upgrades, the ship is



► Thanks to its upgrades, the ship is scheduled to serve well into the middle of the next decade, while its successors, the Type 26 frigates, enter service.

French Defense Firms to Produce Weapons in Ukraine



French companies plan to produce military equipment in Ukraine to help Kyiv bolster its war efforts, defense minister **Sebastien Lecornu** said last week.

The first production unit could commence as soon as this summer, he added.

“Three French companies will be setting up partnerships with Ukrainian companies, in particular in the drone and land equipment sectors, to produce spare parts on Ukrainian soil, and perhaps ammunition in the future,” *France 24* quoted Lecornu as saying, hinting that the companies could include Franco-German tank producer KNDS and drone maker Delair.

French Weapons in Ukraine

Lecornu also confirmed the purchase of 200 Aster surface-to-air missiles from MBDA, some of which would be sent to Ukraine.

France provided 3.8 billion euros (\$4.15 billion) of aid to Ukraine from 24 February 2022 to 31 December 2023, including military equipment worth 2.62 billion euros (\$2.86 bil-

lion) and 1.2 billion euros (\$1.31 billion) to the European Peace Facility.

Some of the more prominent French weapons delivered to Ukraine include 30 Caesar self-propelled truck-mounted howitzers, a SAMP/T air defense system, and an unspecified number of SCALP long-range air-launched cruise missiles.

In addition, France has trained 10,000 Ukrainian soldiers in Poland and France.

Stratolaunch Achieves First Powered Hypersonic Test Vehicle Flight

Stratolaunch achieved the first powered flight of its Talon-A hypersonic test vehicle, TA-1, last week.

Reaching Mach 5, the flight achieved its primary objectives, including safe air-launch release of the test vehicle, engine ignition, acceleration, sustained climb in altitude, and a controlled water landing.

Mach 5 is the threshold of hypersonic speed.

“While I can’t share the specific altitude and speed TA-1 reached due to proprietary agreements with our customers, we are pleased to share that in addition to meeting all primary and customer objectives of the flight, we reached high supersonic speeds approaching Mach 5 and collected a great amount of data at an incredible value to our customers,” Stratolaunch president and CEO **Zachary Krevor** said.

TA-1 Hypersonic Test Vehicle

The trial is the culmination of months of preparation and testing, including two captive carry flight

tests in December and February.

A Roc aircraft launched the disposable TA-1 with a payload of 1,000 pounds (453 kilograms), according to *Interesting Engineering*.

The two-fuselage aircraft can carry three Talons simultaneously and release them at different altitudes and locations, the outlet added.

Powered Test Vehicle

The test vehicle is powered by an Ursa Major Hadley engine with a thrust of 5,000 pounds (2,268 kilograms).

Colorado-based Ursa designed, built, and tested the liquid oxygen and kerosene, oxygen-rich staged combustion cycle rocket engine within ten years, according to *Interesting Engineering*.

More Talon Versions

Meanwhile, the company plans to test Talon’s first reusable version, the TA-2, and is set to manufacture the second reusable version, the TA-3.

“Our goal with this flight was to continue our risk reduction approach for TA-2’s first reusable flight and be steadfast on our commitment of delivering maximum value to our customers. We are excited to review the data from today’s test and use it as we plan our next steps toward TA-2’s first flight later this year,” Krevor added.

Additionally, A larger hypersonic vehicle, A-Z, with a speed of up to Mach 10 is reportedly on the horizon.



► Sweden Conducts First Surveillance Flight Near Russia After NATO Membership



Sweden has conducted its first surveillance mission as an official NATO member near Russia's border over the Baltic Sea.

The Swedish Air Force reconnaissance flight flew by the eastern border of Poland, shared in part by the Russian exclave of Kaliningrad.

A Saab 340 aerial early warning and control plane and a Gulfstream S102B Korpen electric intelligence aircraft, capabilities from the 72nd Special Air Squadron and the 73rd Signals Intelligence Squadron, were deployed on the mission.

