

The Security World



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CHINA DREAM

Repatriation of Rohingya from Bangladesh: Is it a Far Cry?

War, Famine and Turbulence: Global Trends 2023

UN "High Seas Treaty" – Looking at the Future Implications

Defence Diplomacy in the Bay of Bengal Region: Bangladesh Perspective

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THE SECURITY WORLD

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THE SECURITY WORLD

ABOUT US

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

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Kosovo is Keen to Enhance the Defense and Economy

Rabb Majumder

Bangladesh maintains defense ties with a number of nations worldwide, including both conventional and unconventional allies. Bangladesh's principal defense allies include: India, China, Russia, United States, Turkey.

In addition to these significant defense allies, Bangladesh also keeps close defense connections with a number of other nations, such as Pakistan, Japan, South Korea, and Germany. Bangladesh also takes part in a number of global defense projects and organizations, such as UN peacekeeping operations.

Armend Mehaj, the visiting Kosovo defense minister, spoke exclusively with The Security World about a range of topics, including the controversial Rohingya in Bangladesh, security, defense ties, the economy, and the composition and objectives of Kosovo's security forces.

A genuine patriot, human being and fan of Adam Demaci, often known as Kosovo's Nelson Mandela.



Armend Mehaj, Defense Minister of Kosovo



- ▶ He was a human rights activist who led a nonviolent uprising against the Yugoslav government in Kosovo.

Adam Demaci spent longer time behind bars than the African leader Nelson Mandela, having served 28 years and 6 months.

According to the Defense Minister Armend Mehaj, when he was six years old, his family immigrated to Norway due to the persecution of his family by the Serbian regime. There, he completed his primary, secondary, and further education. After finishing his coursework at the Norwegian Army's Military Academy, he went on to pursue further military education through a variety of courses at the Norwegian Defense College and the Army War School.

As a result of his training and excellent military career, the Prime Minister of the Republic of Kosovo has extended an offer to him to relocate back to his own country and serve as Minister of Defense to improve the armed forces of the Republic of Kosovo. After 35 years in Norway, Minister Mehaj recently relocated back to Kosovo.

Minister Mehaj embraced the responsibility and has already served as the Ministry of Defense's leader for two years, understanding that serving one's country is of utmost importance.

The following is an excerpt from the interview:

As you are aware, Bangladesh has strengthened her defence connections with numerous nations, including Japan, India, China, the United States, Rus-



Armend Mehaj, the defense minister for Kosovo, visited and met with Dr. A K Abdul Momen, the foreign affairs minister of Bangladesh, in the latter's office.

sia, and Turkey. How would you rate the defence cooperation between Kosovo and Bangladesh?

Let me begin by quoting the father of your nation Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. He described your main foreign policy principle as "friendship to all, malice towards none", which is very similarly reflected in your defence policies as well. Bangladesh's defence connections with numerous nations are geared toward peace consolidation. We commend Bangladesh's peaceful foreign policy. Your country is promoting global peace, particularly through its contributions to peacekeeping missions. Let me ex- ▶



Armend Mehaj, the defense minister of Kosovo, converses with Bangladesh's prime minister's defense and security adviser, Major General Tarique Ahmed Siddique, rcds, Psc (retd).

► press our gratitude to your country for providing security to Kosovo in the post-war period. Hundreds of Bangladeshi police officers served as peacekeepers in Kosovo, ensuring safety of our citizens. On the other side Kosovo and Bangladesh have developed intense relations in a considerably short amount of time. We signed one agreement two MoUs so far. Also the Agreement on Cultural Cooperation, the Agreement on Economic Cooperation and the Agreement for Avoiding of Double Taxation and Prevention of Fiscal Evasion between the two countries are in progress. With the engagement of the two parties, bilateral relations are increasing day by day. As Kosovo, we are eager to cooperate with Bangladesh in defence sector as well. Our visit to Dhaka is proof of this intention. We are keen to cooperate in multilateral forums as well.

What difficulties can small states face in the context of the conflict between Ukraine and Russia? Do you believe that tiny governments like Kosovo

are thinking about enhancing their security?

First of all, let me emphasize that my country deplores the terrible consequences of the unjustified aggression of Russia on Ukraine and we express our full solidarity with the Ukrainian people. There may be problems between countries, but there are peaceful instruments and ways to overcome the problems. As the European Union model demonstrates that people who value cooperation, peace, and democracy will prevail

but not the invaders. On the other side, aggression makes opponents become closer allies. For example, Finland became a member of NATO a few weeks ago. Sweden is very close to NATO membership. We, as the Republic of Kosovo, are seriously considering and willing to join the NATO alliance in order to reduce our security risks. To face the regional and global challenges of safety, Kosovo's strategic solution is the integration into the Euro-Atlantic structures. The membership institutionalizes the relations between the countries, particularly in the economic and defence field, as well as sets the frames of the behavior with which the weak are protected from the eventual misuse of the most powerful ones. Our vision is very clear. We want to build Kosovo on the fundamental principles of democracy. It is necessary to provide a suitable environment for the functionality of democracy and the welfare of the people. Small countries strengthen their democracy and welfare environment with peaceful approaches and pragmatic partnerships in ►►



Kosovo's defense minister held a meeting with Bangladesh Army Chief General SM Shafiuddin Ahmed at Dhaka Cantonment. The meeting emphasized on defense and other areas between Kosovo and Bangladesh.

