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# The Security World



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# THE SECURITY WORLD

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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# How Singapore has established its prominence in global politics and the lessons it offers for Bangladesh

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## General

Bangladesh a country in south Asia always in a dichotomy of being a large or small country. While geographically it is so, Bangladesh is the world's 101st country in size with an area of 148,460 sq. km (57,320 sq. miles) with a population more than 173 million. (Anon., n.d.) On the other hand Singapore is the 175th in size with an area of 728 sq. km (281sq. miles) with a population of 5,832,387. Singapore is ranked 30th of 145 out of the countries considered for the annual Global Firepower review. This country is a Top 10 financial power according to its global standing in key categories. Singapore is surrounded by larger neighbours Malaysia in the north with an area of 330,803 sq. km and Indonesia with 1,904,569 sq. km in the south

across the strait of Singapore. The geographical size or the larger and powerful neighbors did not bar Singapore to pursue its national interest and achieve what they wanted to achieve. In the present day context when the Centre of Economic Gravity is shifting toward Asia and IPR, the importance of Bangladesh is growing. This article makes an endeavor to study the background and realities and Singapore how it pursued and achieved the balance of power by balancing its foreign policy. Whether or not the country, which is substantially smaller than Bangladesh, was able to achieve the same degree of growth as a first-world nations is undoubtedly a matter worthy of study.

## **Singapore an Way out to Survive with Dignity** *Pre Independence Singapore*

Singapore, usually known as the Republic of Singapore, is a city-state with over three million in-▶▶



## Skyline of the Central Business District of Singapore, Marina Bay Singapore

►habitants. Singapore is a successful, sovereign nation with a parliamentary form of government, despite the fact that its area is only 710 square kilometers. A large number of individuals, both inside and outside the country's boundaries, questioned Singapore's ability to continue as an independent nation.

### *Independence and Recognition*

Obtaining independence unexpectedly on August 9, 1965, gaining recognition of Singapore's sovereign status was a crucial priority. Almost immediately after Singapore's admission to the UN on September 21, 1965, a small delegation of Singaporean officials, including the Deputy Prime Minister Dr. Toh Chin Chye and the Foreign Minister S. Rajaratnam, spent months traveling throughout continents to spread the word that this Southeast Asian island city-state was now an

independent and sovereign nation. They needed to make as many friends as possible as quickly as possible for survival. Lee Kuan Yew was Singapore's prime minister from 1959 to 1990 turning Singapore to a nation from the point of extinction to a first-world power.

### *Isolation to Aristocracy*

Singapore was able to attract the friendship and early support of prominent world figures such as the Chinese leader Deng Xiaoping, the German Chancellor Helmut Schmidt, the French President Jacques Chirac, the British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher, and the former US Secretaries of State Dr. Henry Kissinger and Madeleine Albright. It was possible due to the persuasiveness and determination of their pioneering leaders, including the first Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew, meaning personality matters. ►

### ► *Realities faced by the Leadership*

Due to its diminutive size, Singapore had no meaningful strategic impact; in international politics, they are now price-takers as opposed to price-setters, and they were unable to avoid global trends. It lacks an abundance of natural resources relative to its population size, as well as harbors in crucial locations to facilitate regional trade. Moreover, there is a limitation on the human diversity of the population. The leadership of Singapore had to overcome the following difficulties:

#### *Creation of Economic Space*

Given that the country's economy was in such a precarious situation shortly after gaining independence, the primary objective was to promote and encourage worldwide companies to invest in Singapore in order to stimulate the economy and provide employment opportunities. To achieve this objective, a great deal of pressure was placed on the domestic businesses to expand their operations abroad. They entered into free trade agreements with a number of other nations and regional organizations in order to assist the execution of these initiatives besides enacting legislation for financial and tax incentives.

#### *Sovereignty and Autonomy*

Even the tiniest nations must maintain their independence. Both Vietnam's invasion of Cambodia in 1978 (Times, 2019) and Russia's annexation of Crimea in 2014 were condemned by Singapore. The Minister of Foreign Affairs of Singapore, K. Shanmugam, expressed his displeasure of Russia's invasion of Crimea. He emphasized Singapore's aversion to invasions of sovereign nations by force, regardless of justification. (Singapore, 2014)

### *Rule of Law*

Singapore believes that global issues should be resolved through direct bilateral negotiation or the intervention of a neutral third party, such as the ICJ. The area known as Pedra Branca was listed as belonging to Malaysia on a map dated 1979. In February 1980, Singapore lodged a complaint against Malaysia. The dispute damaged bilateral relations for years. In September of 1994, Malaysia and Singapore achieved a compromise and signed an accord. South Ledge "belongs to the State in whose territorial seas it is located," the ICJ ruled on May 23, 2008, but Middle Rocks and Pedra Branca are regarded to be the territory of Malaysia and Singapore, respectively. Ultimately, the ICJ resolved the three-decade-long dispute between Singapore and Malaysia.

#### *The Integrity of the Territories*

Being a small country Singapore strictly focused on maintaining territorial integrity. Especially during contesting for Middle Rocks and Pedra Branca with Malaysia, they referred to ICJ and accepted the verdict.

#### *Relevance*

Singapore's significance to the rest of the globe cannot be taken for granted; rather, it must be maintained, preserved, and bolstered continuously. This objective has been pursued in a variety of methods, including assimilation into the greater Southeast Asian community and deeper integration with the region's social and political structures. These are only two of the numerous techniques have been taken. Singapore was one of the founding members of the ASEAN in 1967, only two years after attaining independence. The ►►



Map 1: Singapore and Surrounding Countries

► efforts to widen and enhance the ASEAN have been beneficial. Singapore's position have been firm as a part of a greater whole.

### *Getting the Balance Right*

In his 1976 work *Sinnatharim*, Rajaratnam conveyed this goal in a modest but too ambitious manner. He made the argument, "When there are

multiple suns. The gravitational attraction of each is not just diminished, but strategic utilization of the attraction of each diminishes it further. Careful use of the pull of each is not the only consideration. This aim has been, for Singapore, a balance of power, or, more precisely, a distribution of power that would deny undue dominance to a possible hegemon in the region by engaging external nations in relationship patterns that ►►

► achieve this objective. Specifically, this balance of power would prevent a future hegemon from dominating the region (Leifer, 2000, pp. 39, 40)

### *A Balance of Power Perspective*

Singapore's leaders have traditionally approached the subject of foreign policy from the standard realist perspective of a small state having to deal with a potentially hostile and government less globe. In Singapore, the concept and practice of balance of power have not been treated in a crudely mechanical fashion. Since it is not simply dependent on responding and adjusting to indices of military might by shifting alignment, as was commonplace in Europe throughout the seventeenth century. It has always been the case that the regional balance, or to be more exact, the allocation of power, has a discriminatory attitude. The question that must be answered is not how to defend against every potential good or negative factor that could affect Singapore's interests.

## **The Challenges**

### *China and the United States*

Singapore may now suffer a tug of war between two mightiest world power USA and China which in now the most interesting bilateral relationship in the global system. However the economic competition is turning to strategic competition to strategic rivalry. Especially, when the conflict is centering the Taiwan Strait, the Singapore will face a sever dilemma.

### *Parochialism and Nationalism*

Nations States around the world have become more aligned to larger States with benefit and led

to the "hollowing out" of the political centre. This tendency has led the world to a geopolitical situation predominantly by an increasingly instant transactional attitude and a zero-sum mindset.

### *Down-Trends of Multilateral, Rules-Based Trading System*

Many view international agreements as constraints on national autonomy and impediments to economic development. Singapore and the rest of ASEAN have benefited immensely over many decades from the free, open, rules-based trading system. If countries reject multilateralism and economic connections decline, a negative sum will occur.

## **How Singapore Advanced**

### *Singapore remained Vocal for Rules-Based International Order*

Singapore must defend the multilateral, rules-based global trading system because its trade volume is over three times the country's GDP. This wasn't a topic of contention; it was Singapore's very survival.

### *Singapore Tried to remain as a Sincere Broker*

Singapore was always bold in the quest of sovereignty and autonomy. Never has it compromised. Because of this approach, Singapore has been able to gain the respect of its peers and become a more important player in international affairs. It has been able to maintain positive relationships with the world's leading nations and play a positive role in international affairs thanks to the credibility it has earned. ►►

### ► *Relevancy was the Key*

The leadership always emphasized the need to underline the need for Singapore to remain relevant in order for the country to prosper and grow. The fact that Singapore hosted the meeting between US President Donald Trump and North Korean leader Kim Jong Un last year, he added, upheld the country's reputation as a neutral, dependable, and secure host as well as a dependable and consistent partner.

### *Be a Friend to All and Enemy of None*

Leadership stated the importance of fostering positive relationships with Singapore's immediate neighbors in order to maintain regional peace and stability. As Singapore's closest neighbors, Indonesia and Malaysia hold a unique place in the country's diplomatic priorities. The "ultimate currency" was Singapore's diplomacy. Following the foreign policy precept in line of the Singapore, Bangladesh has seen some very good returns thus far.

### *Strategic and IR Options*

As the external environment grows more unstable, it is imperative that Singapore maintain its agility and equilibrium. (Lai, 2019) Singapore adopted following IR Options:

- Push to Multilateralism.
- Remain a credible and dependable and trustworthy partner.
- Maintain its position on the global scene.
- Establish friendships with all.
- Political will, determination and leadership.

### **Bangladesh is in Quest for Economic Emancipation**

Once Henry Kissinger mocked Bangladesh saying as bottomless basket. The country has now presented itself as a role model of development. In last fifty year it has been able to achieve remarkable progress in different parameters and envisioned for achieving strategic visions step by step. IR, Foreign Policy and Strategic foresightedness will be even more crucial in the coming days. The Case of Singapore has been studied and learnt how a tiny island has adapted itself with the reality and adopted appropriate policies and strategies.

### **Statehood of Bangladesh**

#### *National Values*

The statutory guidance, spirit of Liberation War and evolvement of the nation through last fifty years the National values listed as follow:

- Democracy and Human Rights.
- Socialism and freedom from exploitation.
- Secularism.
- National Unity (People's Bonding).
- Equality and justice.
- Humanity.
- Mutual respect for cultural diversity and religious beliefs.

#### *National Purpose*

Fundamental aim of the state to realise through the democratic process a socialist society, free from exploitation- a society in which the rule of ►►

► law, fundamental human rights and freedom, equality and justice, political, economic and social, will be secured for all citizens". The objective, aim, and ideology are rooted in the 1971 Liberation War. Three realities emerge as a result of this purpose: determination to have political autonomy; no discrimination based on caste, color, creed, religion, or parochial differences; and statutory guidance, National Purpose, and National Interest. All constitute the reasons for our Independence, aspiration for our existence, and urge to prosper as an independent state to achieve a 'Bangladesh Dream'.

### *Strategic Vision*

The Strategic Vision of Bangladesh in the current geopolitical scenario is concluded as "Secured, prosperous and enlightened Bangladesh with peaceful, stable and dignified position in the competing world.

### *National Interest*

In Bangladesh perspective her vital interest is the – "Sovereignty and territorial integrity, Spirit of the "Liberation War" and "July Revolution", Political Autonomy and economic independence, Cultural integrity and heritage and Internal Peace and Stability of the State." In current geo-political environment significant interest for Bangladesh may be – to survive as an independent nation with dignity and human security. Bangladesh will stand tall with three Zeroes; zero poverty, zero unemployment and zero carbon emission.

## **Dynamics of National Security Situation**

### *Environment Around*

As the World's only surviving superpower, the

U.S. will not abandon its military preeminence in the IOR, and it will use soft and hard force to accomplish so. China's official policy is "development without confrontation," suggesting the country will enhance its weight through diplomatic and economic means. India will continue to dominate the Indian Ocean. A stable, independent Bangladesh free of Chinese influence would help the US and India. China will prioritize a BoB energy and trade entrance. India will continue to consider Bangladesh essential to its strategic interests and would use all means to reduce Chinese predominance.

### *Sovereignty of the State*

Sovereignty in the modern world usually refers to a government's freedom to formulate policy and pursue those to the best of country's interest without any external influences. In the present context Bangladesh will reemerge as stable and autonomous nation. National unity and cohesion will be the source of power and central to the National Sovereignty and Dignity.

### *Non Traditional Security*

In the past whenever Bangladesh had flourished, fortune seekers came here and tried to subjugate the people. Bargis, Mughals, British and Pakistan extracted the bounties from this land. Today internal peace and stability much depends on the happenings beyond its national boundary. Bangladesh remains susceptible to the major powers' game plans. They may ignite internal political unrests and discord into violence by fuelling feuds. They may also cause great security hazards by sponsoring ethnic or extremist groups for their gains. ►►

### ► *Maritime Security*

To get the desired blue growth, Bangladesh needs unhindered access to the living and non-living resources of the seas under national jurisdiction. Any disturbance or interference on her SLOC, will bring the nation on the knees in no time. From that consideration, any military confrontation is likely to strike the very lifeline of Bangladesh.

### *Challenges Ahead*

Coming to new century Bangladesh started rising over the horizon changing its fate from aid receiving to achieving self-reliance. Challenges those lay ahead can be categorized to security and development related one with some having both implications:

- **Rohingya Issue** Over the time this issue has become one of the top security concern of the country with very little or no response from Myanmar. With the changed political situation in Myanmar, Bangladesh may need to pursue an adaptive policy.
- **The Russia – Ukraine War and Middle East crises** had an immediate impact on Bangladesh and the global economy which is also impacting Bangladesh.
- **Phenomenon of climate change** is one of the most serious challenges that have pulled back the national development and endangered security from the climate refuge. Mega scale natural disasters have badly affected the economy, crop damage and causing internal displacements.
- **Any dispute in Bay of Bengal** will have both security and long term development concerns for Bangladesh for maintaining it SLOC. The

situation will be much grave if it is a prolonged one due to huge dependency on import and more importantly for energy resources.

## **Strategic Options for Bangladesh**

### *Strategic End State of “Bangladesh Dream”*

“Bangladesh Dream” refers to a utopian society with full economic and social equality and unrestrained political freedom based on nationalism, socialism, democracy, and secularism. Bangladesh must utilize multipliers, catalytic, and complementing actions bilaterally, regionally, and globally to protect its total sovereignty and political and economic autonomy in pursuit of IR. To get the most out of IR, Bangladesh will need to think outside the box and make some significant changes to its strategy.

### *Strategic Ways*

Bangladesh, it needs to have its Border secured as like any independent Nation strives to have. The nation must preserve its Political Autonomy for which the nation has struggled hundreds of years. For ensuring the wellbeing of her citizenry who were exploited for thousand years by intruders and political masters, the country must have internal Stability. Lives of the people of the country must be valued with state being at their service. The development of the national institutions and infrastructures need to be ensured. Any wrong Strategic choice by the State the peoples suffer. For development and security will mostly revolve around its engagement options and policies.

### *IR Theory Basis for Foreign Policy Options*

Bangladesh by and large believes in rule based international order and effectiveness of the interna- ►►

▸ tional institutions. While Bangladesh may tend to rely on the IR theory of Liberalism and expects the states to behave accordingly. But It accepts the fact that the anarchical international system where there is no international government, theory of Realism gets the dominance in determining the international relation, power politics and international order. As such Bangladesh should base it IR on basis of Defensive Realism Theory.

### ***Friendship on the basis of Sovereignty and Equality***

Bangladesh seeks friendship to all. It also expects other nations also to extend their friendly hands on the basis on sovereignty, equality and dignity. It is a part of the National Strategic culture of Bangladesh to offer cooperation but also very resistant if there is an element of dictation which tantamount to an interference. As such Bangladesh will look for an engagement policy with other Nations on the basis of gains on both sides not exploitation.

### ***Adaptable Foreign Policy***

Flexible, intelligent, adaptable, sensible, recyclable foreign policy with built in feedback system incorporated. The policy should be flexible enough to Foreign Policy should be able to assess the call of the moment and seek the appropriate decision for the Government to the best interest of the nation.

### ***More Engagement with People to People; Culture to Cultures***

While at the policy engagements would continue on the basis of a structured policy by different

Government offices the people to people contact shall have to be facilitated. Bangladesh diaspora living in there have to be actively sponsored. Regular exchange of academics, students, cultural groups, sports teams, business enterprises should be encouraged to have exchange programme even at private level.

### ***Defence Cooperation but Not Alliance***

Bangladesh desires to maintain good relations with neighbours. Bangladesh need not to have any military alliance with any country for its national security objectives. However, it does not limits the defence cooperation which Bangladesh has with number countries such as India, China, USA, KSA etc. for different weapons system, technology and training exchange programme. Bangladesh may consider military deployment when it is brokered by UN with specific mandate supported by UN Resolution.

### ***Soft Power Development; Education and Technology***

It is a universal truth that people always tends to have a friend who is capable and who has potentials. In fifty years of independence Bangladesh has risen to a place of respect today. Bangladesh needs to be strong. One of the most precious and important assets it has is the population which is still youth bulge. Bangladesh needs to invest heavily in education and technology. Experts say that agriculture shall continue to meet the food security while the education will lead the nation to a new destiny. Education should give more emphasis on STEAM; Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts and Mathematics. ▶▶

### ► *Rohingya Issues to Handle with Specific Aim under a Plan*

One of the major security issues Bangladesh is facing is Rohingya issue which Bangladesh must handle prudently. But, the issue must not die here. It has to be carried forward since it is a major issue possibly turning vital for Bangladesh security as well as for South Asian Region in the long run. Bangladesh needs to make it common agenda point whatsoever repetitive it might appear.

### Conclusions

Having studied the case of Singapore, it is understood that well thought of Foreign Policy and due diligence by the leadership and determination of the people may lead a nation of even a size of a city state Singapore may take to a height that many country aspires for years. Singapore had the determination, leaders had the ability to maintain their relevance by a smart application of multilateral foreign policy. While it maintained friendship to all major powers including the dominant neighbour, never it compromised on the question of autonomy. In the neighbourhood, it is not always smaller powers who suffers the dilemmas but the bigger powers do too. As Bangladesh has always wanted and strived to work for neighbourhood stability, expects cooperation from both the neighbours. The strategic relation should be complementary to each other with mutual respects, with the principle of “we grow together” to make our development sustainable. Bangladesh needs to explore the opportunity all over the world as the country has limited natural resources. Its main resources is the Population, manpower. Manpower need to effective employed to generated in-

come in home and abroad. For this Bangladesh require to pursue IR with other countries. Especially the country who has the ability to influence.

### Recommendations

Bangladesh needs to remain on track to meet her desired development goals while facing all odds on the way. To materialize the dream of a new Bangladesh with no discrimination and fulfilling people’s will, the followings are recommended:

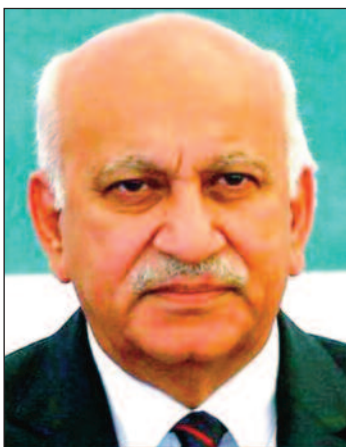
- Bangladesh maintain a good International Relations on the basis of equality and dignity.
- Singapore Case study lessons shows that a small nation can also survive with national security, international relevance and strong economy with a comprehensive balancing strategic policy. It also indicates the long term vision and persuasion of the leadership.
- On different issues Bangladesh must go for calculated Alignment Protocols with countries and forums as required on specific issues. Bangladesh should try and join as many forums as possible.
- Bangladesh may take initiative to propose an inclusive and greater regional platform where Bangladesh may have a greater space for multilateralism.
- Bangladesh should extend its diplomatic reach by increasing its diplomatic missions to as many countries as possible to explore the opportunities for Bangladesh. Especially in South America and Africa.
- Bangladesh must maintain National Unity to foil any threat towards its security and development. ■

# Time for Another Nobel Genuflection?

*Trump's latest idea could be a verbal carrot for Netanyahu*

MJ Akbar

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argument is not wholly invalid. The Nobel citation claimed that Obama won for “extraordinary efforts to strengthen international diplomacy and cooperation between peoples” when he had not even settled down in the White House. There is no reason why the Nobel Peace Prize committee should not revert to Peaceful Genuflection.

A campaign is wandering around select parts of the world that President Donald Trump should get the Nobel Prize for Peace in 2025. Since Barack Obama got the prize in 2009 for doing nothing, the

But this may miss the point. Trump should get the Nobel Prize for Service to Columnists. He is a gift which keeps on giving, and I say this with the utmost respect and gratitude, just in case the now truncated CIA misunderstands. The White House has produced a headline a day to keep editors at bay. Some are effective, and some touched with the bizarre, but all have impact. Some of the so-called outlandish demands touch the right nerve, particularly those which put brakes on a free ride. No one ever asked Ukraine for quid pro quo. Its President Zelensky, whose government seesaws between defiance and corruption, knew instantly that the game had changed when Trump demanded Ukraine’s rare earths in return for \$200 billion in gratis grants. Zelensky, who had claimed that this \$200 billion was fiction, quickly bent as backward as a yoga guru in his prime. He invited American companies to dig for rare ▶▶



► earths, agreed to meet Vladimir Putin and waited for the next diktat. It works.

Except when it doesn't. Trump's desire to turn the bloodstained Gaza Strip into a playing beach for the rich, teeming perhaps with Trump Towers and Trump casinos, is as tragic as impossible. Surely, Trump does not believe in it; he is too intelligent. No Arab state, and no Palestinian, will accept the exodus of Palestinians from Gaza. The idea is a verbal carrot for Benjamin Netanyahu, a prelude to some unclear and unexamined prospective deal. The danger is that the bizarre might defeat the good.

A literary festival encourages diverse thoughts. A day in serene Bhopal, for a dialogue with Lt General (retired) Raj Shukla on the Middle East, encouraged me to add language to the litany of paradox. Let's start with the Middle East. Which East is it in the Middle of? If any Asian region can

be described as the middle of the east then surely it is India. Colonial names defined a colonial perspective, and we are still struggling to develop an independent language of geopolitics.