Both flights took off from Malmen Air Base in southern Sweden.

Sweden and NATO

The surveillance flight took place just three days after Sweden became NATO's 32nd member, ending the country's 200-year non-alignment, and a 20-month delay following a holdout by Turkey.

Sweden's membership took effect after it delivered its instrument of accession to the treaty in Washington, DC.

"Sweden's accession makes NATO stronger, Sweden safer and the whole Alliance more secure," NATO Secretary General **Jens Stoltenberg** said.

"Today's accession demonstrates that NATO's door remains open and that every nation has the right to choose its own path," he added.

The country's recent contributions to the organization include troop reinforcements in Latvia as well as delivering a seminar alongside NATO's Civil Protection Group to bolster inter-alliance cooperation between private sectors.

Xwing to Demo Autonomous Airlift, Logistics for US Army

Aviation startup Xwing has secured a contract to demonstrate autonomous airlift and logistics missions for the US Army.

The agreement is part of a US Department of Defense program seeking small businesses to develop prototypes to support its autonomous requirements.

The initiative focuses on associated innovations including remote command, target localization, sensor functionalities, and 360-degree situational awareness.

Xwing wrote that its autonomous flight solution addresses "critical operational challenges" in contested environments while decreasing risks to warfighters.

It can also be used for force structure, transport, and combat operations alongside tactical applications, the company added.

"Xwing is at the forefront of uncrewed aviation, focusing near-term on transforming operations in scenarios typically described by the three Ds of robotics: dull, dirty, and dangerous," Xwing Product



Head **Kevin Antcliff** explained.

"This innovation is crucial for reducing dependency on manned aircraft confronted with these threats. By shifting to uncrewed aircraft, we aim to enhance safety, efficiency, and operational flexibility across various mission types."

US Army Autonomy Program

The US Army wrote that the contract for the autonomy program's initial phase cost \$13 million, with each of the 20 winners receiving \$400,000.

Work for the next stage will take place over 18 to 24 months. Four companies will be evaluated according to their performance and become eligible for a Phase II contract worth \$1.9 million.

"To support mobility and navigation across multiple terrains, it's important we develop and employ ground and aerial robotic autonomous systems throughout the Army," US Army Autonomy Portfolio Manager **Nicole Fox** stated.

"Solutions developed via the competition – and through follow-on [Small Business Innovation Research] contracts – will support Soldier safety and efficiency in contested environments."

Flight Trial for US Air Force

Xwing conducted a separate autonomy test under the US Air Force's innovation arm AFWERX earlier this year. ►►

► The activity validated the startup's flight technology on a Cessna 208B Grand Caravan high-wing aircraft for autonomous takeoffs and landings as well as cargo transports between bases in California.

Ramadan Brings No Relief as Israel-Hamas War Rages in Gaza

Gaza's deadliest war showed no signs of abating as the Muslim holy month of Ramadan began Monday (11 March) amid a grueling humanitarian crisis that has pushed much of the territory to the brink of starvation.

UN and aid groups say only a fraction of the supplies needed for Gaza's 2.4 million people have been allowed in since Israel placed it under near-total siege after the October 7 attack.

As the Muslim world welcomed Ramadan with the customary daytime fast, many Gazans awoke to bombardment that saw residents once more search through the rubble of destroyed homes for survivors and bodies.

"The start of Ramadan has been sad and covered in darkness, with the taste and stench of blood everywhere," said one displaced Palestinian man, Awni al-Kayyal, 50.

"The (Israeli) occupation does not want us to have any joy during Ramadan. We do not have any food for

our iftar table," he said, referring to the fast-breaking evening meal.

A Cyprus government spokesman said a Spanish charity ship with food aid was set to sail from the island within hours to the coastal Gaza Strip, where the UN has repeatedly warned of famine.

The non-governmental group Open Arms said its boat would tow a barge with 200 tonnes of food, which its partner the US charity World Central Kitchen would later unload on Gaza's shores.