- ▶ different fields, including security and defence.

Since Kosovo is a landlocked, newly independent country that is bordered by NATO nations, could you explain NATO's involvement in Kosovo during Kosovo's crucial period?

NATO played a crucial role in ending the humanitarian crisis caused by the Serbian regime in Kosovo. All over the world must know that Serbian regime killed over 15,000 people in Kosovo, raped 20,000 women, during the war in 1999 killed 1392 children, and also 40 children were killed before the war, in total we have 1432 children who were killed by the Serbian regime, also we have still missing over 1600 people, we had 200,000 houses fired and over 1 million people who were forced to depart. All these crimes you can find in the book "Albanian children in Kosovo - victims of the state genocide of Serbia", with author PHD, Nustret Pllana. NATO, even with a less number of troops comparing the initial phase of the post-war period, continues with its peace-support mission in Kosovo.

The NATO-constructed structure under the name Kosovo Force (KFOR) was established in 1999, when NATO's 78-day air campaign against the Serbian regime, aimed at putting an end to violence in Kosovo, was over. We still perceive threats from countries that have not embraced democracy and are ruled by autocrats. Despite the positive trends we have in Southeast Europe, there is another trend that could easily trigger a return to the bitter history of the Balkans. For that reason, it is important that all the countries in the region share a common vision of their Euro-Atlantic future. Unfortunately, Serbia refuses to come under the same umbrella of security and thereby harms trust-building in the region. Not only that, but it threatens the future of Bosnia and Herzegovina as well, through the Serbian entity and its elements there.

Could you explain us about the structure, goals, and security forces in Kosovo?

The Kosovo Security Force (KSF) is an armed force that was transformed from the Kosovo Protection ▶▶

► Corps (KPC) in January 2009, 11 months after the declaration of independence of the country. Let me clarify that the KPC the predecessor of the KSF, was founded in 1999 with the incorporation of the structures of the dissolved Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA) into it. The KSF is tasked with defending the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Kosovo, providing military support for civil authorities, and participating in international peacekeeping missions and operations. Since 2018, it has been in the process of transforming into the Kosovo Armed Forces (KAF). Until the end of 2028, finalization of the transformation of the KSF into the KAF is expected.

Any citizen of Kosovo over the age of 18 is eligible to apply for service in the Kosovo Security Force. The membership of the Kosovo Security Force is required to reflect the ethnic composition of the country. Members of the Security Force are protected from discrimination on the basis of gender or ethnicity. The Ministry of Defence of the Republic of Kosovo has taken active steps to recruit women into the KSF, and has also encouraged all the ethnic communities living in Kosovo to be part of the structure.

What do you think about the over 1.1 million Rohingya refugees, and do you think they pose a threat to the security of both Bangladesh and the world?

A refugee crisis can arise anywhere in the world. Most of us Kosovars experienced what is to be a refugee in 1999. The real problem is not the refugees themselves, but the brutality that obliges people to be refugee. I am sure that the Rohingya people originally from Myanmar will be forever grateful to Bangladesh and the Bengali people who have embraced and hosted them. It is not easy to host more than one million refugees. Bangladesh deserves the highest commendation for this humanitarian approach. Rohingyas are human beings like we are. They deserve to go back to their homelands.

Unfortunately, Myanmar with its domestic political instability always found a pretext to neglect the obligations they have toward their citizens, to the Rohingya people. Accelerating the Rohingyas' return would be beneficial for all parties. Postponing the process can also lead to increased security problems, including organized and individual crimes inside the camps. The international community should support Bangladesh more and increase the pressure on Myanmar. This is not enough, a decent living environment should be created for the Rohingyas in Myanmar. In addition, those who perpetrated atrocities against the Rohingyas should be prosecuted.

Could you explain Kosovo's economic connections with Bangladesh and how they could be improved?

Both Kosovo and Bangladesh have high economic growth. This demonstrates that both countries are very dynamic and have increased potential for cooperation. With the engagement of two parties, bilateral trade is growing steadily, and cooperation between our institutions is at a satisfactory level. For a short amount of time, we achieved a lot in trade relations. According to the figures of the Kosovo Statistical Agency, in 2022 trade volume between the two countries reached 21 million US dollars, which means around 30 percent more than in 2021. Even though modest, this growth trend makes us optimistic for the future. On the other hand, after the Visa Unit opened in our Embassy in Dhaka, in October 2022, the number of Bangladeshis visiting and working in Kosovo began to rise. Cooperation between the two countries is increasing in every field. Both parties show a common will to increase mutual investments, joint ventures and trade volume. We will continue to invite our companies for closer cooperation. We are satisfied with the perseverance and determination shown by the parties so far. That makes us optimistic about the future of our relations. ■

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CHINA DREAM

Lt. Gen. Md. Mahfuzur Rahman (Retd.)