The mind wandered towards the mysteries of the spoken word. Is rehearse the opposite of hearse? Hearse is the vehicle of death, so what do we do in a rehearsal? Lift your imagination out of the plastic bag of convention and let it run.

Just in case you are perplexed by the success of English, here are a few helpful facts. Some 80,000 English words, or around 40 per cent of the vocabulary, originated in French. Old French became the literal lingua franca of the English aristocracy after the northern French, or Normans, conquered England in the middle of the 11th century. The new upper class used French to demonstrate their superiority, creating an amal-►

▶ gamated language that gave us Shakespeare in the 16th century and international discourse in the 20th. French could not compete because English is French, mispronounced. English is careless about purity of diction or grammar, and thereby democratic. Carelessness makes it adaptable. As the French might ruefully say: Voila!

Some notes from a recent book on my reading list, *How the World Made the West: A 4000-Year History* by Josephine Quinn.

- Every familiar alphabet owes something to the birthplace of secular scripture, ancient Egypt. In the Egyptian script, based on the hieroglyph, A resembled the head of a bull (*alep*), B was a house (*bayit*), D a door (*dalet*), and so on. Lebanese

traders brought the script to Greece circa 750 BCE.

- Aristotle thought Europeans were full of spirit but lacked intelligence; Asians were full of intelligence but lacked spirit. Aristu, widely acknowledged as the First Teacher of European civilisation and a significant influence on Arabian and Persian philosophy, thou shouldst be living at this hour. So much has changed, and so little has changed. (Aristu is Aristotle in Arabic.)

- In ancient Athenian democracy, six out of seven public posts were determined by lottery; the seventh was reserved for the military. Elements of a lottery are still evident in a contemporary election. In old-world Athens women wore a veil and ▶



Trump says US could 'take over' Gaza and rebuild it.



► needed a male guardian's sanction to travel or work, so maybe the Taliban should begin studies on the pre-Islamic past. Persian women, in contrast, owned businesses and property, ran shops and travelled freely.

**The last word** on language must surely be left to the inglorious pun. The Republican American politician John Warner never became famous for his five terms in the Senate from Virginia, but turned into a household name after his marriage

to the abundant Hollywood star Elizabeth Taylor in 1976. As the well-read reader will surely know, he was not her only husband.

The stormy Elizabeth Taylor married often, and once the same man twice, which is understandable given that he was Richard Burton. John Warner, her sixth husband, lasted six years. After their marriage a caustic, petulant Democratic opponent remarked that the voters of Virginia had elected the three biggest boobs in the country. ■

# The World in (Dis)order

## Air Vice Marshal Mahmud Hussain (Retd)

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Never since the advent of the post-Cold War period, the world has been so much under the stress of an unpredictable and ramshackle times. The world order which with the debacle of the

erstwhile Soviet Union had sparked off a sense of hope and innovation is, no longer, in the making. Then with the United States being the single superpower, the idea of maintaining a stable world order seemed a manageable task. It was the French Foreign Minister Hubert Vedrine who called the United States a “hyper-power”, not perhaps in the negative sense. With a single superpower, the world could upend the age-old principle of anarchy as theorized by the realist formula of international politics. Many thought that

anarchy proliferating the milieu of global society would now be replaced by a “hierarchical order” where amity will be the pursuit of global leaders. But such global aspiration was transient, and died down under the duress of capitulation to the whims of decrepit great power leadership. Three decades after 1989, the year of the fall of communism, the world has never been the same.

In recent times, the leaders have invested the world with major conflicting crises. Putin is the modern-day recollection of Adolf Hitler. He suffers from a megalomaniac disposition of a distraught leader. Russia which had the possibility of regaining its past leadership influence in international affairs has lost that chance because of his revanchist policies. His continued hostilities to neighbors have not strengthened Russia’s great power profile, rather it has weaned him of the support of Russian population. Putin has turned the entire Europe against himself. He might be lounging in the hope that with Donald Trump in ►►



► power, military and economic assistance to Europe will be transactional at the cost of Ukraine succumbing to the superior fire power of Russian military. He is just replicating the historical blunder of Hitler, the person he hates most. His invasion of Crimea in 2014 reminds us of Hitler's attack on Russia just within one year of the signing of the non-aggression pact between Nazi Germany and Soviet Union, known as Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact, in August 1939. The pact was a farce because neither Hitler nor Stalin had genuine understanding of how peace had to be chalked out through the relative gains of territorial acquisition of other countries. Both Hitler and Stalin believed that they were enemy to each other, and wanted to destroy each other's armies, take each other's resources and enslave each other's people. In addition, Hitler's obsession with lebensraum, creating living space for the Germanic (Aryan) peoples, led to his blunderous initiation of Operation Barbarossa. It is now well recorded by the historians that the invasion of the Soviet Union ultimately decided the tragic fate of the post-Hitler Germany.

February next year, the war in Ukraine will enter its fourth year. Putin is just witnessing the nemesis of Alfred von Schlieffen. Schlieffen Plan named after Field Marshal Schlieffen, had its seed in Germany's sense of fear of being surrounded by her enemies, the alliance between France and Russia, and Germany's long-term rivalry with France. The plan was a masterpiece of military grand strategy that formulated the defeat of France in six weeks. At the end, the plan failed to ensure German victory, and World War I petered out to long five years at the cost of 15 to 22 million deaths, and 23 million wounded military personnel. The moral of human catastrophe in the Great War is so tragically defined in Erich Maria Remarque's novel *All Quiet on the Western Front*. In World War I, the average age of soldiers was just about 24-25 years. Since so much youth was engaged in the war, German defeat only engraved the loss of great future of its demographic potential.

Putin's delusion of an early victory has produced similar distraction in reality. In February 2022, when Russia launched a full-scale invasion of ►►

► Ukraine and began occupying more of the country, starting the biggest conflict in Europe since World War II, his idea to “demilitarize and denazify” failed to fathom the moral strength of the Ukrainians and the support, military and humanitarian, Ukraine would receive from its western partners. Such western resolve has also come as a shock to Putin. The west has demonstrated that giving security guarantee to Ukraine is in its regional geo-political interest. When peace comes, Ukraine might have to accept the loss of some of its territory. The 7 percent that Russia took in its first invasion in 2014 of Crimea and eastern Donbas will certainly be irrecoverable as well as the additional 11 percent that Russia has seized since February 2022. Besides territorial gains, Russia has nothing to pride in itself as a great power. It would have to swallow Ukraine’s entitlement to full membership of NATO. The biggest loss for Russia as a consequence of Putin’s adventurism is that Russia, no longer, can claim metaphorically as a country belonging to the continent of Europe. Moreover, Russia is equally close to exhaustion like Ukraine, and the world can hardly expect Russia to be a major partner for managing global order. Mackinder’s Heartland was the area then ruled by the Russian Empire and after that by the Soviet Union, is no longer Kremlin’s prized heritage of inheritance. Putin’s vision of ancestral revanchism has further denuded Russia of a rational policy option in post-Cold War period.

The second major crisis of this decade is the Middle East. Middle East is now at the center of Heartland Theory, a major shift from the erstwhile East Europe. Instead of Iraq, Libya and Syria, Israel poses greatest threat to regional peace. Netanyahu has never shown a clear perception that the connection between peoples and

their territorial identity is not irredeemable. Given the Jewish nation’s rich and powerful history, its political leaders have failed to match its genius in science and technology of the past two centuries with regional geo-political realities. For Netanyahu, war has turned into an order for politics. If the Generals of the Israeli Defence Forces had their way, the war that Israel has launched would have seen its end by now. But Netanyahu feels the other way. Like Putin, he is immersed in a pathological dealing with the Palestinians. Like many die-hard Jews, he is obsessed with the idea of Eretz Israel, the land of Israel for Jews only. He seems to ignore that of 9.6 million people in Israel, close to 2.6 million people are non-Jewish close to 25 percent of the total population. He even seems to ignore that there is large Jewish community outside Israel in the US, UK, Russia, France, Canada, Argentina, Australia and Germany. Like Putin, he also wears the nemesis of Hitler.

Adolf Hitler conducted history’s most gruesome treatment of the Jews in the last century. His killing of the Jews was aimed at the annihilation of the Jewish nation. His pogroms resulted in three million being murdered in gas chambers of concentration camps in Poland with one million at the notoriously famous Auschwitz which has become a historical symbol of assault on human conscience. The genocide which murdered six million Jews in a methodical way in World War II has been given a tragic literary coinage known as the Holocaust.

More than 45,000 Palestinians have been killed in direct attacks in Gaza since Israel launched its war on Hamas following the Hama’s October 7, 2023 attack. The most agonizing part of the systematic killing has verified that 70 percent of the deaths are women and children. Gaza is now a completely decimated city standing on the total ►►



► destruction of rubbles and dead human bodies.

Both Israel and Hamas have been accused of war crimes. What is most harrowing is the figure of 186,000 deaths due to malnutrition or as a result of wounds inflicted by Israeli bombs released by NGO Doctors of the World. How many thousands will die in the coming months, hardly misses one's guess if the war is not stopped. But as one of the Israeli General puts it, "Soldiers fight wars; politicians decide when we have won". Netanyahu has proved that how much he misinterprets the phrase of Carl Von Clausewitz, "War is an instrument of politics".

The most important news of the current world order is the stunning victory of Donald Trump to become its 47th President. He has spelled out his political actions in the post-Cold War era for America and the world. World order is, in some sense, the making of great powers' leaders. After

the Cold War, it was a return to an old idea of a "hyper-power" to bring order and prosperity to the world in the interest of America. What is clear of Biden administration is that lackadaisical leadership breeds uncertainty with penalizing cost to both the hyper-power and the world. Now positive American influence has to come through something deeper than mere chauvinistic rhetoric of Trump. Trump has a unique opportunity to go down in history as someone great who looked at the world through the visionary examples of Roosevelt, Eisenhower, Kennedy, Bush Sr, Clinton and Obama. His exemplars worked to build a world based on consensual institutions and regimes. He will do good to remember that he is the second President to win non-consecutive two terms since Grover Cleveland in 1892, and to do justice to the latter's achievement, he might as well eschew the path that brought his downfall in the first term. ►►

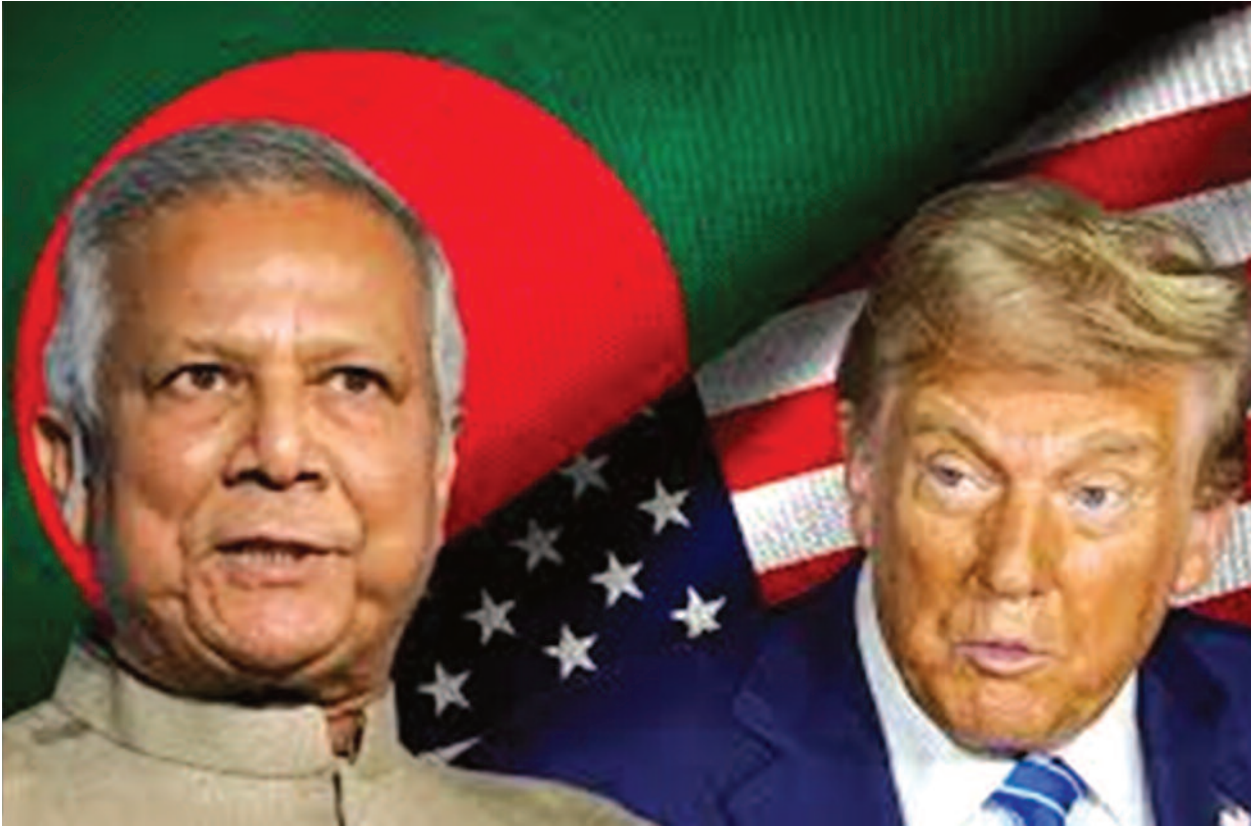
► From Ukraine to Israel there is a mad competition to woo and grease Trump. His test of leadership will come not so much from extricating illegal immigrants from American soil but how deftly he has managed US ally, Israel in bending down to truthfully work for peace in Palestine. Trump's commitment to end Ukraine-Russia war by setting peace through strength demands unusual skills of diplomatic élan. If he takes conciliatory mood to Putin and upbraiding attitude to Zelensky, it will produce a kind of dis(order) whose bitter consequences will be resented by Europe. America might lose Europe because if America withdraws substantial cost defray from NATO, Europe will find its own alternative for self-financing. The cost for America is that European leadership will be in no one's hand. One can easily make a comparison of such a scene with that existed before the Concert of Europe in 1815.

Trump's oft-delivered retort, "The is the world's problem, not America's" undermines the stature of a great power President. Overcoming this personal stance will be a great challenge for Trump. He will do good to guard against the likes of disrupter of order noticeable in Bolsonaro of Brazil, Le Pen in France, or Putin of Russia. If he concedes to international system of populist movement, he will certainly be failing as the President of the United States. The destruction of lives in Ukraine and Palestine is tragic. Trump should prevail in helping those afflicted nations with his allies in ending conflict and fostering peace. Order is what he should be looking for. He must remember that America has given him something by way of gift that is worth cherishing to turn into global good.

American economy is the envy of the world. The other two rising economic giants, China and India, are still behind America. It is, no doubt,

that American share of global GDP has decreased but in terms of providing quality of life to citizens, it still outgrows the two most populous countries. China's output per person is lower than a third of America's; India's is smaller still. Average wages in America's poorest state, Mississippi, are higher than the average wages in Britain, Canada and Germany. American productivity may have slowed but it still leads the world. America accounts for 4 percent of the global population, and by 2100, it will still be about the same, according to the UN. By 2100, China's share is expected to drop from 18 percent to 6 percent, while the European Union will go from 6 percent to 3.5 percent. America will also remain younger than them, thus making it possible for her to remain ahead of the rest in garnering higher income from labour productivity. In economy, the US does not have to be made great again; it is great already. So, Trump's fear of losing economic security by imposing trade and tariff barriers to foreign countries will unnecessarily start trade wars whose effects will fall upon the Third World. So, squandering the US economic gift which Trump inherits as the President will proliferate into strategic realm. America is the apex to ensure free market economy with appropriate financial institutions and just trade regimes. Majority of global cross border capital flow is done in US dollar. If Trump adopts a severe protectionist policy toward others, China and others will have to trade in alternative currency, say Yuan. Already 25-30 percent of Chinese goods and services are now settled in its own currency. The prevalence of many currencies in international business and trade will create confusion and cause a disorderly atmosphere of toxic politics.

Artificial Intelligence (AI) and space will be the next frontier of world order that the US will grab. But perils are there if Trump's devotee Elon Musk turns the gifts into populist agenda for making ►►



► acquisitive money. AI and space are everyone's domain for research, exploitation and making money from. The technological dimensions of the two areas are open to potential hostilities of states. It is not possible to demarcate the national boundary in space as it is in case of land boundary or maritime boundary. Moreover, space possesses the highest value of resources, and is the abode of electro-magnetic spectrum. The world is flowing with innovative euphoria. But it is uncertain how long this euphoric mood will persist. Competition over the resources of space and a race toward making AI understand better than human beings in doing jobs may put America face to face with China spurring disorderly and risky manner of doing all sorts of innovative artifices. People's private lives will be under threat. Reinventing a useful strategy to take the entire world through the merger of AI and Space Science in a holistic manner will be a great challenge

both for the world's number one politician, Trump and its richest man, Elon Musk. Two much concentration of power in these two men will be a determinant in restoring or disrupting international order.

All through the history since 19th century, Europe and America have dominated Asia. 21st century prompts the world to have a fresh look at Asia. China and India never played a role in the last two centuries in making the world order. Now in this century, their actions seem quite unpredictable. In August, "monsoon revolution" in Bangladesh led to the ouster of Sheikh Hasina, who had become unbearably autocratic. India has given her shelter. Bangladesh feels upset with her attitude as a big neighbor. India has not been able to develop cordial relations in South Asia. Her great power mindset suffers from an isolationist syndrome and it augurs unwell for regional security. ►►

► What makes China suspect of western intention is America and her allies' scorn of China's military growth, economic resilience and putatively good behavior in many global issues. Belt-and-Road Initiative is seen by America as something to overpower western dominance in Eurasia. If looked deeply, alliances such as AUKUS (Australia, UK and US), partnership such as QUAD (America, Japan, Australia and UK) and a panoply of INDOPACIFIC strategies all seem to be emanating from a fear of China and its aggressive posture concerning South China Sea. The country in the Asia-Pacific region which has a potential to be major player with the western support is Australia. Looking at the situation, China's relation with her neighbors in the Pacific is as bad as India's in South Asia. Possibility of Asia becoming the pivot of geo-politics and growth engine of the world is high in the coming decades when Russia-Ukraine war reaches its exhaustion point. But if China and India are interlocked in perennial conflict, the ultimate manipulator of the world order will be someone else outside of the region. For India to partner with BRICS and China to draw closer to Russia and North Korea will only drive US allies in Asia closer to America. If stable Asian order is what will

underwrite global order in the days ahead, then President Xi and Prime Minister Modi need to understand the aspirations of their neighbours. Merely being great powers will not be enough; if China and India want to set up an Asian order, there is no option but to work together through institution-building of regional economic and geo-political security by taking their neighbours into confidence. Failing that will only court shame to their image as great power actors.

How will Bangladesh navigate itself in the post-Biden era will be a forbidding challenge for its

brittle economy, expectant future elections, vulnerable political infrastructure and above all, unskilled diplomatic workmanship. America presents new challenge to Bangladesh. On 31st October, Trump echoed Indian concerns on X (formerly Twitter) by condemning "barbaric violence" against Bangladesh's Hindu minority, stating that the Muslim-majority country was in disorder. This is exaggeration with a geo-political twist. Since the flight of Sheikh Hasina to India, Modi has not felt at ease with the interim government. He has turned down a couple of times in international gathering the appeal from Dr Yunus to sit for a meeting. Trump is known for his chummy-chummy predilection with Modi. If US tries to look at Bangladesh through the eyes of India, this might spell disorder further not only in Bangladesh but also in the seven states of India where insurgency can be directed from the neighbouring areas of Bangladesh. Under such circumstances, the beneficiary will be China. What Modi needs is to stabilize relations with Bangladesh. India cannot afford to have two disgruntled states on her two sides that includes Pakistan as well. Given India's past political behavior with her, Bangladesh needs to be subtle.

As Trump prepares for a second term, Bangladesh will hardly be his government's top priority. Still, America should help meaningfully by ensuring that Bangladesh avoids a financial crisis while she prepares for elections and makes institutional reforms on corruption, partisan politics, incompetent bureaucracies that will guarantee her people's struggle to democratize and do away with totalitarianism. India will have choice to support Bangladesh and desire for order to be restored that will also guarantee order in the region with its positive effects on geo-political imperatives. For disorder to be transformed into order, states need to genuinely engage with themselves. The process is difficult but not unrealizable. ■



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## A GREEN HAVEN

Away from the hustle and bustle of the city, with green open spaces to lead a healthy and peaceful life. With all the amenities you need, just a few steps away. A safe, spacious environment to raise your children. We promise you a Greener Tomorrow.



RAJUK APPROVAL NO:  
25.39.0000.092.33.237.21,  
DATE: 31 March 2024,

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

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

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

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# Political Economy of the Size of Government: *What Shakes and What Shapes*

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It is a fact that no society throughout history has ever obtained a high level of economic affluence without a government. Where governments did not exist, anarchy reigned and little wealth was accumulated by productive economic activity. After governments took hold, the rule of law and the establishment of private property rights often contributed importantly to the economic development of the Western civilization, and it has similarly impacted on other societies as well. Having a Government is a necessary, though by no means sufficient, condition for prosperity. It is also a fact, however, that where governments have monopolized the allocation of resources and other economic decisions, societies have not been successful in attaining relatively high levels of economic affluence. Economic progress is limited when governments constitute zero percent of the economy and when it is at or near 100 percent as well. The experience of the old Soviet Union is revealing, as was the comparison of East and West Germany during the Cold War era, or of North and South Korea today. Too much government stifles the spirit of enterprise and lowers the rate of economic growth. If no government is too little, but all-encompassing government is too much, what is about right from the standpoint of maximizing economic welfare. Review of theories of government growth raises more questions than answers. However, it will also show that the relationship between government growth and eco-▶▶



► Economic efficiency is more complex than many classical liberals would like to believe. Economic growth may slow as countries reach a more advanced stage of economic development that also sees an increase in demand for governments, but without a causal connection. Growth in governments can also give rise to a drive in search for greater efficiencies on the part of reform-oriented politicians, making government growth more sustainable and increasing the efficient size of governments. Review of theories of government growth raises more questions than answers. However, it will also show that the relationship between government growth and economic efficiency is more complex than many classical liberals would like to believe. Economic growth may slow as countries reach a more advanced stage of economic development that also sees an increase in demand for governments, but without a causal connection.