Fighting meanwhile raged on across Gaza, with the Israeli military reporting that troops killed 15 militants "in close encounters, sniper fire and airstrikes."

It added that "several Hamas operatives were arrested" during raids on homes in southern Gaza, while witnesses reported violent clashes in several areas through the night.

Gaza's health ministry said at least 67 people were killed over the past 24 hours.

The Hamas government media office said separately that more than 40 airstrikes targeted homes in Khan Yunis, Gaza City and other areas.

'Immense pain'

Multiple countries airdropped aid into northern Gaza on Sunday, but the United Nations' aid coordinator for the area has said boosting supply by land would be far more effective.

Some of the food packages smashed open on impact, leaving residents picking through the dirt to salvage what they could, AFP TV images showed.

The war started by the October 7 Hamas attack on Israel has killed

31,112 Palestinians, mostly women and children, according to the health ministry in Hamas-ruled Gaza.

Weeks of talks involving US, Qatari and Egyptian mediators failed to bring about a truce and hostage exchange deal ahead of the intended target of the start of Ramadan.

Both sides have blamed each other for failing to reach a deal, after Israel demanded a full list of surviving hostages and Hamas called for Israel to pull out all its troops from Gaza.

A source with knowledge of the ceasefire talks told AFP "there will be a diplomatic push especially in the next 10 days" with a view to securing a deal within the first half of Ramadan.

The Islamic holy month this year is "all pain," said Ahmed Kamis, 40, in Gaza's far-southern city of Rafah, where around 1.5 million people have tried to find refuge but are still at risk from Israeli bombing.

But even as many Palestinians did not know where to find their next meal, others still found ways to celebrate the start of the holy month, fashioning meager decorations and distributing traditional fanous lanterns between their tents.

In Washington, President Joe Biden, who faces growing criticism for his steadfast support of Israel as the civilian death toll in Gaza soars, issued a statement marking the start of Ramadan.

This year, it comes at a moment of immense pain," Biden said.

As Muslims gather around the world over the coming days and weeks to break their fast, the suffering of the Palestinian people will be front of mind for many. It is front of mind for me." ■



Popular Life paid Taka 24,41,68,189 (Twenty Four Crore Forty One Lakh Sixty Eight Thousand One Hundred Eighty Nine) by 7,468 checks to the insurance claimers



At a recent meeting held in the auditorium of the Diploma Engineers Institution (IDEB) in Dhaka, Popular Life Insurance Company Limited presented checks totaling taka 24,41,68,189 to 7,468 insurance customers' claims. Mohammad Joynal Bari, chairman of the Insurance Development and Controller Authority, served as the meeting's chief guest. Sheikh Kabir Hossain, chairman of the Bangladesh Insurance Association, attended the meeting virtually as a special guest. BM Yousuf Ali, CEO and Managing Director of the Popular Life Insurance Company Limited, presided over the event. Abdullah Haroon Pasha, additional secretary for the Ministry of Finance, Moinul Islam, member for (administration) Insurance Development and Controller Authority, Kamrul Hassan, member for (life) Md. Nazrul Islam, member for (non-life) and Dr. Naznin Kawser Chowdhury, Executive Director, (Joint Secretary) were among those present at the meeting. BM Shawkat Ali, additional managing director of the company, presided over the event. The meeting was also attended by Mohammad Anis Uddin Miah, former secretary and senior consultant of the company, Mohammad Sirajul Haider NDC, former additional secretary and senior consultant of the company, Roy Debdas, former chief Insurance controller (In Charge) and senior consultant of the company, Colonel retd Ahsan Aziz PSC, senior consultant of the company, Nandan Bhattacharje and Mostafa Helal Kabir, additional managing directors, Syed Motahar Hossain, senior DMD, Mohammad Nowsher Ali Nayeem, Mohammad Abu Taher, Feroz Iftekhar, Md Habibur Rahman, Md Bashirul Islam and Emad Uddin Ahmed Prince, DMD Mohammad Kamal Hossain Mohsin, Md Khalilur Rahman Dulal, Syed Sultan Mahmud, and CFO Ershad Ali Hiru and other high officials of the company attended the program.