Growth in governments can also give rise to a drive in search for greater efficiencies on the part of reform-oriented politicians, making government growth more sustainable and increasing the

efficient size of governments. Classical liberals have traditionally been concerned with growth in the size of governments because of its potentially adverse implications for economic efficiency and living standards. However, they also recognize that growth in governments can weaken the rule of law and undermine the voluntary relationships that constitute civil society. To the extent that classical liberals have mainly focused their advocacy on policies that promote economic efficiency, they may have unwittingly contributed to an induced expansion in the size and scope of government by easing the revenue and other constraints on government growth. Classical liberals need to locate arguments for more efficient tax and spending policies within a broader framework of advocacy for rules and institutions that promote limited government. The size of government as a share of the economy has been on a rising trend since the Glorious Revolution of 1688–89, which established Britain as a modern constitutional democracy (Greg Clark 2007). International conflicts such as the Napoleonic Wars and World Wars I and II had a ratchet effect, with the government's share of the economy remain-►

ing above its pre-War level in the wake of these conflicts. The brief trend to smaller governments in the nineteenth century was reversed from around 1900 onwards, aided by the two world wars, the Great Depression, and the rise of the social welfare state in the post-World War II period. The growth of government spending in the twentieth century was documented by Tanzi and Schuknecht, who noted that countries with relatively smaller governments have economically outperformed their bigger government counterparts, without underperforming on a broad range of social, environmental and other indicators. This implies that many governments throughout the developed world likely surpassed their efficient or optimal size from around 1960 onwards (Vito Tanzi and Ludger Schuknecht 2000).

J. M. Keynes is a central figure in the emergence of the welfare-state paradigm, which he elaborated by rejecting the two extremes of state socialism and laissez faire and defining a middle ground between them. This new paradigm sanctioned 'the enlargement of the role of government' for the purpose of correcting deficient demand (Keynes, 1936:380-1). The problem with the new paradigm was that it consisted of the middle ground between two extreme options in an extreme case: the Great Depression. After the Western economies recovered, growing liberalization of international trade and (later) of capital flows challenged the role and competence of government's economic management. Eventually, the welfare state reached its limit in the 1990s, when fiscal deficits and public debt grew to proportions that destroyed government's ability to intervene effectively: additional government spending raises interest rates, which negates any stimulus it provides to demand.

### Paradigm Shift

There are numerous signs that the tide of big governments is receding. Interest is growing in the

high compliance costs of government. The appearance of Osborne and Gaebler's book *Reinventing Government* (1992) suggests that governments are trying to increase the efficiency of public spending. In his 1996 *Paradigm Shift*. There are numerous signs that the tide of big government is receding. Interest is growing in the high compliance costs of government. The appearance of Osborne and Gaebler's book *Reinventing Government* (1992) suggests that governments are trying to increase the efficiency of public spending. In his 1996 State of the Union Address, US President Bill Clinton announced that the 'era of big government is over'. In the late 1990s, there is talk, and even some action, in the United Kingdom, the United States, Australia and New Zealand on replacing welfare handouts with 'workfare'. The principal reason for this disillusionment with big governments is that, if it grows beyond a certain point, the public sector reduces welfare rather than increasing it. In his overall analysis of the link between taxes and growth, Gerald Scully, a leading pioneer in the field of the optimal size of government, has observed that:

Economic theory suggests that up to some level, government expenditures increase the productivity of private economic resources. The provision of national defense and a judicial system protect private property and individual rights. Other publicly provided goods, such as infrastructure, also enhance private productivity. Thus, up to some point, government expenditure acts as a positive externality on private economic activity ... Beyond some optimal size of government, increased taxation acts as a negative externality on the private sector (Scully, 1996:4-5).

### Why do Government Expenditures affect Economic Growth

In theory the relationship between government expenditures and economic growth is ambiguous. ►►

▶ Long ago, Thomas Hobbes (1651) described life without government as “nasty, brutish, and short” and argued that the law and order provided by government was a necessary component of civilized life (Rothbard 1973). Taking the Hobbesian view, certain functions of government such as the protection of individuals and their property and the operation of a court system to resolve disputes should enhance economic growth (Knack and Keefer 1995) and Keefer and Knack 1997). Viewed from another angle, secure property rights, enforcement of contracts and a stable monetary regime provide the foundation for the smooth operation of a market economy.

Governments can enhance growth through efficient provision of this infrastructure. In addition, there are a few goods—economists call them “public goods”—that markets may find troublesome to provide because their nature makes it difficult (or costly) to establish a close link between payment for and receipt of such goods. Roads and national defense fall into this category. Government provision of such goods might also promote economic growth. However, as government continues to grow and more and more resources are allocated by political rather than market forces, three major factors suggest that the beneficial effects on economic growth will wane and eventually become negative. First, the higher taxes and/or additional borrowing required to finance government expenditures exert a negative effect on the economy. As government takes more and more of the earnings of workers, their incentive to invest, to take risks, and to undertake productivity-enhancing activities, decreases (Browning 1976). Like taxes, borrowing will crowd out private investment and it will also lead to higher future taxes. Thus, even if the productivity of government expenditures did not decline, the disincentive effects of taxation and borrowing, as resources are shifted from the private sector to the public sector, would exert a negative impact on economic growth. Second, as government grows

relative to the market sector, diminishing returns will be confronted. Suppose that a government initially concentrates on those functions for which it is best suited (for example, activities such as protection of property rights, provision of an unbiased legal system, development of a stable monetary framework, and provision of national defense).

### Relationship between size of Government and Economic Growth

Gwartney et al (1998) illustrated the relationship between size of government and economic growth, *assuming that governments undertake activities based on their rate of return*. As the size of government, measured on the horizontal axis, expands from zero (complete anarchy), initially the growth rate of the economy—measured on the vertical axis—increases. Gwartney et al (1998) illustrated this situation in their study. As government continues to grow as a share of the economy, expenditures are channeled into less productive (and later counterproductive) activities, causing the rate of economic growth to diminish and eventually decline (See Barro 1990). The range of the curve beyond B illustrates this point. In the real world, governments may not undertake activities based on their rate of return and comparative advantage. Small government by itself is not an asset. When a small government fails to focus on and efficiently provide core functions such as protection of persons and property, a legal system that helps with the enforcement of contracts, and a stable monetary regime, there is no reason to believe that it will promote economic growth. This has been (and still is) the case in many less developed countries. Governments—including those that are small—can be expected to register slow or even negative rates of economic growth when these core functions are poorly performed. Unless proper adjustment is made for how well the core functions are performed, the ▶▶

► empirical relationship between size of government and economic growth is likely to be a loose one, particularly when the analysis involves a diverse set of economies.

A fundamental model of economic growth developed by Robert Solow (1956) suggests that while some economies may be wealthier than others, in the long run they should all grow at the same rate. More recent work has suggested that not only do economies actually have substantially different growth rates over lengthy time periods (Quah 1996; Gwartney and Lawson 1997), there are also good theoretical reasons for believing that countries can maintain the different rates (Lucas 1988; Romer 1990). This issue is important because if long-run growth rates across countries are all the same (or approximately the same), the long-term consequences of economic policies that impede growth are less severe.

### **Government Expenditures and Economic Growth in the United States**

Gwartney et al (1998) illustrated this growth in government expenditures in the United States, and showed that the increase in government expenditures is primarily due to the growth of transfers and subsidies, rather than in the core areas of government.. In the 1960s government expenditures at all levels of government averaged 29.9 percent of GDP, and increased to 32.8 percent of GDP in the 1970s, 34.7 percent of GDP in the 1980s, and 35.3 percent of GDP in the 1990s. As *a share of GDP*, transfers and subsidies have more than doubled since the 1960s. They have risen from 6.4 percent of GDP in the 1960s to 13.5 percent of GDP during the 1990s. Thus, transfers and subsidies consumed an additional 7.1 percent of GDP in the 1990s than during the 1960s. The share of GDP devoted to total government expenditures rose by 5.4 percent over that same period (and 6.2 percent between 1960 and 1996). This expansion in the size of the transfer sector is likely

to reduce economic growth. Transfers and subsidies that enlarge the size of government will require higher tax rates, which will reduce productive incentives. Compared to expenditures in core areas, additional government expenditures on transfers will exert little positive impact on growth. Transfers and subsidies also bring with them the problem of rent seeking. Gwartney et al (1998) found that as investment has fallen over the four decades from the 1960s to the 1990s, the growth in output per hour has also fallen. In turn, the slowdown in productivity has reduced the growth rate of real GDP during each of the last three decades (see Gwartney et al, 1998). The story told by Gwartney et al (1998) is that as government has grown, it has crowded out investment which has resulted in declining productivity growth and a slowdown in the growth rate of real GDP. Larger government leads to less economic growth.

### **Evidence from the OECD Countries**

Compared to most other countries around the world, the institutional arrangements and income levels of the 23 long-standing OECD members are relatively similar. Politically, all OECD countries are stable democracies. Their legal structures generally reflect a commitment to the rule of law. Monetary arrangements have been stable enough to avoid hyperinflation during the post World War II era. In the area of international trade, OECD members have been at the forefront of those promoting more liberal trade policies within the framework of GATT and the World Trade Organization. Gwartney et al (1998) presented data on the average year-to-year growth rate of GDP according to the size of government. As illustrated, total government expenditures summed to less than 25 percent of GDP in seven OECD countries in 1960. In total, there were 81 cases during 1960-1996 where a nation had government expenditures less than 25 percent of ►►

► GDP. Countries in this category averaged a GDP growth rate of 6.6 percent during these years. When the size of government was between 25 percent and 30 percent of GDP during a year, the average growth rate fell to 4.7 percent. The year-to-year growth declined to 3.8 percent when government expenditures consumed between 30 percent and 40 percent of GDP. Still larger government was associated with still lower rates of growth.

Japan did register very high growth rates for several decades. But even here there is a revealing story (Gwartney et al (1998)). At the beginning of the 1960s, the total expenditures of the Japanese government were only 17.5 percent of GDP and they averaged only 22.0 percent of GDP during the decade. With that environment, the Japanese economy registered an average annual growth rate of 10.6 percent in the 1960s. During the 1960s the Japanese economy fits the small government, high growth mold. Over the next three decades, the Japanese government grew steadily; by 1996 government spending had soared to 36.9 percent of GDP. At the same time, Japan's growth rate moved in the opposite direction, falling to 5.4 percent in the 1970s, 4.8 percent in the 1980s and sagging to 2.2 percent in the 1990s. As in United States, the growth of government in Japan has been associated with a slowdown in the rate of economic growth.

### Evidence from OECD Nations with Shrinking Government

The growth of government has been so pervasive in the last half of the twentieth century that there have been only a few instances where nations have substantially reduced its size. This is particularly true for the high-income industrial economies. There are three instances of a substantial decline in government expenditures as a share of the economy among OECD countries during the 1960-96 period. The first case is that

of Ireland, which saw government expenditures as a share of GDP go from 28 percent in 1960 to 52.3 percent in 1986. This situation was reversed during the 1987-96 period. As a share of GDP, government expenditures declined from the 52.3 percent level of 1986 to 37.7 percent in 1996, a reduction of 14.6 percentage points. From 1960 to 1977 government expenditures increased from 28 percent to 43.7 percent, and Ireland's real GDP growth rate was 4.3 percent. It declined to 3.4 percent during 1977-86, as the government further expanded to 52.3 percent of GDP. During the recent decade of shrinking government, the annual growth rate in Ireland's real GDP rose to 5.4 percent. As government expenditures shrank in Ireland, Ireland's economic growth increased. The experience of New Zealand is also revealing. Between 1974 and 1992, New Zealand's government expenditures as a share of GDP rose from 34.1 percent to 48.4 percent. Its average growth rate during this period was 1.2 percent. Recently New Zealand began moving in the opposite direction. The percentage of GDP devoted to government expenditures was reduced from 48.4 percent in 1992 to 42.3 percent in 1996, a reduction of 6.1 percentage points. Compared to the earlier period, New Zealand's real GDP growth has increased by more than two percentage points to 3.9 percent. The United Kingdom provides additional evidence. Government's share of GDP rose from 32.2 percent in 1960 to 47.2 percent in 1982. During this period, UK's GDP growth rate was 2.2 percent and there was widespread reference to the "British disease." Between 1982 and 1989, government's share of GDP declined by 6.5 percentage points to 40.7 percent. Responding, UK's rate of GDP growth increased from 2.2 percent to 3.7 percent. While shrinking government has been rare in the past few decades, evidence from places where government has shrunk is consistent with the hypothesis that larger government lowers economic growth. The evidence illustrates that if the size of government is reduced, higher ►►

- ▶ rates of economic growth can be anticipated.

### Size of Government in High-Growth Nations

The data in Gwartney et al (1998) study for OECD countries suggests that smaller government is correlated with faster rates of economic growth. While in theory government could be too small to provide the necessary environment for economic growth, the data in Exhibit 4 give no indication that any OECD government was excessively small at any time during 1960-96. Within the size of government range of this period, smaller government was consistently associated with more rapid economic growth. Gwartney et al (1998) study probes this issue further by looking at government expenditures as a share of GDP for the 10 nations with the fastest rates of economic growth during 1980-95. The average annual per capita GDP growth of these countries ranged from 7.4 percent for South Korea to 4.2 percent for Malaysia. There are no OECD members in this group of fastest-growing economies. The numbers in the table show total government expenditures as a share of GDP at five-year intervals during the 1975-95 period. The numbers in South Korea, the world's fastest-growing economy during this period, had government expenditures that were relatively stable at between 20 and 21 percent of GDP. Non-investment government expenditures in South Korea showed a steady decline from just over 15 percent of GDP to just over 10 percent during the two decade period, indicating that South Korea has increasingly been devoting government expenditures toward investment. The total government expenditures of Thailand, the second fastest-growing economy, were generally less than 20 percent of GDP throughout most of the period, and they also showed a trend toward increased government investment. Taiwan, third on the list, showed a substantial increase in total government expenditures, from 21.5 percent of GDP to 30.1

percent, but still ended the period with government expenditures well below the world average. Taiwan's non-investment government expenditures were still less than 20 percent of GDP. Singapore and Hong Kong, the next two countries, saw substantial declines in government expenditures as a percentage of GDP, and both countries had 1995 government expenditures well below 20 percent of GDP.

### Growth-Maximizing level of Government Expenditures

A persuasive argument can be made for designing government policies in order to maximize the economy's rate of growth. In the long run, a strong economy is the best way to benefit all citizens. One need only look at the progress of the 20th century to see how economic growth has helped even those least well-off in the economy or compare the well-being of those in poverty in the United States with the typical standard of living in less-developed economies, to see why policies that foster economic growth are the key to long-term prosperity of non-investment government expenditures in cases where these figures are available. If one wanted to design a government that maximized economic growth, how large would that government be? The data examined earlier give no indication because for every nation examined, none had governments so small that they impeded economic growth, even though there were several instances in which total government expenditures were less than 20 percent of GDP. Because there is no evidence that any existing government is smaller than the growth maximizing size of government, some other method must be used to surmise what size of government would maximize an economy's growth rate. One way to address the question would be to look at the size of the government within the framework of the theory discussed earlier in the literature. There are certain core functions of government ▶▶

- ▶ that assist economic growth by protecting property rights and creating an environment conducive to growth. As economies expand beyond these core functions, larger government impedes growth because of: (a) the disincentive effects of taxes, (b) the tendency of government to expand into areas that are better suited for private sector production, (c) increased rent-seeking (rather than productive) activities, and (d) the crowding out of private investment.

### Search for the Right Size of the Government

The term cabinet is the most easily recognized generic description of this body, but it might create some confusion between cabinets as a collective political body and cabinets. In particular, France, sense a group of advisers working for a minister, comprising friends, political allies, and politically sympathetic civil servants dealing with political aspects of the post. An understanding of the cabinet government is key to an understanding of policymaking within parliamentary democracy as Laver and Shapols (1994) point out “any discussion of governance in parliamentary democracies must incorporate a systematic account of cabinet decision making”. Without such an account, it is impossible to model the making and breaking of governments because it is not possible to specify how legislators envisage the consequence of their actions. Wright (1998) in describing ‘ten paradoxes’ of the French Administration referred to four types of cabinets. First one is *Cabinet as Spectator*, with major decisions being taken elsewhere in ‘central executive territory’, either by the chief executive, the chief executive in bilateral negotiation with relevant ministers, cabinet committees, interdepartmental committees of high ranking civil servants, ad-hoc commissions, and so on. In Ireland, Belgium, Sweden, Austria, and the Netherlands the cabinet is rarely reduced to the role of spectator. The real debate takes place, even if they are sometimes framed ‘framed’ by the

Prime Minister or Chancellor or by ‘pre-cooking’ of the party bosses. The second is, *Cabinet as Clearing House* for rubber-stamping decisions made elsewhere and for formal reporting. The American & Russian cabinets work mainly as spectators and or clearing house. Third, Cabinet as arena for *reviewing, debating* ministerial initiatives, and for *legitimizing* decision-making. Fourth, *Cabinet as actor*, with power to initiate, filter, coordinate, and, as final court of appeal, to impose constraint or even vetoes. In Britain and French cabinets are found carrying all four functions depending on the prevailing position of the chief executive. Mackie and Hogwood (1985) offered a similar typology of the cabinet.

The form and membership of the cabinet largely vary in the developed and developing countries. In Belgium, Germany, the United Kingdom, and English speaking Commonwealth countries, a cabinet is an assembly of senior party managers or a group including technocrats (Austria, French, and Spain), or a combination. In some countries, following *Wesminister model*, parliamentarians are appointed as ministers while in other countries in particular, Spain and Austria, outside experts can be brought in the cabinet. In France, Norway, Gambia, and Mongolia, there is an incompatibility rule that one cannot be both minister and Member of Parliament. The cabinet system in the USA is more alike to disparate collection of individuals who are beholden together only by loyalty to a particular individual, however, earlier to this century, this was not the practice. In Bangladesh a cabinet is being formed with Parliament members with a provision of having maximum 20% cabinet members from the professionals and technocrats.

The debate over the size of the cabinet is considerable. It is argued that large cabinets allow powerful stakeholders to influence policymaking as Campbell (1996) argued “a large and broadly representative cabinet at least gives dissenters a sense that ▶▶

► *their stances have received consideration in the secrecy of cabinet deliberation*". Campbell (1996) identified 7 general opposition to the reduction of cabinet size. These are, *first*: it requires creation of super ministries, which can run into constitutional or legal obstacle. *Second*: in the countries with government of political coalition get it easier to distribute 25 posts than 14. *Third*: the reduction of cabinet may reduce the scope of Prime Ministerial patronage. *Fourth*: a trade off can achieve a good coordination within super ministries with coordination at the cabinet level. *Fifth*: the larger ministries may lead to the emergence of independent power bases for the super ministers and heighten the political stakes in case of conflict. *Sixth*: the reduction in the number of ministers in the cabinet reduces the chief executive's ability to construct supportive coalitions. *Finally*, super ministries reduce visibility of junior ministers and hence the capacity of the cabinet to identify their talents or weaknesses.

Opponents of larger cabinets argue that *first*: it loses general image of the highest decision making body of the country that comprises of a large number of ministers that a country can hardly afford. *Second*: it may be helpful to entrenched corruption accommodating larger number of stakeholders in the cabinet, as witnessed during 1990 in Bangladesh, Benazir Sharif regime in Pakistan. One may recall available evidence that there was stalemate in the activities of the government as a result of clique among the members of cabinets in 1979-1990 periods. *Third*: with a gap created for reason of clique among politicians, the bureaucrats mostly take advantage of handling the administration to isolate people from the politicians. *Fourth*: the large cabinet offer opportunity for creating an inner or "kitchen" cabinet— an inner core of the most powerful ministers, friends and family members of the prime minister, leaders of the coalition parties in government, including the head of the government. Such kitchen cabinets have been experienced as a symp-

tom of the weakness of the center. The very existence of the kitchen cabinet may result in the creation of unofficial and informal meetings of excluded and resentful ministers, ultimately resulting in creating chaotic politics within the government. For example, chaotic politics among the cabinet members during 1979-81 period may be identified as one of the causes of the undesirable death of the BNP's founder president Zia. Subsequently after his death, the elected president Justice Sattar officially and publicly had handed over power, on the ground of corruption and chaos within the party, to military dictator Ershad who systematically damaged the democratic institutions. The kitchen cabinet has distinguished ancestry and had been frequently used during wartimes (Manning et al 1999). *Fifth*: larger cabinets become expensive in the foreign aid syndrome developing and corrupt countries. For example, countries like Bangladesh where salaries of the government employees are paid from public borrowings and foreign sources. In such context, Bangladesh cannot afford huge number of ministers more than thrice of the OECD average of less than 20 ministers.

Currently, most cabinets in the OECD countries have around 20 ministers; by contrast, the average size of the cabinets was just over 18 during 1987-95 in the European and African countries. The highest average during that period was 32 in Canada and smallest was Switzerland, just below 8. Following some four decades of expansion after 1945, there has been light trend toward further reduction in the cabinet size of the OECD in the past decade. The Australian government reduced the number of government departments from 28 to 18 in July 1987 and cabinet portfolios 16. The cabinet was further reduced to 14 in 1996. Similarly, Canada radically reduced the size of its cabinet in 1993. The Hungarian cabinet was reduced from 20 in 1987 to 15 in 1999. These are proven to be the beginning of downsizing the government from the top for right sizing of public ►►

► sector. Because, reducing the role of public sector enlarges the role of private sector that is private institutions of the society. Downsizing of public sector means that less money is taken and spent by the government and more money left in the hands of the people, to be spent in the market place, broadly defined. Less borrowing by the government means that there is less crowding out in the market for money, and, therefore, more capital available for private borrowing and job creating investment. Currently, popular terms for the conceptual process of reducing the size, scope, role, and cost of government-shrinking government, some would say- are rethinking, dis-inventing, reinventing, reengineering, and privatizing.

The result of the study conducted by António Afonso and João Tovar Jalles (2012) on 108 countries on the *Economic Performance, Government Size, and Institutional Quality from 1970-2008*, employing different proxies for government size and institutional quality reveal several conclusions regarding the effects on economic growth of the size of the government: i) there is a significant negative effect of the size of government on growth; ii) institutional quality has a significant positive impact on the level of real GDP per capita; iii) government consumption is consistently detrimental to output growth irrespective of the country sample considered; iv) moreover, the negative effect of government size on GDP per capita is stronger at lower levels of institutional quality, and the positive effect of institutional quality on GDP per capita is stronger at smaller levels of government size. In addition, the negative effect on growth stemming from the government size variables is more attenuated for the case of Scandinavian legal origins, while the negative effect of government size on GDP per capita growth is stronger at lower levels of civil liberties and political rights.

James S. Guesh (1997) study on Government Size and Economic Growth in Developing Countries:

A Political-Economy Framework: A model which differentiates the effects of government on growth across political and economic institutions is developed and tested using annual time-series data for fifty-nine middle-income developing countries over the period 1960–85. The results suggest that growth in government size has adverse effects on economic growth in developing countries, but the adverse effects are three times as great in countries with nondemocratic socialist systems as in countries with democratic market systems. Thus, greater government size takes not only a toll on economic growth, but the type of political and an economic system present in a country affects the magnitude of the toll. In light of what we have discovered, it appears that an appropriate policy prescription for economic growth and development should include a reduction in government size and the promotion of economic and political liberties.

Patrick J. Caragata (1998) on *From Welfare State to Optimal Size of Government: A Paradigm Shift for Public Policy* study suggested a new paradigm that culture of public control, or regulatory and intrusive management, that has grown up under the welfare state must be ended and replaced with the culture of public service that respects taxpayers as the shareholders of government. The greater the numbers demanding benefits from government, the greater is the welfare dependency of the population, and the greater the level of government control. The greater the level of control, the less acceptable and the more wasteful are government services likely to be. Reducing taxes helps to encourage less wasteful spending and greater personal responsibility. The new paradigm of the optimal size of government offers politicians the basis for addressing ‘democracy’s discontent’ by reducing the culture of dependency arising from the intrusive welfare state and promoting self-development and learning as the basis for national re-invigoration and enhanced international competitiveness. ►►

► Stephen Kirchner (1968) in his research monograph *Why Does Government Grow* concluded that The absolute size of government is less important than the constitutional, legal and other constraints under which governments function. Growth in government is of concern largely because it is symptomatic of a relaxation of the constraints that have traditionally bound it. The relaxation of some of these constraints is welcome, for example, the expansion in the potential tax base associated with the growth of formal and more extensive markets and reduced household production. As markets and other voluntary interactions become more extensive and complex, the demands on government increase, but government effectiveness decreases as knowledge in society also becomes more specialized and dispersed. This argues against the increased centralization power and decision-making that often accompany growth in government. To be effective advocates of limited government, classical liberals need to acknowledge and better understand the forces driving the long-run growth in government. While classical liberals view government as being less efficient than markets in most contexts, governments may grow in part because they are successful in finding greater efficiencies in their activities. This in turn can be expected to undermine the negative correlation between government size and economic growth and weaken critiques of big government based mainly on efficiency arguments. Classical liberals have traditionally argued for policies that would improve the efficiency of specific government tax and spending programs, but such policies need to be located in a broader framework of advocacy for the rules and institutions that support limited government.

### The Bangladesh Scenario

Until recently, the operation of the Peoples' Republic of Bangladesh have been running with 231

office organizations under 36 ministries. Soon after the independence, number of ministries were 21 in 1972, 13 in 1975, 33 in 1977 under military dictator, 19 in 1982 also under military dictator, 35 in 1995 under BNP-Jamat lead coalition, 36 in 2000 under Awami League-JSD & JP coalition, strikingly 72 in 2001 lead by BNP-Jamat. Since independence, different governments have formed 16 committees and commissions to reform bureaucracy and public services within the country. However, the situation has not changed under the Grand Alliance since 2009 showing significant increase in the size of the government in terms of size of cabinet, expenditure and number of civil servants and departments.

An analysis of the 231 office organizations reveal that 48 are under the supervision of the Ministry of Finance, 20 Law and Justice, 16 Health and Family Welfare, 11 Home Affairs, and 10 in Education. Ministries of Establishment, Defense, and Cabinet Division each have 9 offices under their supervision with the Prime Minister being the in-charge for all of these 27 offices. Ministries those have 7 offices under them are Communications, Information, Housing and Public Works, Shipping and Agriculture. Labor & manpower and Commerce are two Ministries who supervise 6 offices each. The Prime Minister being the in-charge of Power and Energy Ministry has 5 offices under them. Ministries each of those have 4 offices under them are LGERD, Industries, Fisheries and Livestock, Land, including Environment and Forest. 5 Ministries, such as, Disaster and Relief, Religious Affairs, Planning, Youth and Sports and Culture each have 3 offices under their supervision. There are only 2 offices each work under the Ministry of Post & Telecommunications and Women & Children Affairs. There are 8 Ministries running with 1 office under them are Foreign Affairs, Food, Textiles, Hill Tracts, Civil ►►

► Aviation & Tourism, Science and Technology, Social Welfare, Water Resources, and the Prime Minister's Office. In addition the Parliament Secretariat and Election Commission each have 2 offices and 1 office work under Bangladesh Public Service Commission.

On the cost and effect of the Expanding Size of Government of Bangladesh since Independence Jasim (2014) reports that the number of ministries has doubled in Bangladesh since independence - from 21 in 1972 to 42 in 2014. The divisions under different ministries have expanded in two decades— from 49 in 1994 to 59 now. Likewise, the number of autonomous bodies has increased from 199 to 247 during this period of past twenty years. Departments and directorates of Government have risen, in numbers, to 275 now, from 221 in 1994 and 181 in 1982. The overall numbers of 'civil' or 'public' servants and public sector employments have thus virtually trebled since independence, rising from 4,54,450 in 1971 to 7,79,000 in 1982, 9,46,749 in 1992, 1,000,983 in 2001, 119,557 in 2005, and 1,760,864 in 2014. The aggregate number of 'civil servants,' as of now, reflects an annual compounded rate of growth by about 3.0 per cent against an average population growth rate in the same period at about 2.25 per cent. Figures, noted above, may, however, require some adjustments, on a more detailed scrutiny of statistics.

But one thing stands out clear: the size of Government, in terms of numbers of those employed in ministries and their divisions, autonomous bodies and departments and directorates, has expanded, outpacing the country's average annual population growth rate, on a compounded basis, over the last 44 years since independence. The figures of those engaged in defence services, officers and support-staff for a good number of projects under the annual development programme (ADP) and temporary workers employed in con-

tingency posts or covered under 'master roll' of departments and directorates etc., have been excluded here. If these are included, then the picture will be 'bigger' about the size of Government. According to knowledgeable circles, the size of Government has a "strong bearing" on cost of running it. The burden of this cost, as such circles noted, does ultimately fall on the people who bear the load of direct and indirect taxes, fees and other government charges. Trends of compensation costs for both serving and retired government employees show that the bill on account of pay and allowances as well as pension and retirement benefits has been bulging steadily. It has increased not only in absolute terms but also as relative ratios to the government's revenue expenditure and gross domestic product (GDP) at current prices.

Jasim (2014) talked to a number of analysts of public expenditures, economists, former civil servants and other competent experts to obtain their views on, what appeared to be, on the basis of available statistics and data, an unending expansion of size of Government in the country and its wider ramifications. Their views covered a wide range of areas, centering the moot issue-size of Government. Most of them made one common observation: time is ripe now to give a serious thought to right-sizing-meaning neither down-sizing or over-sizing-Government.

The advantages of greater use of today's digital technology and modern management practices, styles and methods do also heighten the need to taking such developments into consideration while making a meaningful exercise to this effect, they suggested. The expansion on growth of Government, according to them, must not be stimulated by pure political considerations, like increasing the number of ministries to accommodate more intra-party groups and to give new ministerial positions to keep some influential happy, ►►

► spreading Government's wings unnecessarily to absorb the politically favoured ones in jobs in civil service or creating jobs for dispensation by political leaders without examining, on dispassionate grounds, the need for the same.

A number of analysts and observers with whom this Jasim (2014) talked to, noted that the number of ministries in Bangladesh "is already large" in Bangladesh, compared to the situation in many other countries like Thailand, Malaysia, the Philippines, Sri Lanka, South Korea, Japan, the UK and many more. "What counts most in this contest is the quality of output, not more functioning of a ministry", one of them observed. When this correspondent drew his attention to the claim by some quarters that the cost of running the government in Bangladesh is not far out of line with other comparator countries in fiscal terms, he observed that this factor must not be taken "as a source of any comfort" in the Bangladesh context where recurring expenditures on account of pay and allowances as well as retirement and pension benefits for serving and retired public officials increased by about 120% in last two decades and a half alone.

The number of employees under government revenue budget has increased by 83 per cent to 1.26 million over the last three decades since the early 1980s, leaving aside the first post-Independence period. This growth, according to most of analysts and experts with whom this correspondent talked to, is rather disproportionate to the public services that the administration delivers. And this overstaffing eats up a significant chunk of government revenues coming from taxpayers' money without yielding the expected quantitative and qualitative outcome, they said. Government expenditure in the last fiscal also increased to Tk 248.67 billion—up nearly 69 times over the 1983 mark.

In FY 2014, the number of approved posts for the

ministry of home affairs was 281,122, against which and some postings were made for 258,451. The ministry of primary and mass education has approved posts for 215,072. Some 189,544 have been posted. In FY 1983, the ministry of education was the biggest ministry in terms of manpower followed by the ministry of home affairs. The ministry of primary and mass education was then part of the ministry of education. The ministry of education had 185,587 posts in FY 1983 while the that of home affairs had 118,974. Meanwhile, the departments and directorates also rose, in to 275 in number in FY 2014 from 181 in FY 1983. Experts like economists and former bureaucrats are of the view that the fiscal space is shrinking as a result of a substantial growth of expenditure in the 'non-development' areas. Fiscal space, they said, will shrink further after implementation of the next new national pay scale. It is set to be announced next month. We are managing a central bank with nearly 90 general managers in comparison South Korean central bank is running with 6 general managers in a most efficient manner. In Bangladesh, now nearly 500 bureaucrats do not have position in their cadre service; many are sitting at State Owned Enterprises doing nothing. Contractual employment in the Government is de-motivating eligible down level promotion seekers.

### **Shape Bangladesh on the Spirit of Liberation War**

Expert commission need to set up for manpower planning and crafting organization for the size of Cabinet for Bangladesh to Structure of Government the Shape Bangladesh on the Spirit of Liberation War. The Meritocracy should get priority both in politics and bureaucracy. All managers in politics and bureaucracy must meet the literacy criteria. Current system of Five Year Plan is not functioning. To make the planning and budget ►►

Government of Bangladesh: Proposed size of the Cabinet

President of the Peoples' Republic of Bangladesh

Prime Minister of the Peoples' Republic of Bangladesh

Education & Infrastructure Science & Technology Cultural Youth & Sports	Human Resource Dev Employment Establishment Training & Development	Finance Banking and Planning GoB Revenue Expenditures Development Expenditures	National Resources Management Energy & Mineral Resources Energy Infrastructure	Industry Commerce SME Textile & RMG Jute, Economic Zone EPZ and Infrastructure	National Defense and Defense Infrastructure
Health & Family Welfare Health Infrastructure	Public Works Housing, Town Planning & Rural Development	Communications Road & Highways Railway Bridges	Foreign Relations and Foreign Employment	Internal Security Law and Order	Agriculture Food Fisheries & Livestock
Social Welfare Religion Minority Mental and ysical Disadvantaged Disaster Relief	Print Media Electronic Media Statistics Tourisme	Law Justice & Parliamentary Affairs	Information and Communication Technology	Local Government Rural Development Rural Communication	Gender Minority & Children Affairs

document effective, Bangladesh should formulate long term business plan considering all variables by setting national goal with a provision of revision every two years. Budget should be considered as integral part Five Year Plan which has not been practiced. The Planning and budget process should comply the requirements of constitutional provisions [7 (1); 7 (2)]. The Five year Plan and Annual Budget should emphasis higher allocation to the development expenditure (70%) and less (30%) to the revenue expenditure. In the revenue model direct collection need be higher ratio (55%) than indirect tax (45%). Generation of Black money within the economy tend to increase if indirect tax collection is not collected.. Application of ICT is essential to collect the desired level of revenue collection. All government offi-

cial must be ICT literate, if any one left must be given time line to recover his/her ICT weakness.

City Corporation and municipality revenue management requires automation to meet growing demand of urbanization within the country. Education, Primary and secondary Health Care, Electricity, Road Infrastructure, Railway, Sea Port and River Ways and Information Technology investment will bring long-term benefit. The 7th Five Year Business Plan document should emphasis highest and largest investment to Build Bangladesh as middle-income country by 2021. The Interim-government should review the current size of Bangladesh government and propose the structure and size of the government for the elected government of country. ■

# DEEP SEABED MINING, QUEST FOR TREASURE FROM THE OCEAN FLOOR

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The International Seabed Authority ISA, the United Nations body that regulates the world's ocean floor is preparing to resume negotiations that could open the international seabed for mining,

including for materials critical for the green energy transition. Years long negotiations are reaching a critical point where the authority will soon need to begin accepting mining permit applications, adding to worries over the potential impacts on sparsely researched marine ecosystems and habitats of the deep sea.

Here's a look at what deep seabed mining is, why some companies and countries are applying for permits to carry it out and why environmental activists are raising concerns. Deep seabed mining involves removing mineral deposits and metals

from the ocean's seabed. There are three types of such mining: taking deposit-rich polymetallic nodules off the ocean floor, mining massive seafloor sulphide deposits and stripping cobalt crusts from rock. These nodules, deposits and crusts contain materials, such as nickel, rare earths, cobalt and more, that are needed for batteries and other materials used in tapping renewable energy and also for everyday technology like cellphones and computers.

Engineering and technology used for deep seabed mining are still evolving. Some companies are looking to vacuum materials from seafloor using massive pumps. Others are developing artificial intelligence-based technology that would teach deep sea robots how to pluck nodules from the floor. Some are looking to use advanced machines that could mine materials off side of huge underwater mountains and volcanoes. Companies and governments view these as strategically important resources that will be needed as on-shore reserves are depleted and demand continues to rise. ▶▶



► How is deep sea mining regulated now- Countries manage their own maritime territory and exclusive economic zones, while the high seas and the international ocean floor (Area ie seabed and subsoil beyond 350 nm from baselines of any coastal state) are governed by the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Seas (UNCLOS), 1982. It is considered to apply to states regardless of whether or not they have signed or ratified it. Under the treaty, the seabed and its mineral resources are considered the “common heritage of mankind” that must be managed in a way that protects the interests of humanity through the sharing of economic benefits, support for marine scientific research, and protecting marine environments. Mining companies interested in deep sea exploitation are partnering with countries to help them get exploration licenses. More than 30 exploration licenses have been issued so far, with activity mostly focused in an area called the Clarion-Clipperton Fracture Zone, which spans 1.7 million square miles (4.5 million square kilometers) between Hawaii and Mexico. In 2021 the Pacific Island nation of Nauru – in partnership

with mining company Nauru Ocean Resources Inc, a wholly-owned subsidiary of Canada-based The Metals Company, applied to the ISA to exploit minerals in a specified deep sea area. That triggered a clause of the UN treaty that requires the ISA to complete regulations governing deep sea exploitation by July 2023. If no regulations are finalized, Nauru can submit an application to conduct the mining without any governing regulations. Other countries and private companies can start applying for provisional licenses if the UN body fails to approve a set of rules and regulations by July 2024.

What are the environmental concerns? -Only a small part of the deep seabed has been explored and conservationists worry that ecosystems will be damaged by mining, especially without any environmental protocols. Damage from mining can include noise, vibration and light pollution, as well as possible leaks and spills of fuels and other chemicals used in the mining process. Sediment plumes from the some mining processes are a major concern. Once valuable materials are taken extracted, slurry sediment plumes are sometimes ►

▶ pumped back into the sea. That can harm filter feeding species like corals and sponges, and could smother or otherwise interfere with some creatures. The full extent of implications for deep sea ecosystems is unclear, but scientists have warned that biodiversity loss is inevitable and potentially irreversible. “We’re constantly finding new stuff and it’s a little bit premature to start mining the deep sea when we don’t really understand the biology, the environments, the ecosystems or anything else,” said Christopher Kelley, a biologist with research expertise in deep sea ecology.

The ISA’s legal and technical Commission, which oversees the development of deep sea mining regulations, met in July 2024 to discuss the yet-to-be mining code draft. The earliest that mining under ISA regulations could begin is 2026. Applications for mining must be considered and environmental impact assessments need to be carried out.

In the meantime, some companies — such as Google, Samsung, BMW and others — have backed the World Wildlife Fund’s call to pledge to avoid using minerals that have been mined from the planet’s oceans. More than a dozen countries—including France, Germany and several Pacific Island nations— have officially called for a ban, pause or moratorium on deep sea mining at least until environmental safeguards are in place, although it’s unclear how many other countries support such mining. Other countries, such as Norway, are proposing opening their waters to mining.

As demand grows globally for metals needed to make batteries for electric vehicles, one of the richest untapped sources of the raw materials lies two and a half miles beneath the surface of the Pacific Ocean. This remote section of the seabed, about 1,500 miles southwest of San Diego, could soon become the world’s first industrial-scale mining site in international waters. Some firms, based in Vancouver, has secured exclusive access to tons of seabed rocks packed with cobalt, copper and

nickel-enough, it says, to power 280 million electric vehicles. Recent trends of allowing tax credits for buyers of electric cars by some countries, will only accelerate the need for these materials as automakers also push forward with plans to phase out production of gasoline-powered vehicles.

“No mining has ever been done on a scale like this on the planet,” said James A.R. McFarlane, former head of environmental monitoring at the International Seabed Authority, an agency affiliated with the United Nations that will regulate mining by the Companies and the many other businesses and countries expected to follow. To exploit this new frontier in the green energy revolution—the firm are calculating that they may clear \$31 billion in earnings over the 25-year life of the project. The ISA provided data identifying some of the most valuable seabed tracts, and then set aside the prized sites for the company’s future use. The sharing of that information has angered some, who said some of the data was meant for developing countries trying to compete with richer countries, something the agency is mandated under international law to assist. Nearly two dozen contractors that have exploration deals with the ISA; most of them are held by the member countries. But the other firms have been especially aggressive in pushing the Seabed Authority to allow it to start mining by 2025. The undertaking has raised concerns among environmentalists about the perpetually underfunded agency’s commitment to protecting life on the ocean floor, and has renewed broader questions about who gets to profit from the riches of the sea.

The Seabed Authority was established under the auspices of the United Nations well before climate change set off a surge in demand for the metals. Though it has never gotten off the ground, a unit of the agency was charged with leveling the playing field for developing countries, in part by reserving metal-rich tracts of the ▶▶

ocean floor and helping to mine them. With jurisdiction over half the planet, the agency's 50 employees work out of offices here in Jamaica's capital, Kingston on a small annual budget of \$12- 13 million. At a meeting of the agency's governing body in 2024, contractors were among a group of businesspeople who roamed freely among the international delegates as they debated agenda items, including the firm's request for the authority to sign off on a plan to test mining equipment. One of the top rule-making bodies at the Seabed Authority, its legal and technical commission, is supposed to be secretive and meeting behind closed doors.

Even with that partner, the Pacific islands of Nauru and Tonga, which have a combined population of 120,000 and are nowhere near the mining zone-some of the firms have maintained nearly complete financial control over the project, including rights to all but a fraction of the anticipated profits. A law firm retained by the ISA rejected the notion that anyone at the agency

had acted inappropriately in sharing data or engaging with contractors. The legal and technical commission, the firm said, "meets entirely properly" with its members and exercises independence in its decisions.

Mr. Michael Lodge, the then secretary general also defended the agency's actions. Around that time, he said in an interview at the headquarters in December, 2023 it publicly released summaries of some data in an effort to draw attention to the seabed's riches and generate interest in mining, and it welcomed inquiries by potential partners. The biggest hurdle is the enormous task underway at the Seabed Authority to enact the world's first environmental regulations of deep-sea mining in international waters – and a royalty system to collect revenues from contractors extracting the metals. The effort has been in the works for years but recently accelerated after Nauru, one of the Metals Company's sponsors, invoked a provision effectively mandating that it wrap up by 2024. The plans to begin ▶▶



► mining by the contractors have generated fierce opposition from some environmental groups, which along with government leaders like President Emmanuel Macron of France have called for a moratorium on mining until scientists can study the remote seabed and better understand the consequences of an industrial-scale operation.

However the secretary general said in interviews that the criticism was unfounded and the mining would be for the “benefit of mankind,” as required under the U.N. Convention on the Law of the Sea 1982, which established the Seabed Authority, and they predicted that it would cause less ecological damage than open-pit mining. A miniature replica of the British Royal Navy’s H.M.S. Challenger found a place at the Seabed Authority headquarters. The famed ship set sail 150 years ago on an expedition that mapped the ocean floor. A dredge on that voyage scraped “several peculiar black oval bodies” out of the Pacific, the crew reported in 1873. The polymetallic nodules, small enough to fit in the palm of a hand, had formed over millions of years and contained high concentrations of valuable metals. A century later, China, Japan, the Soviet Union, the United States and some European nations began exploring a stretch of the ocean between Hawaii and Mexico, known as the Clarion-Clipperton Zone, that has an especially large volume of the nodules.