Photo shows guests are handing over check to the Insurance customer's claim.

It may be mentioned that the company has paid a total of 5 thousand 239 crore 6 lakh 52 thousand to 38,52,903 insurance customers till to date.

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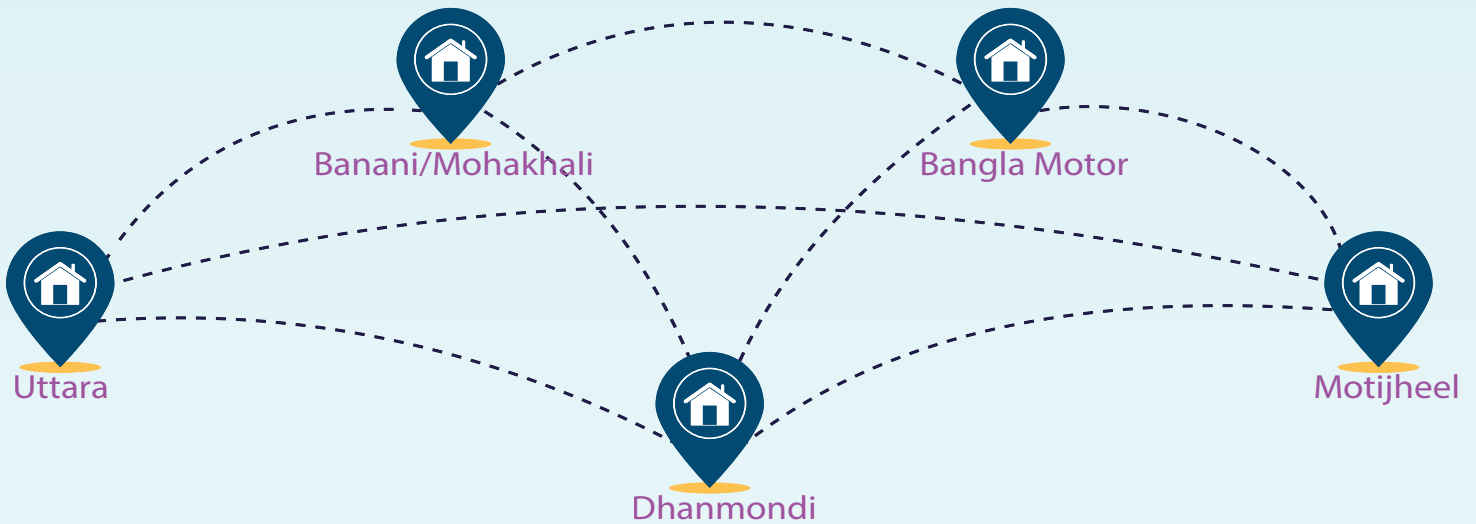


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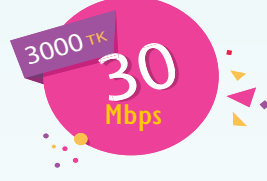
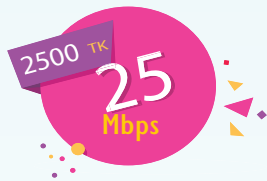
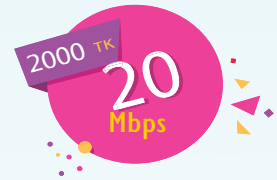
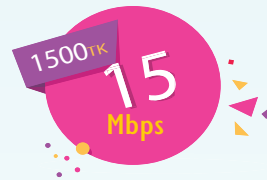
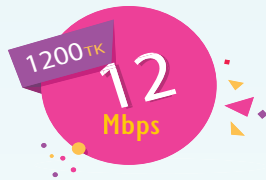
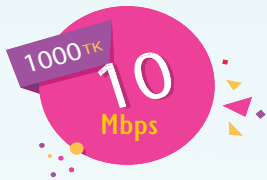
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