With no mining rules in place, the UN intervened and adopted the Convention on the Law of the Sea, a treaty that went into effect in 1994 and now has been ratified by 168 countries and the European Union. The agreement established the Seabed Authority, granting it exclusive jurisdiction over mining in international waters — those not under the territorial rule of individual countries — and charging it with the creation of a regulatory system. A delegate from Malta had laid out the mission years earlier during a 1967 speech at the U.N. The seabed should be used

“for the exclusive benefit of mankind as a whole,” said the delegate, Mr. Arvid Pardo, adding that poorer nations should get “preferential consideration in the event of financial benefits” and that mining should not cause “serious impairment of the marine environment.”

The United States refused to ratify the treaty, insisting, among other things, that it gave too much authority to developing nations. But the country agreed to act generally in accordance with its provisions, which extend to other activities like shipping, fishing and navigation. As the rules stand, any nation can seek permission to conduct surveys to identify mining sites, and China, France, India, Singapore and South Korea, among other richer nations, have done just that. When they find worthy locations, they must hand over half of them to the Seabed Authority, which sets them aside as “reserved areas” where less developed countries can initiate their own projects. The authority has allocated roughly 200,000 square miles of seabed to developing nations to do exploratory work in the reserved areas, with nearly half of that space now under the control of various companies.

Starting two decades ago, the Seabed Authority began keeping track of the reserved areas with the highest concentration of nodules, based on countries’ proprietary surveys. Some of the data was used for a modeling project that charted the geology of the ocean floor, and its potential for mining, though the public version of that project aggregated the data and did not disclose anything proprietary. Around the same time, some companies were keenly interested in the reserved areas and turned to the Seabed Authority for help in deciding where to focus their attention, the documents show. Nauru, Kiribati and other island states, one of the world’s smallest nations, quickly emerged as a leading country. They also did not demand much in exchange for sponsorship, having no ability of its own to pursue such an under-►



Deep sea drilling.

► taking. A community leader in Tonga, said in an interview that the company had agreed to pay it \$2 per ton as a “mining production fee.” That payment would amount to less than half of one percent of the firm’s total estimated value of the mined material. Separately, the companies would have to pay an undetermined royalty fee to the Seabed Authority once commercial mining began.

But the Seabed Authority staff routinely interacted with contractors pursuing mining sites, but reiterated that the agency had always honored data confidentiality rules. It is not unusual and is entirely proper and normal practice for the ISA secretariat to engage with contractors to discuss proposals which those contractors have regarding potential applications and also the contractors providing a confidential indication of the areas under consideration. The rules require that the sponsoring nations, in this case Nauru and

Tonga, exercise “effective control” over the mining projects so they are not partners in name only. Nii Allotey Odunton, a mining engineer from Ghana who served as the Seabed Authority’s secretary general from 2009 to 2016, said that developing nations were left with no choice but to work closely with private contractors, particularly because the unit within the agency meant to facilitate mining was never created.

“The only realistic option for most developing states therefore was to form partnerships with commercial interests that have access to the financial capital and technology necessary to conduct deep-sea exploration,” A spokesman for one of the private company said it donated a total of \$140,000 in 2022 to support community and social programs in Nauru and Tonga. The spokesman added that the contracts left the islands in “effective control” because their environmental agencies have regulatory oversight. ►►

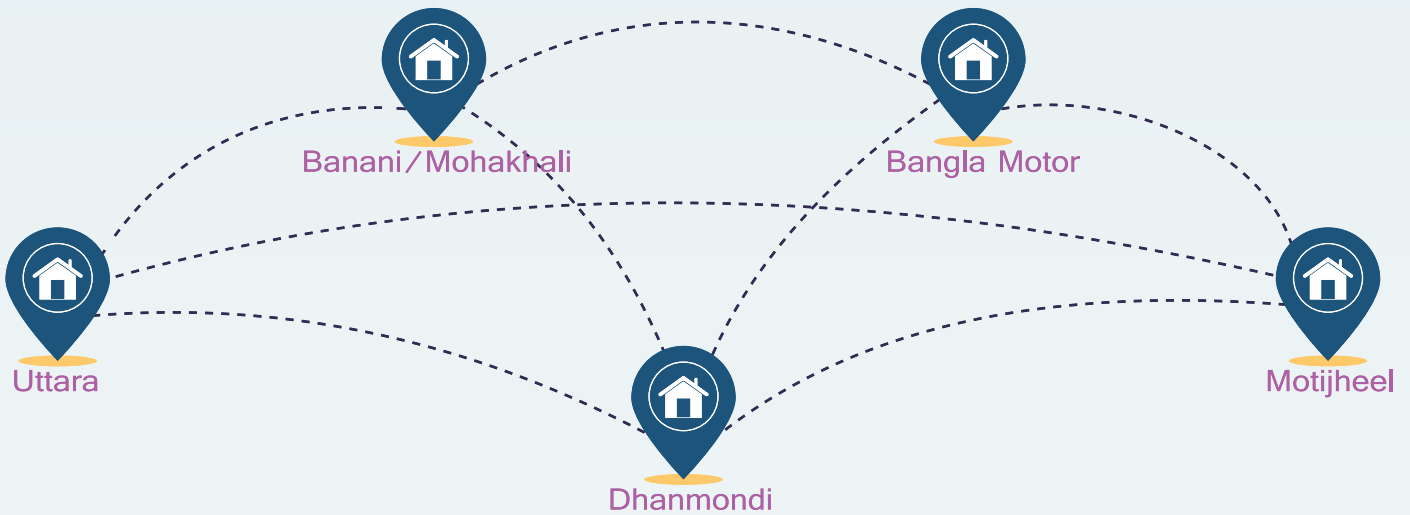
► Scientists say that more is known about the surface of the moon than about the floor of the ocean, with much of it still unmapped, and estimate that perhaps 90 percent of the species at the bottom of the Pacific remain unclassified. Worries about that knowledge gap emerged publicly in 2023 when the Metals Company submitted plans to test a new mining machine. The company had teamed up with Allseas, the offshore oil contractor, to equip a former drill ship with a device resembling a bulldozer that vacuums up nodules. The machine has been tested in the North Sea, but the Metals Company wants a separate trial in the Clarion-Clipperton Zone so it can demonstrate what, it predicts, will be limited consequences for aquatic life as it collects about 3,600 tons of nodules. Ultimately, once commercial mining starts, it intends to extract 1.3 million tons of these rocks a year at its first site.

These questions echo larger concerns about the harm some scientists fear large-scale seabed mining may cause. These are some of the most pristine, biodiverse habitats on a planet where we already have a biodiversity crisis because of destruction on land. Some of course opined that criticism was off base and that these projects are extremely important to the future health of the planet: this could be one of those projects that could really make a difference — that could really move the needle and their immediate concern is for approval to test its new nodule collector. After pushback from governments and environmental groups about its proposal, the company supplemented its filing with the Seabed Authority with additional environmental data. “Picking up the nodules from the seabed has to be accomplished with the maximum efficiency and minimum disturbance,” a former offshore-drilling executive said at a briefing. The effort, according to the company, would include a continuous environmental monitoring system that would allow

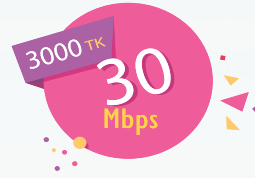
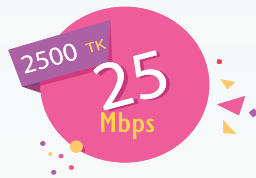
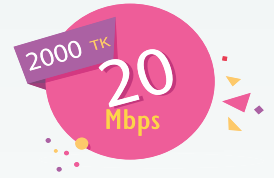
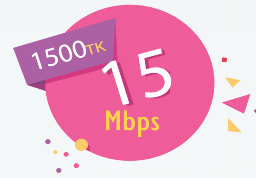
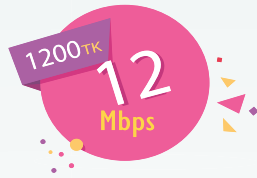
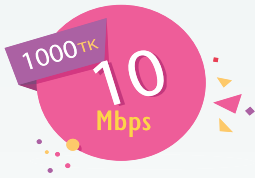
the crew to redirect the mining if sediment plumes or other harm occurs.

The broader issue is: “Where are you going to get these minerals from?” The Seabed Authority, nonetheless, has taken significant steps to limit harm, including setting aside about 40 percent of the Clarion-Clipperton Zone, 760,000 square miles, as areas where mining will not be allowed. At the meeting of the authority’s governing body in 2023, proponents and opponents of the Metals Company’s plans reached a compromise to speed up the review of the comprehensive seabed mining rules, sticking with the firm’s proposed timeline to start commercial operations as early as 2024. “Consensus means that everybody is slightly unhappy,” Mr. Lodge told the council. But framing of the rules could not be completed in 2024 and this would be discussed again in March and July session to be held in 2025. It is expected that finally the mining code allowing exploitation of seabed resources could be adopted by the ISA and thus allow companies waiting for long 15 years to commence much discussed seabed mining according to the implementation regulation of the UNCLOS 1982.

Bangladesh has already promulgated the Territorial Waters and Maritime Zones Act in 2021 allowing such contracts to be signed with private companies willing to invest, as a sponsoring state. As a sponsoring state Bangladesh will have the authority over a licensed area extending over 75,000 sq km more than half of Bangladesh’s total Sea/land area. However, it will entail scrutiny of the contractors work and physical monitoring of mine site and then negotiating a good term for every ton of minerals being exploited by the company. Environmental regulations are being drafted by the ISA and the sponsoring state will also be made responsible for environmental hazards during mining. Overall, this could be a game changer for Bangladesh. ■



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# Ace Eagle Like No Other FOOTMARKS FOR RESTORING PEOPLES' EMANCIPATION

## Air Commodore Munim Khan Majlish, BUP, BPP, psc

*Air Commodore Munim Khan Majlish, BPP, psc has a long illustrated career as an Air Traffic Controller to rightly contribute in aviation safety. He had served in all the major international airports of Bangladesh and worked in the regulator's capacity to formulate and standardise policies regarding airspace management. He had unique opportunities to work in multinational aviation environment in Turkey, India and Democratic Republic of Congo (DR Congo). He is a category 'A' Air Traffic Controller with surveillance and precision approach radar rating. He has obtained MBA from the University of Dhaka, MDS from National University and MSc from General Sir Jhon Kotalawala Defence University, Sri Lanka.*



ous patriotic comrades of the nation. I forgot to carry keys of my suitcase. When my mother noticed that she asked her nephew Suja to be in my aide. The veteran aerial combatant replied **“phupu if your smart son is not able to unlock the luggage without keys then he should never even try to take challenges of joining Air Force.”** The valiant ace eagle never considered any obsta-

1. On a winter afternoon in 1988, I commenced my adventurous journey for becoming the air warrior of motherland. It was the day of facing the Inter Services Selection Board (ISSB), a major step towards joining glori-

cles as barrier rather enjoyed overcoming those challenges and came out triumphant.

2. The Arabs pledged to encounter Jews community who started concentrating in Jerusalem and adjoining areas occupying Muslim settlements under British and French patronization. The Arabs under the united banner of “Military Coalition of Arab States” like Egypt, Transjordan, Syria, and expeditionary forces from Iraq were outsmart by the diplomacy, outstanding leadership and strategic planning of legendary politicians Ben Gurion and Golda Meir who could successfully exploited western and American support to established the State of Israel on 15 May 1948 (Wikipedia, 1948 Arab Israel War, 2024). The creation of Israel triggered significant demographic change throughout the Middle East. Around 700,000 Palestinian Arabs fled or were ►►



► expelled out from their homes in the area that became Israel, and they became refugees in what they refer to as Al-Nakba ("the catastrophe"). In the three years following the war, about 700,000 Jews immigrated to Israel. Around 260,000 Jews moved to Israel from the Arab world during and immediately after the war ((Wikipedia, 1948 Arab Israel War, 2024). The mistrust and collaborative mentality of Arab League (regional organization in the Arab world) was exposed by fragmented ambitions of King Abdullah of Transjordan, King Farouk of Egypt, Iraqi strongman Nuri as-Said, the vested national interest of Syrian and Lebanon.

3. Gamal Abdel Nasser Hussein emerged as one of the strong leadership in the Muslim world overthrowing the monarchy in Egypt in 1952 by establishing a republic and ending the British occupation of the country (Wikipedia, 1952 Egyptian Revolution, 2024). He denounced British imperialism in Egypt and British control over the

Suez Canal. He persuaded that the Egyptian people had a right to sovereignty over the waterway. Such nationalistic move was aggressively reacted by Israel and the West. The Suez Crisis was actually a tripartite aggression. It was an invasion of Sinai Peninsula in Egypt in late 1956 by Israel, followed by intervention of the United Kingdom and France. Their aim was to regain Western control of the Suez Canal and to remove Egyptian president Gamal Abdel Nasser from power. However, huge political pressure from the United States, the Soviet Union and the United Nations had finally led to a withdrawal by the three invaders. The episode ultimately humiliated the United Kingdom and France and strengthened the political empowerment of Nasser. Though Israel was eventually forced to withdraw, but was guaranteed that the Straits of Tiran would remain open that had been blocked to Israeli shipping since 1950 (Wikipedia, Suez Crisis, 2024). A United Nations Emergency Force (UNEF) was deployed along the border of Egypt and Israel to se-►►

cure an end to the Suez crisis in 1956. It can be said that the crisis signified the end of Great Britain's role in the international arena as one of the world's major powers (Wikipedia, Suez Crisis, 2024).

4. In 30 May 1967 Egyptian President Gamal Abdel Nasser once again announced that the straits would be closed to Israeli vessels and then mobilised its Egyptian forces along its border with Israel expelling United Nation Emergency Force (UNEF) presence (Wikipedia, Six-Day War, 2024). Egypt then had signed a defence agreement with Jordan envisaged that in the event of war Jordan would contain Israeli forces to prevent making territorial gains. Syria was also gradually building strong military capabilities. On 5th June, Arab endeavours was overshadowed by a series of preemptive airstrikes by Israel against Egyptian airfields. The Egyptians were caught by surprise, and nearly the entire Egyptian air force was destroyed with a few Israeli losses, obtaining the Israelis air supremacy. Only four unarmed Egyptian training flights were in the air when the strike began. A total of 338 Egyptian aircraft were destroyed and 100 pilots were killed. Simultaneously, the Israelis launched a ground offensive into the Gaza Strip and the Sinai, which again caught the Egyptians by surprise that suffered heavy losses. Israel had conquered the entire Sinai Peninsula (Wikipedia, Six-Day War, 2024). The Israeli success was the result of a well-prepared and enacted strategy, the poor political leadership of the Arab states, and their poor military leadership and strategy. Israel seized the Gaza Strip and the Sinai Peninsula from Egypt, the West Bank, including East Jerusalem from Jordan and the Golan Heights from Syria. Israel's international standing greatly improved in the following years. Its victory humiliated Egypt, Jordan and Syria. While the Arabs were disgraced and totally annihilated by Israeli superior strategy and tactics, one smart Bangladeshi air warrior alone

overshadowed Israel's triumphant by inflicting severe aerial damages while terminating Israeli arrogance as invincible. He was none but our popular Suja bhai formally known as Group Captain Saiful Azam (1941-2020).

5. Saiful Azam was such a personality who could make friendship with people of any age. When I often used to ask him about his unique involvement in the historic episode taking place thousands miles away from his motherland, he revealed many interesting episodes staged during his challenging journey at the Middle East. Our valiant fighter pilot (Flight Lieutenant Saiful Azam) along with Flight Lieutenant Sarwar Shad were sent by the Pakistan Air Force (PAF) on deputation as instructors and military advisers to the Royal Jordanian Air Force (RJAF) in November 1966 (Masum Billah, 2021). They were training the young Jordanian pilots. This was Pakistan's gesture of solidarity with the Arab nations during tension with Israel (Masum Billah, 2021). At the same time, they used to work in the Air Operation Centre at RJAF for preparing operational plans for future conflict. Azam spent many hours flying one aircraft more than any other in Jordan—the Hawker-Siddeley Hunter. The British made aircraft was an industry leader of the transonic era. Azam quickly adopted to the performance of Hunter and loved flying her optimum capability (Masum Billah, 2021).

6. The tension between Israel and her Arab neighbours had reached a crescendo by mid '67. Israel surprised not only their Arab neighbours but also the world. Israel initiated a preemptive air attack on the Arab countries on June 5 by targeting Egyptian air assets first; and then Jordan, Syria and Iraq faced the subsequent Israeli aggression. When the war broke out on 5th June 1967, RJAF Commander found his majority of aerial combatants were either not fit for flying or not confident to withstand such difficult tasks. The Base Com-▶▶

► mander on behalf of King Hussein requested skillful fighter pilot Flight Lieutenant Azam to take part in Arabs resistance against Israeli invasion. Courageous Azam immediately accepted King's offer. A special authority was required to obtain for Azam to fly RJAF fighters as Pakistan was not in the war. King Hussein personally sought President Ayub Khan's approval, which he asserted immediately. Flight Lieutenant Saiful Azam became the only air warrior in history to participate in the war bearing three different identities-born in Bangladesh, serving in Pakistan Air Force, took active part in Arab-Israel War wearing RJAF uniform as an air combatant of No 1 Fighter Squadron (Hunters) (Wikipedia, Six-Day War, 2024).

7. Israel had two main objectives in Six-Day War in 1967: destruction of the military assets of the Arab countries and grabbing more Arab land for Israel (Masum Billah, 2021). On 5th June at 7:45 (IST) Israel Air Force (IAF) launched Operation Focus (Moked). All but 12 of its nearly 200 operational jets conducted a pre-emptive surprise series attack of simultaneous waves devastating Egypt's aircraft and air defence capabilities on ground and destroying airfields and other military installations. The raids, which were part of the opening moves of the Six-Day War, thwarted top secret Arab plans for an upcoming invasion of the Jewish state. Israel had pursued the similar attack on the following days (Wikipedia, Six-Day War, 2024).

8. Azam was rearing to take part in the historical episode right at the first instance. He was to lead a 4-ship attack on Lod Air Base inside Israel. But a "go-no go" dilemma prevailed and kept all Arab

attack groups on ground at Mafrag Air base of RJAF. At mid-morning on 5th June Azam's role was switched from attack to Air Defense duties (Masum Billah, 2021). At mid-day, scramble order was issued and all aircraft were ordered to take off to defend the base. Azam was the first to take off, with Ihsan Shurdom as his wingman. Suddenly, there were a large number of aircraft in the air. The controller at Ajlun Radar Station was unable to identify friend or foe. Azam spotted a formation of four jets with desert camouflage (similar to Iraqi Hunters). Azam had a unique lookout and air orientation like an eagle. He observed that the group changed into an echelon formation for a bombing attack on Mafrag. He immediately noticed that they were Israeli Mystere IVs, not hunters. When IAF Bombers were returning to base after completion of ground attack, they were surprisingly intercepted by our brave Bengali young air warrior. Azam first shot

*"You see, only a very small number of pilots ever get to take part in aerial warfare, in their entire career. I was very lucky to have a shot at it. I wasn't going to let the opportunity pass me by." –Saiful Azam*

down the Number-4 of the formation of Dassault Mystere IV belonging to the IAF while flying a Hawker Hunter. The Is-

raeli jet crashed at the perimeter fence of Mafrag Air Base. Israeli pilot Captain Hanania Bula of the 116th Squadron was killed inside the stricken Mystere (Masum Billah, 2021). Pulling away from dive, Azam spotted the smoke trail of other two Mysteres of the IAF formation escaping at full speed. He immediately chased the escaping pair. Both IAF fighters and Azam with Hunter exhibited skillful application of aerial combat manoeuvres. Azam had finally delivered his all remaining 30 mm shells on the wing of enemy fighter. The crippled Mystere is learnt to have crashed on its way back to base (Masum Billah, 2021). The lead Mystere only witness his number ►►



Painting of Azam's battle scene of 5th June 1967

► 4 and 2 being shot down, was just alone, away from base and most likely low on fuel, and did not have the courage to chase our valiant air warrior Azam.

9. After completion of the mission Azam could not land back to his base (King Hussein Air Base, Mafraq) as it was already destroyed by Israeli air attack. Our smart eagle- Suja bhai narrated me once that while he had been returning back home after the mission he was instructed to rejoin and land at Mafraq by the Air Traffic Controller. Flight Lieutenant Azam had a doubt regarding the joining instructions received from Mafraq Air Traffic Control (ATC) Tower. He thought the accent of the controller seemed unfamiliar. He immediately asked for communication security check. The lady controller promptly replied correctly. The super intelligent Air Warrior was not deceived by the Israeli Electronic Jamming strategy. He then asked about the nick name of the pet (dog) of the then Base Commander of Mafraq Air Base, which was well known to all the personnel of the base. Israeli Intelligence Agency (Mussad) officer on duty was unable to respond such query. Brave and intelligent Azam immediately aborted landing and diverted to alternative airfield (interview with Saiful Azam, 2007). While

going around from final phase of landing Suja bhai discovered a totally devastated runway underneath. Had he not cross checked the ATC instructions he would be just crash landing on the destroyed runway and would fall prey of Israeli deception measures. He then somehow managed to land at King Hussein International Airport, Amman. Israel Air Force was immediately ordered to retaliate to the Jordanian air attacks. Finding the King's planes refueling at their bases in Mafraq and Amman International Airport, the Israeli jets wrought havoc-all 22 of Jordan's Hawker Hunter jets were destroyed including Azam's one (serial number 702), as were the air bases, which meant that Jordan no longer had an air force. The Israelis lost 19 planes, including two destroyed in air-to-air combat and 13 downed by anti-aircraft artillery (Wikipedia, Six-Day War, 2024). Both the aerial success against Israelis credited to our brave Bengali super eagle Flight Lieutenant Azam. He was applauded by PAF Air Commodore Abdur Rahim at the Operation Room at Amman International Airport. A very big surprise was waiting for brave Azam when he noticed King Hussein himself arrived to boost up the moral of his fellow air warriors. It was even a bigger surprise when His Majesty King Hussein Bin Talal of Jordan had asked Azam to ride him ►►

► in his car after appreciating for his valiant combat performance (Masum Billah, 2021). King Hussein inspired Azam to continue fighting against the Israeli aggression. Actually, King had offered President Hasan Al Bakr of Iraq to support Arab resistance by providing all remaining Jordanian pilots and aircrew along with the most fearless air warrior of the Muslim world-Saiful Azam.



10. Arabs' aerial capabilities were neutralized by efficient and surprised strategy of Israel. At one stage Arab efforts were crippled by simultaneous Israeli aerial attack and missile firing. It became difficult for the Arabs to sustain and keep cohesion of fighting units. It is indeed noteworthy to know that Flight Lieutenant Azam was equally efficient in ground operations. At midnight of that long day of June 5, 1967, Azam joined the Jordanian contingent of aviators, aircrew, ground crew, technicians in a convoy of trucks and buses destined for Iraqi Air Base H-3, which is 435 kilometers from Baghdad in western Iraq, close to the Syrian-Iraqi border, and near the highway that connects Jordan with Baghdad (Wikipedia, Six-Day Wars, 2024). The convoy lumbered through a cold desert highway with weary and exhausted air warriors who had just experienced the sufferings from the atrocities caused by Israeli aggression on that day. On the following early morning, they were targeted by four Israeli Vought bombers escorted by two Mirage IIIC. The convoy sustained damages and a few injuries, particularly it caused panic amongst the personnel in

the convoy. The Contingent Commander then decided to move under cover of darkness only, not in broad daylight. Such decision was not accepted by those jubilant fighters who were eager to reach Iraqi territory as soon as possible and commence retaliation against Israel. A group of junior officers approached Azam who was second in command, to take over the command and march towards Iraq despite danger of Israeli air attacks. Suja bhai once told me that he was totally surprised to find all officers and soldiers of Jordanian Contingent approached him to take over the command the Company and they would isolate their commander for lack of displaying heroic command strategy. They said that otherwise, they might also kill their commander for not taking enough initiative during the war. They were going impatient by the minutes. A bloody revolt was about to break out over the disputed decision of the commander. The Officer Commanding understanding the crucial situation issued a revised order for all willing fighters to proceed to Iraqi destination on a voluntary basis. Azam, thereby, ►

► led the brave sub-contingent of air warriors towards Iraq, eager to take part in the noble warfare. The unit thereafter started functioning under the able command of Flight Lieutenant Azam. What a compliment awarded to a young Bangladeshi air warrior who never refused to take challenges be it in the air or in the ground. They reached H-3 that afternoon, but had to move further forward as the base had already suffered severe damage by earlier Israeli air attack (Masum Billah, 2021). Azam's valiant contingent was asked to move to a distance base at Habbaniyah, 75 kilometers west of Baghdad. It was already 6th June 1967. Our brave Azam could reached his destination at the earliest to satisfy his adrenalin secretions of contain Israeli attacks.

11. Azam hastily moved to Iraq from Jordan where he was similarly deputized into service and earned his historical contribution in aerial combat. Iraqi Air Force used to operate same Hawker Hunters. So this time our

brave air warrior participated straight way in the historic episode wearing Iraqi uniform. Israel had been destroying all the neighbouring Arab states by series of air strikes for six days since 5th June 1967. Saiful Azam could not just be an observer of such atrocities done against the Arab world. It was staged on 7th June 1967; the Israeli raid on Iraqi Air Base H-3 was a disaster for them. Israel attacked with four Vautour bombers, escorted by four Mirage IIIC fighters. Within a few minutes of engagement, they were intercepted and lost three aircraft and four air warriors (2 dead, 2 captured) (Masum Billah, 2021). With aircraft far inferior than that of enemy, a battle hardened leader had turned the tide, second time in two days, in the six days of mayhem. That leader was none but our dearest Suja bhai (Masum Billah, 2021).

*"I never engage in an aerial battle with the thought of losing. There is simply no such option." –Saiful Azam*

12. Azam was given command of a formation of four Hunters. He had his favourite Ihsan Shurdhom as his wingman along with other two Iraqi pilots- Lieutenant Samir and Lieutenant Mohammad. They got scramble order in the middle of breakfast and were airborne within minutes from Iraqi Air Base Habbaniyah to intercept Israeli offensive. Iraqi Radar Controller confirmed that a big formation was pulling up over H-3 and Azam's formation of interceptors were asked to descend and engage the enemy. Azam asked Samir and Mohammad to engage slower and larger moving bombers (Vautour) and decided to take on the faster speed Mirages along with his trusted wingman Ihsan. The spectacular and historical dog fight of aerial combat was staging place. Azam with Hawker Hunters had a close encounter or popularly known as "Dog Fight" with Israeli superior aircraft Dassault Mirage IIIC.

Azam got the first best opportunity in the aerial fighting and squeezed the trigger. The shells scored hits on both wings of

the Dassault Mirage IIIC. With valiant effort coupled with evasive manoeuvre and smart thinking Azam outclassed the technological advantage of Mirage and finally shot down the huge and state of the art fighter of the moment with much lesser capable aircraft. The Israeli fighter was engulfed in flames and the pilot Captain Gideon Dror ejected out of the burning aircraft and was taken as prisoner of war (POW). Captain Gideon Dror earlier had shot down Azam's one of the member of the formation, but he himself fell prey to Azam's dwelling brilliance (Fighter Jets World, June 2014). Azam was in the middle of next manoeuvre. He immediately broke off to the right and spotted a Vautour coming in his direction. He made a 'Split-S'- a risky high G dive at low altitude and inverted his Hunter to keep the Vau-►



Painting of Azam shooting down IAF Mirage IIIC on 7th June 1967

► tour in sight. Azam could successfully hit his target with 30 mm shells and achieved his fourth kills in aerial combat in two days. The pilot Yitzhak Glantz-Golan also ejected and was captured. Such efficient handling of fighter aircraft has, thereby, become exemplary and a unique lesson for conducting aerial combat worldwide. People research to draw lessons for acquiring professional excellence from this unimaginable episode. Israel retaliated Iraqi resistance and destroyed the airfield and 23 aircraft of Iraq Air Force in the following days (Wikipedia, Six-Day War, 2024). The overall outcome was a huge military success for Israel and it changed the map of middle east for the foreseeable future. But Azam had a role to play in proving that the Israeli pilots were not invincible against worthy opponents, even with Israel's superior capabilities.

13. Only by joining the aerial combat on behalf of Iraq Azam made a history. He is the only pilot in history who had been adorned with the coveted uniforms of four different Countries- Bangladesh, Pakistan, Jordan and Iraq. He has

flown, from propeller aircraft to the modern supersonic fighters with eight different Air Forces of the world. The Arab states acknowledged his valiant contributions in participating the Arab-Israel war. He was conferred with top honours with a number of medals for his courageous contribution in aerial combat. State of Jordan has conferred him the gallantry award "Wissam al-Istiqlal" (Royal Order of Independence) and State of Iraq has bestowed him the prestigious gallantry award "Naw't al-Shujat (Medal of Bravery). Prior to achieve such remarkable feats he was already recognized with the gallantry award "Sitara-e-Jurat" (Star of Courage)-the third highest military award (PAF equivalent of the RAF Distinguished Flying Cross) and "Sitara-e-Basalat" (Star of Good Conduct) by Pakistan for his glorious contribution in 1965 Indo-Pak war (Wikipedia Saiful Azam, 2024). This is a rare accomplishment in history of mankind to achieve gallantry awards from three different countries (Pakistan, Jordan and Iraq) for valiant contributions in three different wars. Azam had received peacetime gallantry awards like Sirat-e-Harb ►►



► (1965), Tamgha-e-Basalat and Tamgha-e-Jung (1965) from Pakistan. He was awarded “Bangladesh Joy Padak” and “Bangladesh Songbidhan Padak” by the Peoples Republic of Bangladesh (Wikipedia Saiful Azam, 2024).

14. Super Eagle Suja (Saiful Azam) was born to exhibit gallant demonstration in live encounter in the aerial combat. Only at the age of 23 he fearlessly participated in the India-Pakistan war in April-September 1965. Pakistan launched “Operation Grand Slam” on 1st September 1965 to regain lost territories at Kashmir.

Azam was at Mauripur with No. 17 Squadron that used to fly F-86 Sabre. Indian army column claimed strong movement through second echelon (first being in Kashmir) in Punjan towards the heartland of Pakistan. PAF had actually provided the crucial balance in the battlefield by keeping the Indian advances at bay. The Sabres were aptly employed for providing Close Air Support (CAS) supported by F-104 Starfighter interceptors (Masum Billah, 2021). Tho Bengali pilots of PAF Azam along with Alam regularly caused havoc to adversary’s ground forces by conducting series of Fighter Ground Attack (FGA) missions against Indian’s military deployments by F-86s Sabre from PAF Base Sargodha (Wikipedia Indo-Pak-

istani War of 1965, 2024). Throughout the war, Azam took part in 12 ground-attack missions which inflicted severe damages to the Indian military forces. Pakistani fighter pilot, Squadron Leader MM Alam (who was also born in Bangladeshi), was credited with the record of downing five Indian aircraft in less than a minute (probably 40 seconds), becoming the first known flying ace since the Korean War in 1950-1953 (Wikipedia Indo-Pakistani War of 1965, 2024). Our hero Azam had also achieved numerous records in the history of aerial combat. He became only flying ace to experience three different theatres of war in three different scenarios and time frames.

15. It was 19th September in 1965. Four F-86 Sabres were immediately launched from Sargodha for CAS mission in support of Pak-army on ground. The formation led by Squadron Leader Azim Daudpota reached the target area in minutes and began its attack runs over enemy lines (tanks, military convoy, gun positions and troops). It was one of the most successful day for PAF with many kills on the ground (19 tanks, 6 military vehicles destroyed). As Azam’s formation was about to complete its sixth dive over the enemy target, they were intercepted by four In-►



Painting of PAF Sabre air attack on the Indian advancing artillery columns in 1965

▶ dian Folland Gnat fighters. British manufactured subsonic fighter jet aircraft Folland Gnat got the nickname "Sabre Slayer" for its success against F-86. The transonic jet fighter, produced by North American Aviation, the F-86 Sabre is the best known as the United States' first swept-wing fighter that could counter the swept-wing Soviet MiG-15 in high-speed dogfights in the skies during the Korean War, fighting some of the earliest jet-to-jet battles in history (Wikipedia North American F-86 Sabre, 2024). It was considered one of the best and the most important fighter aircraft in that war.

On the other hand, The Gnat was credited as having shot down seven Pakistani Canadair Sabres in the 1965 war, while two Gnats were downed by PAF fighters. None but Bangladeshi celebrated air warrior Azam is credited to shot down one of those two. He narrated me a very brave and chal-

lenging episode in aerial encounter during a personal conversation. He described that he had noticed two Gnats were in pursuit of SM Ahmed's Sabre and the other two Gnats were at his left trying to take position behind his own F-86. IAF Gnats were faster and more manoeuvrable in close combat than that of Azam's own Sabre. He was also outnumbered by IAF interceptors two to one. Our beloved Suja bhai was actually hunted by enemy fighters. While pretending to comply with interceptors' instructions he made a sudden evasive manoeuvre to fool the accompanying IAF fighters. In the following moments Azam made a few evasive turns, followed by hard "Chandelle", partial barrel role, and flying inverted to keep the enemy in full sight. In the quick aerobatic movement, the scenario was completely reversed. Azam, with a larger aircraft was on top of the Gnats with guns aiming squarely on ▶▶

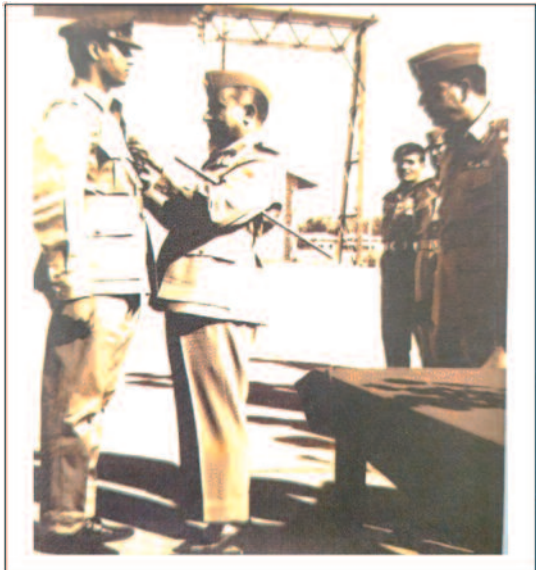
▶ the tail of one of the Gnats. He had shot down one of two attackers, a Folland Gnat, and earned his first victory in the air. He also mentioned that he had probably shot another fighter, whose flame he had noticed, but was not sure of its falling down. The pilot of the downed IAF fighter Flying Officer Vijay Mayadev could successfully eject, but landed inside Pakistani territory. He was immediately captured by Pakistani soldiers on the ground and spent the rest of the war imprisoned in Pakistan as POW (Wikipedia, Indo-Pakistani War of 1965).

16. The ace in the air genuinely showed his class even during the initial building of his career. He got selected for training in USA for two years during his cadet period at PAF College in Risalpur, Pakistan. Azam arrived Lackland AFB, known as Gateway to the Air Force in San Antonio, Texas, USA in July 1959. He got training on Lockheed T-33 jet trainers for six months from October 1959 to April 1960 at Bartow AFB, Florida. His development for becoming an ace pilot continued by successful completion of basic flying training on T-33 at AFB Reese from May to October 1960. Azam was benefited from a sound instructor-apprentice relationship with flying instructor Goodwell. ‘Discipline, hard work, training along with basic instincts’ are the essential attributes that he kept in mind for shaping the conviction for becoming a fighter pilot. He commenced his



training at Advance Gunnery School in Luke AFB, Arizona in November 1960. Initially he got jet conversion on Lockheed T-33 once again. Then he has started his long friendship with F-86 Sabre while undergoing advance training on fighter and jet aircraft (Wikipedia, Saiful Azam ). Once he had narrated me that when he was asked to fly for the first mission in USAF Base Luke by his fellow flying instructor, he had just mesmerized the US veteran by his flying skills with F-86 Sabres. His instructor uttered during debrief session ***“I have nothing to teach you, my boy, rather I wish to learn flying from you, my dear.”*** The manifestation of such performance was recognized when Azam achieved the prestigious “Top Gun” trophy for his best all round performance on 14th April, 1961- a rare fit for any non-American pilot (Official website, Pakistan Air Force). An ace eagle was actually unfolded who would exhibit his courageous flying talents in the days to come.

17. Saiful Azam was a product of a Cadet College system in Pakistan. He is a proud graduate of the ▶▶



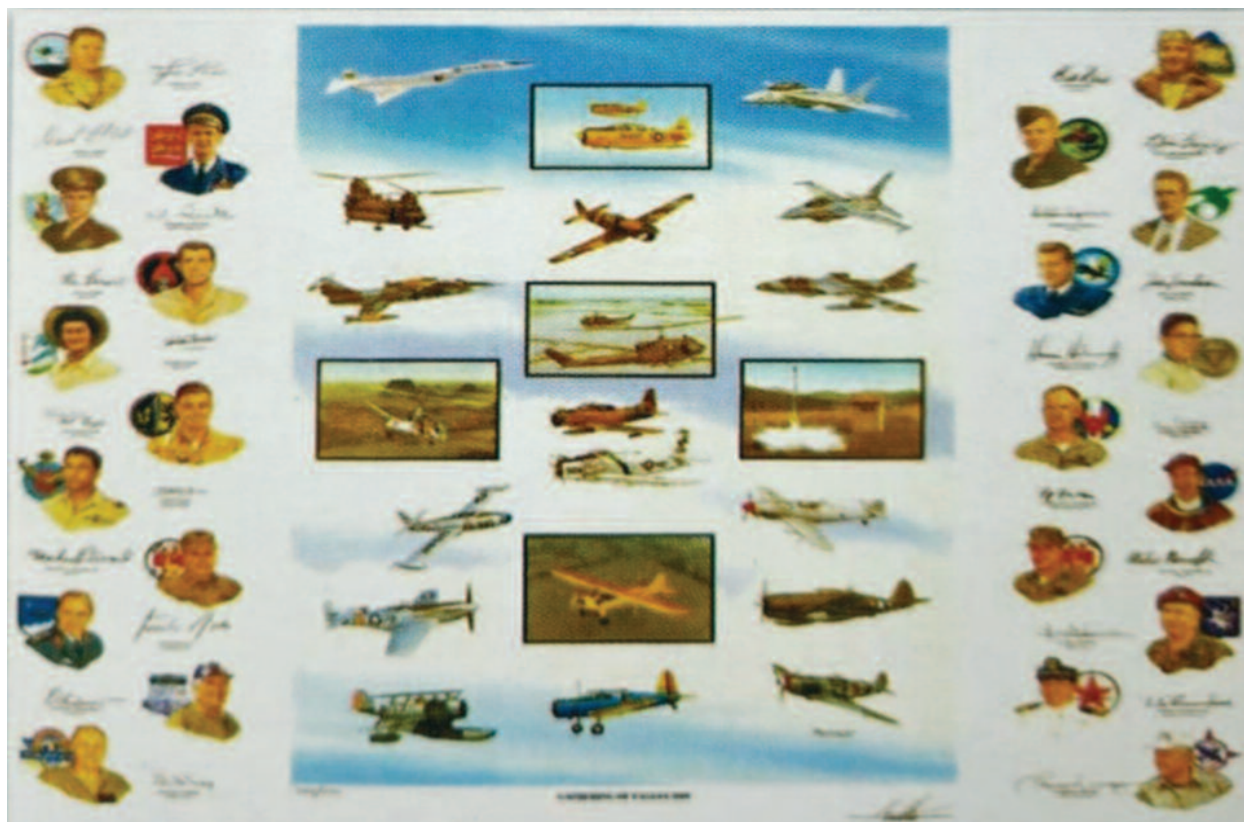
*Naw't al Shujat is being awarded to Azam by an Iraqi General*



*Azam inside the cockpit of Hawker Hunter*

Pakistan Air Force College in Sargodha. He joined Pakistan Air Force Academy, Risalpur in 1958 and successfully obtained commission as an officer in the General Duties Pilot {GD (P)} branch in 1960. Azam was posted for a brief pe-

riod in Dhaka before becoming an instructor pilot with the T-33s at PAF's No. 2 Squadron (Jet Conversion Unit) in Mauripur, Karachi. While still posted as an instructor, Azam valiantly fought in the Indo-Pak War in September 1965 joining



► No. 17 Squadron from PAF Base Sargodha, flying F-86s. In 1966, only at the age of 24 he assumed the command of PAF's No. 2 Squadron (Wikipedia, Saiful Azam, 2024).

18. Saiful Azam is the only air warrior in history to fly for eight different air forces (Bangladesh, Jordan, Iraq, Pakistan, USA and other three), participated in the theatre of war (aerial combat) on behalf of three different air forces (Jordan, Iraq and Pakistan), and destroyed fighter planes in aerial combat of two different air forces (India and Israel). As of now, he held the record for shooting down more number of Israeli aircraft than any other person in the planet, total four IAF aircraft (Higham, Robin, 2003).

19. With the prime motto of "Honour Heritage, Serve Community, Forge Futures" an USA based organisation named 'The Gathering of Eagles Foundation (GOE)' regularly organizes an annual event at USAF Air Command and Staff College (ACSC), Alabama intended to allow the next generation specially the aviators to learn from the distinguished men and women (Eagles) who have made significant contributions to air, space, and cyberspace power (Air University, Maxwell AFB, Alabama, 2024). Accordingly, Saiful Azam was rewarded as one of the Living Eagles for 2000 along with 22 aviators from USA, UK, France, Germany, and Israel (Gathering of Eagles Foundation, 2024). Chuck Yeager, President George HW Bush, astronauts John Glenn, Buzz Aldrin and Neil Armstrong were all honoured as "Living Legend" in the past. Suja bhai narrated that when his name was announced in the auditorium to receive the award, the Chief Guest himself came down from the stage and approached him to confer his credentials mentioning "It is my privilege to honour the greatest 'Ace Eagle' for his historic contributions". All the Bangladeshi along with our beloved motherland are proud to have such a gallant son of the soil. The author of article titled "Top Guns" by Ehud Yonah, based on which

Don Simpson and Jerry Bruckheimer produced a film named Top Gun (Screen Rant, Top Gun True Story, 2024) was also present on the occasion. He uttered with respect "They (US Navy's top aviators) might have claimed many kills, but your ones' had outnumbered their efforts many times. Because they had destroyed them from a standoff distance (beyond visual range) with missiles and radar guidance, and you had inflicted damages to enemy aircraft bravely in close encounter with ordinary gun." What a brave air warrior is our beloved Azam.

20. The widely circulated newspaper Dawn regarded him as "Master of the sky". Prince El Hassan bin Talal of Jordan paid tribute to the legend as "The Group Captain remains a legend in Jordan, for his gallantry in supporting the Jordanian Air force during the 'Six Day' Arab Israeli War in 1967, when he helped defending the skies of Jordan, and we will always be grateful to him (Dhaka Tribune, 2020)." Palestine Ambassador to Bangladesh Mr Ahmed Rabie stated "On behalf of all Palestinians, I send our deepest condolences to his family in Bangladesh." Pakistan Air Force Chief Mujahid Anwar Khan mentioned "Azam was an exceptional fighter pilot who would always be remembered for his valour and professionalism." Bangladesh Air Force (BAF) has paid last tribute to her brave airman by a ceremonial fly past of all types of fighter aircraft of BAF inventory. Bangladesh will ever cherish her esteemed talent who had honoured his country by exhibiting outstanding display of airmanship, particularly in waging aerial combat. The world will ever remember such a fearless air warrior who had set an extraordinary example of professionalism and heroic exploitation of air warfare for future generation of aviators. The display of bravery at the highest level to restore peoples' emancipation is vividly manifested throughout his illustrated career. Patriotic citizens of Bangladesh will ever treasure their beloved comrade- the Ace eagle in the Air, like no other. ■



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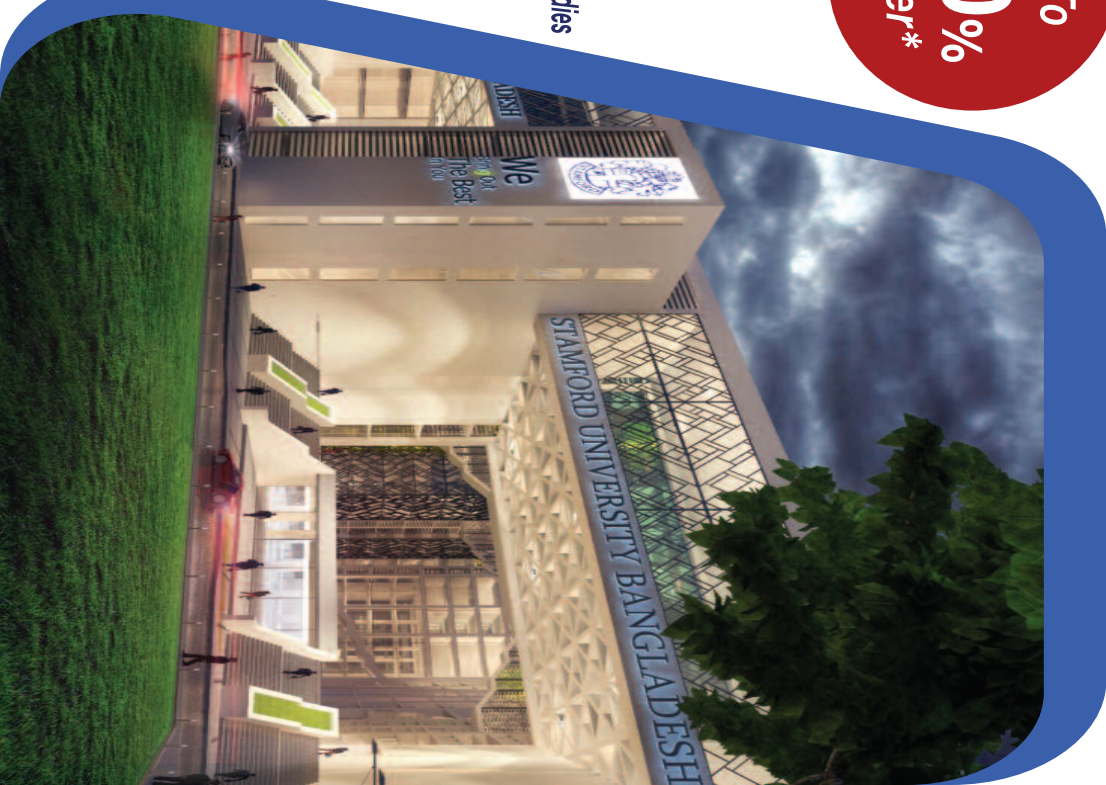
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# GENERAL OSMANY: MILITARY STRATEGY IN THE WAR OF LIBERATION 1971

**“Forward, my countrymen, to protect the lives and honour of our men and women, to secure the future of our citizens. Whatever be their religion, caste or creed, and to defend the independence of Bangladesh.” - MAG Osmany**

## Major General (Retd) M. Ashab Uddin

*ndc, psc, Mphil was a General Officer Commanding (GOC) in Bangladesh Army (2007-2012). He is also a former Ambassador to state of Kuwait and Republic of Yemen. Presently he is an Adjunct Faculty in the Independence University, Bangladesh (IUB)*



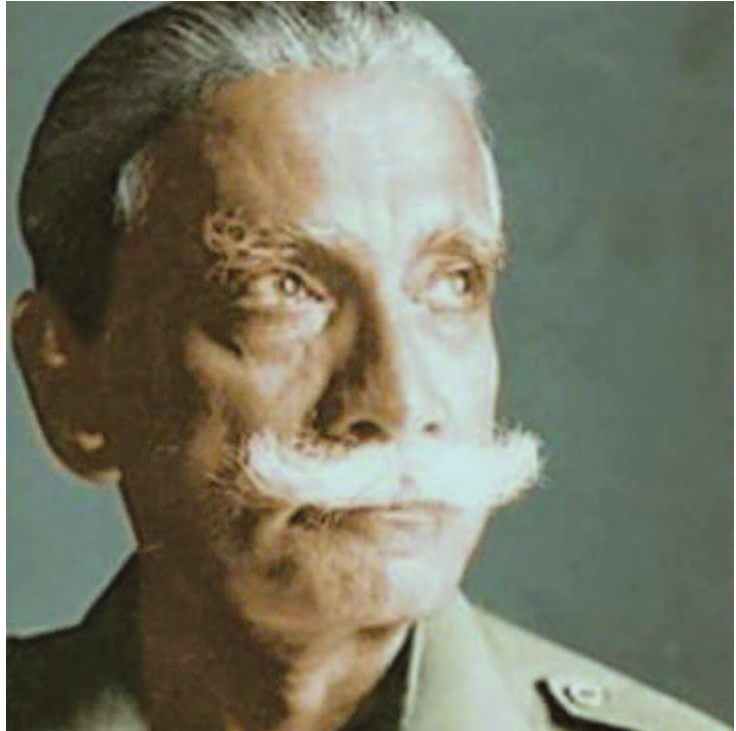
Mohammad Ataul Gani Osmany was the Commander-in-Chief (C-in-C) of Bangladesh Forces during the Liberation War in 1971. He is popularly referred to as General Osmany, with the honorary title of **Bangabir**

(Hero of Bengal). Bangabir Osmany is the name of an era, the name of a history and the name of a chapter by itself in our national history. It is one of those very few names of the twentieth century, which was pronounced frequently with honour and pride. Osmany is a noble name which will remain enthroned in the hearts of all Bangladeshis

and continue to serve as glorious moral beacon for patriotism, courage and dedication. He is the symbol of struggle for our homeland, a symbol of valour, a symbol of success, and above all, the symbol of justice, hope and aspiration.

From 12 April 1971 he was appointed as C-in-C of Bangladesh Forces with the status of a Cabinet Minister. He took command of the Mukti Bahini and immediately decided to bring all the elements of the Mukti Bahini under one command and directed their operations with inspiring leadership, spirit, proficiency and resolve. He was dedicated and totally committed to the independence of Bangladesh. From April to June Osmany toured a number of areas to boost morale and gather information, meeting with his Indian counterparts and setting up the Bangladeshi com-▶▶

► mand structure. As C-in-C, General Osmany had to take great pains to enhance the number of regular and guerrilla forces and also to master the weapons. By dint of his hard work and devotion he could put together an army of about 20 to 25 thousand regular forces equipped with minimum required arms and ammunitions. General Osmany could also gather naval elements to disrupt the Pakistani sea and river lines of communication with overall aim of weakening their infrastructure. He also organized a small air force which came into being on 28 September 1971 using an old airfield at Dimapur, Nagaland with one DC 3 Dakota, one Twin Otter and one Alouette III helicopter.



MAG Osmany

General Osmany was an outstanding and bold military leader. He tasted the success of winning a war, where he was the Commander-in-Chief of the victorious Mukti Bahini. After the initial onslaught, General Osmany instantly structured the guerrilla forces. The aim was to bleed the enemy by the sporadic offensive of guerrilla forces and side by side to launch offensive onto the enemy occupied territory by regular forces to compel the enemy to disperse and weaken them. He had some differences of opinion with the Indian leadership regarding the role of the Mukti Bahini in the conflict. Indian military leadership initially envisioned Bengali forces to be trained into small elite guerilla force of 8000 members, led by the surviving East Bengal Regiment soldiers operating in small cells around Bangladesh to facilitate the eventual Indian intervention but with the Bangladesh government in exile, General Osmany favoured a different strategy:

- Bangali conventional forces would occupy lodgment areas inside Bangladesh and then the Bangladeshi government would request in-

ternational community for diplomatic recognition and intervention. Initially Mymensingh was picked for this operation but General Osmany later settled on Sylhet.

- Sending the maximum number of guerillas inside Bangladesh as soon as possible with the following objectives:
- Increasing Pakistani casualties through raids and ambush using “hit and run” tactics avoiding less casualties on own side.
- Cripple economic activity by hitting power stations, railway lines, storage depots and communication networks.
- Destroy Pakistan army mobility by blowing up bridges/culverts, fuel depots, trains, river crafts and assassinating prominent collaborators.
- The strategic objectives was to make the Pakistanis spread their forces inside the province, so attacks could be made on isolated Pakistani detachments.





Mukti Bahini

► According to General Osmany, the skill and tactics required to defeat a strong and well-prepared force must be varied in accordance with the situation, existing realities of local environment, as well as strength and capabilities of opposing forces. Therefore the Mukti Bahini initially followed 'hit and run' tactics. They avoided face to face contact with the enemy. By July-August then Mukti Bahini improved in their training and operational method. Their actions included ambushing military convoys, raiding police stations, blowing up vital installations, sinking river crafts and assassinating prominent collaborators. By this time their operation extended right up to Dhaka. In September - November, Mukti Bahini was highly active both on the borders and in the interior. The fighting capabilities of Mukti Bahini enhanced significantly with the formation of three regular brigades namely Z Force, K Force and S Force. It has been established that the conventional form of war mixed with guerrilla warfare techniques adopted during the liberation war paid a rich dividend. The guerrilla operations undertaken by the Mukti Bahini isolated the Pakistanis', stalled their movements, shattered their

morale and reduced their fighting capabilities to a great extent. The Mukti Bahini prepared the ground for eventual launching of the Allied Forces and intimately supported the conventional operations, which accelerated the surrender of Pakistan Army.

Bangabir General MAG Osmany was one of the few national leaders who at the same time nurtured and inculcated a number of high principles, human virtues, moral values and a very high degree of military professionalism. A great decision maker who was truly patriotic and a great personality who will continue to inspire and guide generations of heroes and leaders of our nation forever. In true sense, this great General, with relatively short physical stature, towered over everyone around him. He eminently carried the courage of conviction and was a model of selfless service. Throughout his life, regardless of his personal circumstances, he never hesitated to heed his country's call. He was a man who truly did everything for a reason, for a purpose, not for himself, but for the amity and glory of his beloved motherland, Bangladesh. ■



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# Korea needs bold fiscal stimulus

**SONG Kyung-jin**

*is Country Representative Korea of The Asia Foundation. Song led the Institute for Global Economics and served as special adviser to the Presidential Committee for the Seoul G20 Summit in the Office of the President.*



The Dec. 3 declaration of martial law has plunged Korea into a political and economic crisis, which is deepening in an unexpected way following the violent attack on the Seoul Western

District Court. Even under military dictatorship, there was never such an attack on a courthouse. The violence shocked the country and the world. There are serious worries that illegality and violence will increase until the Constitutional Court makes its ruling. Perpetrators of such acts of violence against the rule of law must be punished without pardon in order to defend democracy.

With instability continuing and uncertainties rising, a sense of gloom pervades, casting a shadow over the Korean economy and people's livelihoods.

Last Friday, the International Monetary Fund released its World Economic Outlook update where it upped its forecast for the world economy to 3.3 percent from 3.2 percent in October 2024. Meanwhile, it downgraded the growth forecast for Korea by 0.2 percentage point to 2 percent from the previous forecast of 2.2 percent. It is even slightly higher than those of other forecast institutions, including the Bank of Korea's 1.9 percent. The average growth rate forecast for the

Korean economy in 2025 by major investment banks dropped from 2.1 percent last November to 1.8 percent this month. JP Morgan forecast a meager 1.3 percent, the lowest growth rate among major investment banks.

These forecasts, made prior to the Jan. 19 violence at the courthouse, now paint an even more concerning picture. The public's economic distress index is currently at an all-time high.

Domestic demand remains weak and is getting weaker. Exports are moderating and the export increase is thinning. Export growth is expected to slow down due to intensifying competition in key industries such as semiconductors and downward factors resulting from changes in U.S. trade policy. According to the Federation of Korean Industries, its business sentiment index survey showed the longest consecutive fall for 34 months since April 2022 and the forecast for January is 84.6, falling from 12.7 points in December 2024. Consumer sentiment also dropped in December from 88.4, down 12.3 points from 100.7 in November. The economic sentiment index was down 9.6 points from November to 83.1 points in December.

The Korean won to U.S. dollar exchange rate was 1,472.5 won per dollar at the end of December, its lowest level in 15 years. The won was the worst performer in Asia against the dollar in 2024. Such a large depreciation of the won raises import prices and increases inflation and the cost ▶▶

► of living. Inflation is upping again. It also makes the import of raw materials and energy more expensive, thus affecting export competitiveness. The Korean stock market was the poorest-performing market among major economies last year. Foreign ownership in the Korean stock market is 32.2 percent. If the political uncertainty and instability continue, foreign investors' confidence in the Korean market will also be hurt.

The current economic difficulties call for extraordinary economic measures. Frontloading the budget is far from sufficient. The Korean government should deploy bold fiscal measures to boost the economy. Small, meager measures will create little effect, prolonging the economic downturn. Some argue for fiscal prudence and against it on the back of increasing the national debt to gross domestic product (GDP) ratio. It is true that debt to GDP increased rapidly during the COVID-19 pandemic.

However, current urgency precedes such a debate and justifies a bold fiscal stimulus. Besides, Korea's national debt to GDP stands at 47.4 percent as of 2024, which is much lower than other major economies. It has space for fiscal stimulus. The job of the government and economic policy-makers is to provide a lifeline for the ailing economy and revitalize it to the benefit of the people and the country.

The stimulus package should be bold enough to serve as a catalyst for economic recovery. The package should be as large as or larger than the fiscal stimulus employed in 2009 during the global financial crisis, which was around 3 per-



A vendor prepares food at a stall in Seoul. The South Korean economy is weighed by sluggish consumer spending. ILLUSTRATION: AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE/GETTY IMAGES

cent of the GDP.

Part of the stimulus package should be injected into restoring investment in R&D and innovation, which was drastically reduced due to policy misjudgment. Investment and policy support for R&D and innovation are precisely what Korea used to fuel its growth miracle in the 1970s and 1980s and to overcome the Asian economic crisis in the late 1990s. Investment in critical technologies must be accompanied to boost competitiveness.

Policy support, such as reducing the interest burden or offering low interest rates for small business owners and the self-employed who are especially affected by economic difficulties, should be implemented as soon as possible. The high percentage of self-employed individuals in Korea should be considered when formulating fiscal stimulus policies.

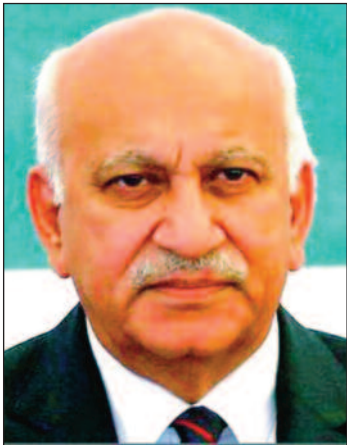
This is the crisis we should not miss. It offers an opportunity to reform and upgrade the institutions and the economy. The Korean economy became stronger after it successfully dealt with the Asian financial crisis in 1997-98 and the global financial crisis of 2008-09. This is a painful but useful time to push for creative destruction. ■

# An Islamist In Damascus

*Bashar al-Assad's fall may have made the Middle East more dangerous*

MJ Akbar

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



“There is no news from Aleppo,” said the merchant at Al-Hamidiya souk in Damascus perhaps a thousand years ago. “Thank God!”

There was news from Aleppo in the last week of November this year

and an inflexible statue fell in Damascus in the first week of December. That’s how fast news and danger travel.

History is best understood through the philosophy of the bazaar, and the great market of Damascus is as old as history. Perhaps it always had 4,000 shops and always sold knives made from Damascus steel forged in India and Syrian dresses

made from Chinese silk; where the sound of bargains is a waft of music, where chatter is knowledge. The Grand Bazaar of Istanbul is a mere upstart from the 15th century, while Cairo was built only in the 10th. Damascus was capital of the Biblical Arameans; Aramaic is still spoken. Damascus is the oldest continually inhabited city in existence. Its cathedral was built by the Byzantine Emperor Theodosius

in the last quarter of the fourth century. The power of the Patriarch of Antioch was second only to that of the Pope. The most dynamic general in Arab history, Khalid ibn al-Walid, conquered Damascus in 634, making it part of the emerging Muslim domain. In 661, the Umayyads seized power and made it the capital of their Caliphate. In 680 the merchants of Al-Hamidiya watched the captives of the epic Battle of Karbala pass by. The holy martyr Imam Hussain, grand-▶



Hayat Tahrir-al Sham leader Abu Mohammed al-Jolani (centre) arrives at the Umayyad Mosque, Damascus, December 8, 2024 (Photo: AFP)

► son of the Prophet Muhammad, is buried in the great Umayyad mosque.

Muslim tradition asserts, although it elides over details, that the site of this mosque, completed in 715, was also the last resting place of St John the Baptist after the saint's head was severed in Jerusalem by King Herod Antipas to appease his stepdaughter Salome. When I last visited Damascus, some eight years ago, young couples were still placing their pictures in a glass case on the premises to seek the blessings of St John. The 253-foot Madhanat al-Arus, or Minaret of the Bride, rose on the mosque's northern wall in 831, named it is said after the daughter of the merchant who provided lead for the roof; she married the Sultan of her time. A muezzin would climb 160 steps of a stone spiral staircase to give the call to prayer. Near the minaret is a replica of the 1371 sundial

of Ibn al-Shatir, the scientist who rationalised time by dividing each day into an equal number of hours.

This year, on Saturday, December 7, the Umayyad mosque echoed to cries of "Allahu Akbar!" and "Labbaiq!" as Ahmed al-Sharaa, the latest conqueror of Damascus, gave his first press conference. "Here I am, Allah, at your service!" said followers of Hayat Tahrir al-Sham (HTS), while America and Britain welcomed the fall of Bashar al-Assad while they began to probe for answers to a hundred questions.

Three powers decided that the vacuum in Damascus was an irresistible opportunity to destroy Syria's military capability. Israel claimed it had destroyed 80 per cent of Syria's arsenal. While claims are claims, security analysts who do not ►►

► speak for public consumption might be wondering if an arsenal which had crossed its sell-by date had been destroyed, creating room for fresh supplies in 2025. This is not a war which is coming to an end any time soon. America shredded its inimical targets operating under the Islamism brand. Turkey hit the resources of the Kurdish Workers Party which wants a separate state for Kurds.

Quite unnoticed in the noise of sophisticated bombs, the Hayat Tahrir al Sham expanded its control to the east, capturing a town called Deir ez-Zor on the Iraq border held by a Kurdish group supported by the US. It is of course too early for clear answers but the questions should be clear once you clear the mind of bias.

The big conundrum is: Has Iran been weakened by the fall of Bashar al-Assad but the war against Israel strengthened?

One video from the excited troops of Hayat celebrating victory at the Umayyad mosque shows them chanting: "This is the land of Islam, this is Damascus, the Muslim stronghold. From here to Jerusalem! We're coming for Jerusalem. Patience, people of Gaza, patience!" 'This' is Syria. In Gaza, Hamas welcomed the change of regime in Damascus.

Since victory has a thousand fathers and defeat is

an orphan, Joe Biden and Benjamin Netanyahu claimed credit for the fall of the Assad family. That was political triumphalism, understandable in the context. Both are totally aware of the old warning. Be careful what you wish for; you might get it.

If you want to know why Israel carpet-bombed the Syrian defence infrastructure now, you must understand why Netanyahu did not touch Syria while Bashar al-Assad was in power. Assad did

not represent a threat. He kept his father's commitment to preserve the status quo reached after the 1973 war for half-a-century. His successors are unlikely to honour that pact, no matter what they might say about the need

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*The best bet for America is that Sharaa née Jolani will become merely another dictator with a benevolent smile, keep religiosity to minimal requirements, provide a government which slowly acquires acceptance, disrupt the Shia arc from Iran to Hezbollah and its supply lines, control the temperature of confrontation with Israel without risking a flare-up*

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for peace during a period of intense vulnerability. The departure of Assad does not mean that their troops, or the Syrian people, do not want the Golan Heights back in their country. Netanyahu has said that the Golan, seized in 1967, is part of Israel for eternity. Eternity has a short lifetime in the deserts of Abraham.

For Israel and the US, the change represents an opportunity to partition Syria again. The country is already divided into de facto blocs. Israel would, in its national interest, prefer to make this de jure.

Turkey's Recep Tayyip Erdogan has been more circumspect. While the future is too volatile for ►►

► rational analysis, his three immediate objectives are to keep Syria united, eliminate Kurdish terrorists based in the north, and enable the return of Syrian refugees to Adana (famous for its delicate kebab) and dozens of other cities.

Ahmed Al-Sharaa has begun to divert his past from attention, by erasing aliases. As Abu Mohammed al-Jolani he was a comrade of Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, the ‘quiet scholar’ who flew the black-and-white Islamic State flag over Mosul. On December 9, the BBC website carried extracts from an interview that Jolani gave to PBS in 2021; so he was not unknown to American state-funded media. The BBC story was written by Mina al-Lami, the corporation’s ‘Jihadist Media Specialist’. How did PBS get the interview?

Sharaa was born in 1982 in Saudi Arabia where his father was an oil engineer till 1989 when the

family returned to Damascus. Clearly, events were inducing him towards radicalisation. The Iraq war seems to have been a point of departure; he was in an American prison, Camp Bucca, in 2005. In 2011 Baghdadi sent Jolani to Syria to lead Al-Nusra Front; within a year it became the most powerful Islamist army in Syria but Assad survived the ‘Arab Spring’ and its various hidden derivatives. In 2013 Sharaa split with Baghdadi, who dreamt of a contiguous Caliphate, and made Nusra the Syrian branch of the less dominating Al-Qaeda.

Washington campaigned in media and on battlefield against Nusra as its principal enemy in Syria. Jolani won a major victory by taking over the province of Idlib in 2015, brushed aside Al-Qaeda the following year, regrouped as Jabhat Fatal al-Shaam and then Hayat Tahrir al-Sham (HTS). He ►



**The Assad family, circa 1992  
(Photo: Alamy)**

turned the focus of his movement on a national objective, Damascus, rather than a confused international purpose. HTS crushed Al-Qaeda affiliates in Syria by 2020. (Covid does not affect war zones. The casualty rate is immaterial.) In 2021 Jolani welcomed the return of Taliban to Afghanistan. In a surprise to those who like stereotypes, he encouraged a conventional contemporary economy. Those who took a harder line than him protested in December 2023 when there was festive and glitzy opening of a mall. Idlib had a functioning government for its four-million people, with a prime minister and a cabinet. And, of course, a council to ensure obedience to Sharia.

A picture taken in 2022 shows him looking at a painting of the Umayyad mosque at a culture fair in Idlib. Two years later he was holding a press conference at the mosque. That day the Syrian national football team switched the colour of its jersey to green.

Jolani and HTS remain, at the moment of writing, on the terrorist list of the three Uniteds: the United Nations, the United States and the United Kingdom. America has a \$10 million reward for Jolani, so now bounty hunters know where to find their quarry. They need to hurry. Washington has sent feelers containing conditions for recognition. The best bet for America is that Sharaa née Jolani will become merely another dictator with a benevolent smile, keep reli-

giosity to minimal requirements, provide a government which slowly acquires acceptance, disrupt the Shia arc from Iran to Hezbollah and its supply lines, control the temperature of confrontation with Israel without risking a flare-up. Russia has already negotiated the continuation of its naval base on the Mediterranean, and let life and death follow some predestined course in a land of war. Israel carefully avoided any Russian target when its air force attacked Latakia. Turkey wants a dilution of terrorism and insurgency in its south.

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*Biden and Netanyahu claimed credit for the fall of the Assad family. Netanyahu did not touch Syria while Bashar al-Assad was in power. Assad kept his father's commitment to preserve the status quo*

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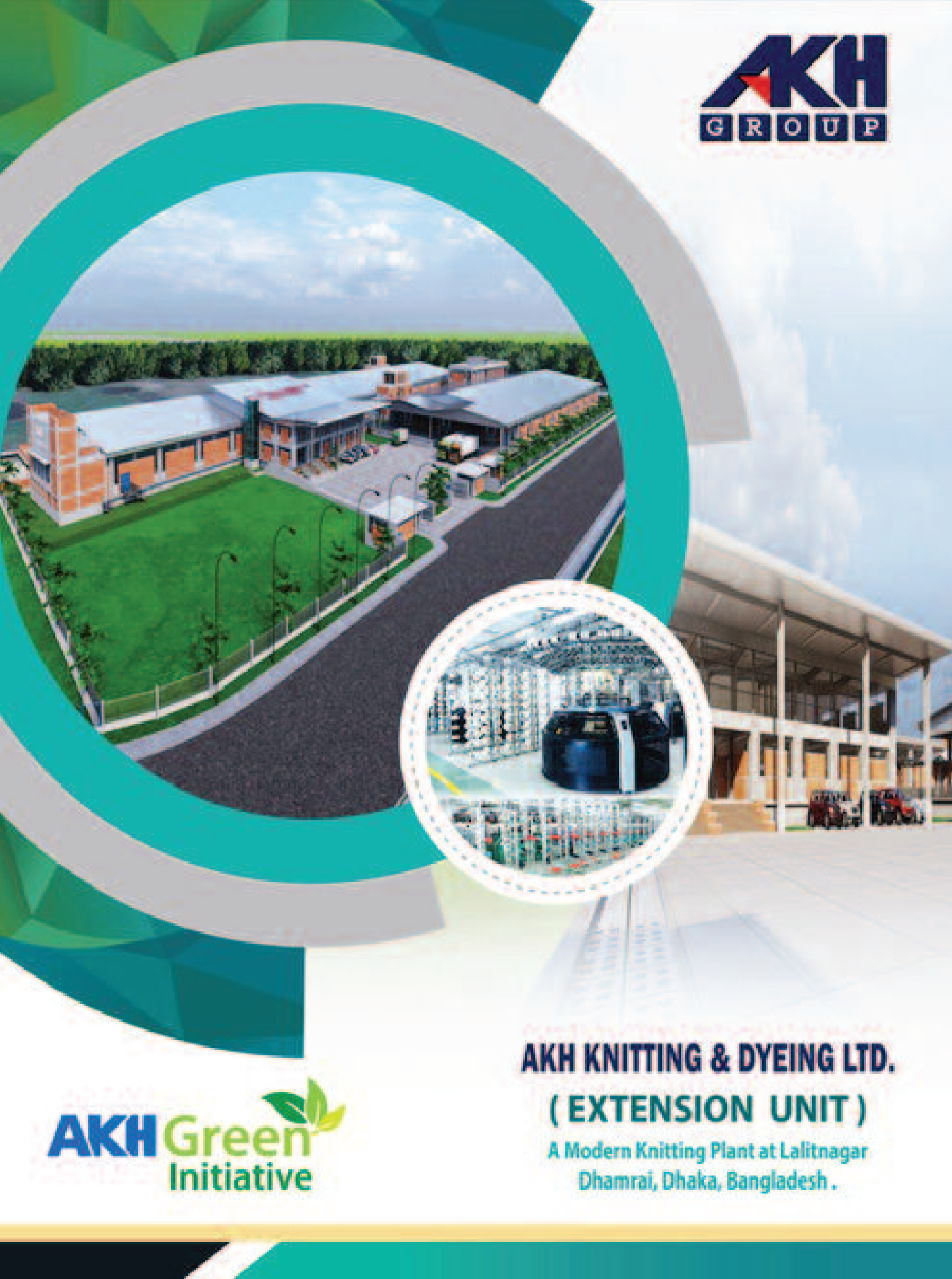
The region would come to terms with a Sunni Bashar al-Assad, with Iran left to find a new algebra after the loss of an Alawite Shia ally. The rest

of our unstable world has other things to worry about.

Can a leopard change its spots? Who knows. Give a leopard four walls and it becomes a sleek cat sipping honeyed milk from a mahogany desk. Time, we are told, will tell. Perhaps. Optimism is not advised. Time is as restless as it is unpredictable.

There will be more news from Aleppo. And from Babylon, Lebanon, Hebron, Golan, Ashkelon, Aden, Ankara, Amman, Gaza, Cairo. And if we are not careful, Grozny. And Jerusalem, holy to those who believe that the dead pass through its gates to heaven and hell.

So much faith. So little peace. ■



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## Memoir

# A Balkan Tale

### Air Vice Marshal Mahmud Hussain (Retd)

*is a 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 Aviation and Aerospace University.*



I was then working as a military observer in Sarajevo, and visiting Zagreb for some official purpose. Jean Marc, one of my French colleagues wanted me to do a favour to a Serb woman. Her name

was Tania, an interpreter in the UN Headquarters. Initially, I was reluctant as rules disallowed peacekeepers from acting as a carrier of any warring parties. But Jean Marc seemed to have developed a strangely innocuous feeling for her as one develops for his or her loved ones in inscrutable pain. But on hindsight, it was more than his insistence that convinced me not to fail in my duty to another human being merely on grounds of institutional absolutism. It was her sad voice suffused with the succinctness of a crying pathos that made me aware of an indescribable tragedy.

“Will you carry for me this letter to my friend, Samir”, she asked and handed me over a brown envelope strung with a silk red ribbon whose ends were cut in the shape of neat triangles with a missing base, and whose middle was designed into a floral pattern evoking ‘the symbol of love’. She briefly told me the story for which I had to be the shipper of her article in half-torn, half-insensible and half-bitter sentences that succeeded in carrying their full instructions to my conscience. Samir was her *fiancé* and both of them had studied together at the same university, but it was the Balkan War that came as a fateful violator to their happy life. Samir was a Muslim, and had to leave Zagreb for fear of being arrested and prosecuted. His religion became a *logo* of striking manifestation of his “otherness” in a country which for forty years under the iron-lid of Marshal Tito’s communist rule prospered as a single state. Suddenly, religion got inflicted with the narratives of xenophobia, and people started choosing for themselves their destiny excavated from the dead history of the past. I often wondered aghast at the ►►



► telling of a Serb ‘that the Muslims had no place in Yugoslavia, that they were brigands who murdered and pillaged their country under six hundred years of Ottoman rule, and that they should find their place outside the soil of Europe’. It was useless arguing with them. God’s greatest gift to man is ‘Reason’. If reason fails to make man understand the universality of his individual soul, philosophy painfully retreats into a terribly miserable experience.

“What is there inside the envelope”, I asked Tania. “Just words”, she replied, and to which I was not to be a privy despite being its courier. I realized that Tania had applied a sort of permanent fragrant perfume on the envelope that gave some hint to its passionate spirit.

The route from Zagreb to Sarajevo was winding and tortuous with splendid spectacle of mountains running down to the plains where villages stood out at respectable distances from each other, the red tiles of brown brick houses on roof shone from afar in the scintillating glow of a bril-

liant sun. My vehicle was wearing a UN flag and fortunately had a free pass through numerous barricades. But all the time, an eerie apprehension was gnawing at my heart; if any of the local gunmen at these check points forcibly wanted to inspect my briefcase, he would have located the envelope by its peerless fragrance, and that could be the end of my story. Pathological idiosyncrasies of a Balkan irredentist could be excited to such morbidity that it begged explanation. Many peacekeepers faced deaths for seemingly sympathizing with one of the weaklings that belonged to the other group. No people demonstrated quite so frighteningly as the former Yugoslavs the hostile metamorphosis of human character associated in the process of national disintegration. I could only draw its parallel to what happened to our country in 1971 when the Pakistani military and their turncoats unleashed the behemoth of vengeance on our soil — killing, rape, hatred, destruction — is no story telling but a living nightmare. Despite all those ideas affecting my sullen and morose mood during that long meditative ►►

▶ journey, I reached Sarajevo with the hope of redeeming the separation of two young couple through the mercy of an envelope.

In Sarajevo, I took the help of my interpreter Radia to find Samir. Tania gave me some hints where I could find him and deliver the letter; she had given me the address of his house. But to my utter consternation, when Radia told me the story of Samir, I was completely disarmed. He had joined the Bosnian army, and was killed by the Serbs in one of the skirmishes at *Mount Igman*. In the course of the Balkan conflict (1991-1995), *Mount Igman* became an area of major strategic importance. Serbs had executed a siege of Sarajevo from 1992-1995 with *Mount Igman* encircling as perimeter. Strategically, Sarajevo is a defender's nightmare, and attacker's paradise, if the control of the mountain is lost. The siege of Sarajevo (1,425 days) is the longest siege of a capital city in modern warfare. The blockade of Sarajevo has become a part of the UN tragedy that took the lives of US diplomats when their UN Armored Personnel Carrier (APC) rolled down some 400 meters into a ditch while carrying the UN Peace Mission headed by Richard Holbrooke; because of the blockade, the Mission had no choice but to take narrow route through *Igman* to reach Sarajevo.

Next day, Radia decided to take me to Samir's house; I had not disclosed anything about the letter to her since it was Samir's exclusive property. It was a two-storied house which needed repair at places where frays had come off the wall. War had completely stopped any kind of public works; it was of no use because shells and bombs were good enough not only to damage property again but also the aesthetic being of human craving. People seemed to wait for eternity for reliving their past happiness. Samir was survived by his old Bosnian mother, and a young sister. His father was a Serb, a mechanic who joined the enemy Serbian army during the conflict, and was killed in the front-line by Bosnian bullets at

*Mount Igman*. Beginning of the conflict, he had left his family to perform a moral act of uniting with Serbian nationhood.

After introductory notes, the first thing Samir's mother asked me was, "How is Tania?" "She is fine", I replied. For a moment, there surged an indestructible anger in her eyes. She exploded, "She is Serb; she is our enemy; my son's greatest sin was to fall in love with an enemy. Imagine how peaceful his soul would have been if he had a Muslim wife to visit his grave". Suddenly, everything began to whirl about my head. I felt giddy. She forgot that her own husband was a Serb whom she as a Muslim had married by an act of pure love. War gives height to the pride of a nation but it also takes away the power from conscience to say "no" to what is abstract. If war had been an instrument of politics as Carl Von Clausewitz epitomized, it could be controlled, but when politics becomes an instrument of war, it manifests itself in uncontrollably poignant realities.

Next day, I decided to visit the war cemetery to bury the letter in Samir's grave, so that its words could reach his departed soul. Radia accompanied me but had no idea of my resolve. The Muslim cemetery dedicated to the victims of Bosnian War is one awe-inspiring sight of sepulchral gloom penetrating into the forbidding rocks of the distant hills that shielded Sarajevo. The evening light had cast shadows of irreparable loss off the tomb stones that lay scattered across the grandiose landscape of this ancient city. Each grave had an epitaph suggesting the irony of a senseless conflict where both men and women, young or old, could be sacrificed in the name of crazy xenophobic ideals. On our walk to the graveyard, I told Tania the story of my country which gained independence at the cost of million lives; those who died in 1971 refused to swear allegiance to injustice, inequality and discrimination committed by rulers of a different nation. In that sense, both her and my country shared a ▶▶



► common destiny whose remarkable feature for someone was to be true to one's own land.

I placed few stray flower stalks on the grave that I bought from a local floral shop, and stood before the grave of this young man whom I had never known and seen. My vague relation with him was through Tania who wanted me to hand over a letter to him. I asked Radia to leave me for some time alone at the grave. Initially, she was startled, and then realizing that the somber solemnity of the evening had overwhelmed me, she started towards the gate with her back towards me. As I was out of her sight, I gently stooped over the grave and dug out some earth with the fingers that displaced some green grass off the surface. After laying the envelope which still smelled of the sweet fragrance, I overlaid the torn surface with the gentle and sad caress of my palm. The letter was now in the safe custody of a dead man.

At night as I lay on my bed, I saw through the window the blue sky with stars looking down upon *Mount Igman* re-creating retrospectively the battle hymns of young soldiers ready to die at the call of a nation. That night I dreamt of a War that was waged far away in a different continent that

gave freedom to my country.

Few years later, Bosnia, Serbia and Croatia became independent states through international intervention. I never met Tania again, and do not know if she ever came to know the truth of *Mount Igman* and Samir's death. In a way, all wars are the same in human catastrophe. Clausewitz had explained only the political and military side of its institutional character. It has a deep humanitarian aspect. If protracted for a long duration, it turns into an absurd irrationality. Choice of putting people in the harm's way for political gains has social implications. The scourge left by the Balkan war still carries its weight in the soul of Europe.

At the end, when peace returned to former Yugoslavia, it was in the form of a truncated reality. Today, the old territorial integrity of the country is lost in the debris of history. The country is now three separate states named Serbia, Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina. But the most important truth is that the mission of the Serb leaders to ethnically cleanse Muslims of Sarajevo has not only failed but have put a permanent scar on the pride of an once proud nation. ■

## BRIEF NEWS

### Taiwan Detects 62 Chinese Aircraft as US Ships Transit Waters



Taiwan said Wednesday it detected 62 Chinese military aircraft near the self-ruled island this week, as two US ships sailed through the sensitive Taiwan Strait.

The United States and its allies regularly transit the 180-kilometer (112-mile) Taiwan Strait to reinforce its status as an international waterway, angering Beijing.

Beijing has never ruled Taiwan, but it claims the democratic island as part of its territory and has threatened to bring it under its control by force.

Taipei said the US ships travelled from north to south “starting from February 10.”

China’s People’s Liberation Army said Wednesday it had monitored the passage of the US warship and ocean survey vessel.

“This US action sent the wrong signal and increased security risks,” Li Xi, a senior colonel and spokesman for China’s Eastern Theatre Command, said in a statement.

Data published by the Taiwan defense ministry show 62 Chinese military aircraft were detected near the island in the 48 hours to 6:00 am local time on Wednesday, coinciding with the US ships’ transit.

“We have monitored the situation and responded accordingly,” the ministry said in a statement.

Taiwan is a potential flashpoint for a war between China and the United States, which is the island’s most important backer and biggest arms supplier.

In recent years, Beijing has ramped up political and military pressure on Taipei to accept its sovereignty claims, and staged multiple rounds of large-scale war games since President Lai Ching-te took office in May.

A record 153 aircraft were reported on October 15 after China staged large-scale military drills in response to Lai’s National Day speech days earlier.

### At Least \$53 Billion Needed to Rebuild Gaza, UN Estimates

More than \$53 billion will be required to rebuild Gaza and end the “humanitarian catastrophe” that has gripped the war-ravaged territory, including \$20 billion in the first three years alone, the United Nations said Tuesday.

The global body said in a report that a “political and security framework” must also be put in place so that recovery and rebuilding can begin, and a groundwork can be laid for a political process to quickly end the Israeli occupation “and establish a viable two-State solution.”

Much of Gaza – including schools, hospitals, and other civic infrastruc-



ture – has been reduced to rubble by a withering Israeli military offensive following an unprecedented Hamas attack on October 7, 2023.

“The interim assessment offers an early indication of the enormous scale of recovery and reconstruction needs in the Gaza Strip,” UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres said in the document, cautioning that it was not a full assessment.

“The report estimates the recovery and reconstruction needs in the short, medium, and long term across the Gaza Strip at \$53.142 billion. Of these, the near-term needs in the first three years are estimated to be around \$20.568 billion,” he added.

In a resolution adopted in December calling for an immediate and unconditional ceasefire in Gaza, the UN General Assembly had asked Guterres to provide an assessment of the territory’s needs within two months.

The report assessed that with “over 60 percent of homes” destroyed in the year-plus war between Israel and Palestinian group Hamas, the housing sector requires around \$15.2 billion.

The commerce and industry sector will need an estimated \$6.9 billion, as will the health sector, according to the report.

Reviving the agricultural industry will take around \$4.2 billion, transport will require \$2.9 billion, water and sanitation an estimated \$2.7 billion, and education \$2.6 billion.

The report also noted the particularly high costs of \$1.9 billion anticipated for the environmental sector “as a result of the massive debris laced with unexploded ordnance and the high cost associated with removal of debris.”



► The United Nations has estimated that the war has generated more than 50 million tons of debris, including human remains, unexploded ordnance, asbestos, and other hazardous substances.

“Critically, the Palestinian Authority must be at the center of planning for and the implementation of recovery and reconstruction in Gaza,” Guterres said in the report, which was dated January 30.

That was days before US President Donald Trump said he wanted to “take over” Gaza, redevelop the territory, and oust the more than two million Palestinians living there.

His plan has prompted a global backlash and has been rejected by Palestinians.

## Germany Investigates Suspected Sabotage of New Warship



German police were investigating the potential sabotage of a brand-new warship after several dozen kilograms of metal shavings were dumped into its engine system, according to a German media report Tuesday.

The issue with the corvette-class ship “Emden” was found during an inspection at a shipyard in the northern city of Hamburg, said the Sueddeutsche Zeitung daily and the broadcasters NDR and WDR.

The warship, which was slated for deployment in the Baltic Sea, had not

yet been delivered to the German navy when the discovery was made.

The presence of the metal shavings could have caused considerable damage to the ship if it had not been spotted in time, said the report.

The incident on the Emden was now being investigated by the Hamburg regional prosecutor’s office and the local criminal police, the report said.

The prosecutor’s office and police declined to comment when contacted by AFP, and the defense ministry in Berlin did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

The German navy has ordered a total of five corvette-class ships, including the Emden, and tasked Naval Vessels Luerssen with construction. A spokesman for the shipyards said the Emden had recently completed “a successful sea trial” but declined to comment further.

The circumstances of the incident were not immediately clear, but Germany has been on high alert to the risk of sabotage and other so-called hybrid attacks, which do not use conventional military tactics.

Along with its partners in the NATO military alliance, Germany suspects that Russia has launched undercover action against western countries as it pursues its invasion of Ukraine.

Earlier this month, police said they were investigating drone sightings over an air base in the north of Germany where Ukrainian forces are trained.

The incident was the latest in a series of drones spotted over military and industrial sites in Germany in recent months that have caused alarm.

Likewise, the Baltic Sea in particular has seen a large number of suspected hybrid war incidents, including the cutting of undersea cables connecting NATO members.

## India Buys Anti-Ship Missiles From Russia

In line with existing defense cooperation, India has signed a contract with Russia to procure anti-ship cruise missiles for the country’s submarine fleet.

This was announced by the Indian Ministry of Defence via social media platform X, without disclosing details of the specific missile type, total number of orders, cost, or delivery schedule.

The missiles will reportedly arm the Indian Navy’s Sindhughosh-class diesel-electric submarines, a domestic variant of Moscow’s Kilo-class submarines, according to Russian state media TASS, citing an Indian news outlet.

### Possible Weapon

Speculation suggests the missile is the Klub-S, the Russian Novator Design Bureau’s submarine-launched export version of the 3M-54 Kalibr anti-ship missile.

The Klub-S is already in service with New Delhi’s Sindhughosh-class submarines, providing long-range precision strike capabilities, as each missile operates at an altitude of 10 to 15 meters (32 to 49 feet) against naval and ground targets for a maximum range of 300 kilometers (186 miles).

Meanwhile, the submarines could also be equipped with the Zircon hypersonic cruise missile, according to Chennai Centre for China Studies head retired Commodore Seshadri Vasan in a quote shared with Russia’s state-owned news outlet Sputnik India.

Reportedly used by the Kremlin to attack Ukraine in February last year and deployed aboard Moscow’s Arkhangelsk nuclear submarine, the Zircon can travel at speeds of Mach 9 and hit adversaries from over 965 kilometers (600 miles) away. ■



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