Power shifting is a dynamic process. It has been sifting vertically (Regionalization-Internationalization-Globalization), laterally (Roman-Greek-Persian-Ottoman-West) and geographically (West to East,

North to South). Some of the very recent moves by China in international arena are testimony of power shifts as well as confidence and responsibility it is exhibiting. Deng Jiao Peng famous guidance “hide your capacities, bide your time, remain free from ambition. Never claim leadership” is possibly over now and is being replaced by ‘China Dream’.

Recently China has offered peace process between Russia and Ukraine. Despite US Secretary of States Anthony Blinken’s question about neutrality of China both Putin and Zelensky ▶▶

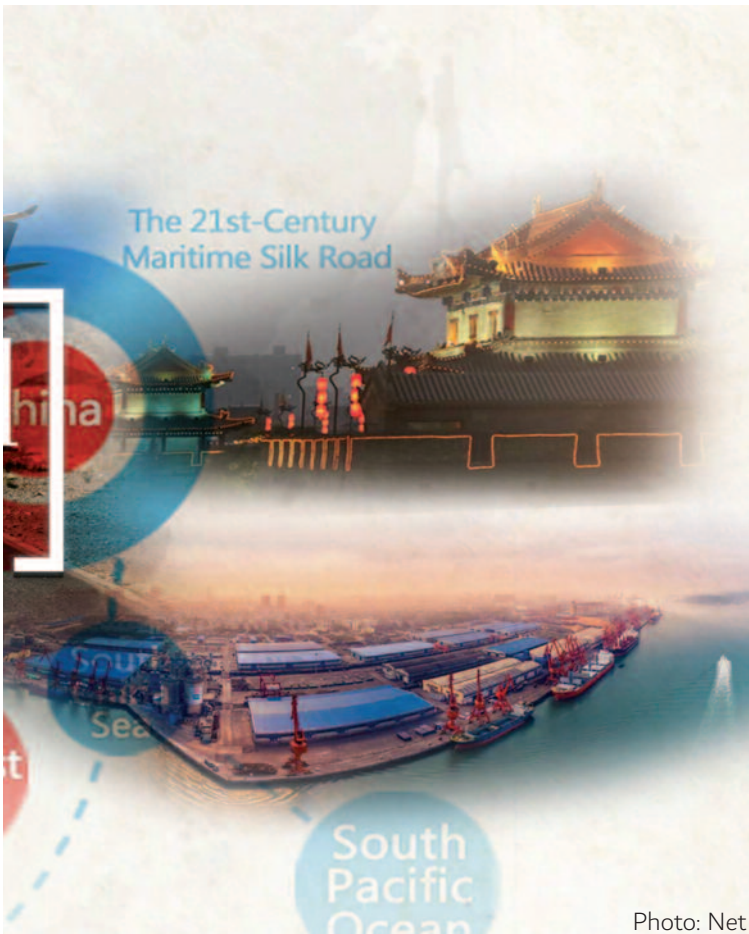


Photo: Net

- ▶ have expressed positive response.

However, one cannot say with certainty about the definite outcome of this offer but China's credibility has been surfaced importantly outshining US diplomacy. Meanwhile, Chinese mediation between Iran and Saudi Arabia has shown the light of stability in the Middle East and West Asia. Both Iran and Saudi Arabia have regional ambitions in addition Iran has nuclear ambition which is antagonistic to the Kingdom's security ego. Bringing them on the table itself is a challenge which has been materialized by the Dragon through exhibiting its diplomatic Charisma. There have been other developments in the area those should not be seen in isolation. Now Basar Al Asad is visiting UAE, Oman, Syria and Saudi Arabia are ready to open embassies. We might see Syria coming back to Arab League again. Lately, the relation between Iraq and Iran with border management deal is being strengthened. All these are happening for a better stability in the region where China has played a crucial role despite unhappiness of Israel and discomfort of US. This is a diplomatic debacle for US and its allies where they approached the region's stability through de-

stability where as China is looking for sustainable stability through relational development with a strategic purpose.

There is another twist in the credibility of US and its allies. US and NATO countries are supplying Ukraine with lethal weapons including State of the Art main battle tanks and blaming Iran for supplying drone to Russia (Which Iran claims were supplied before the outbreak of war as arms sale program). West also blamed China for supplying weapon to Russia and threatened to impose sanction to China. Later, it has been proved that China did not supply arms to Russia that makes China a credible party in peace negotiation between Ukraine and Russia where as being a party, both US and NATO have no legitimate scope for peace initiative.

It is clear to the world community that US and her allies are in a proxy war and would like to defeat Russia in a war of attrition where a credible adversary (Russia) is reduced to a depleted foe for good. On the contrary China would like to draw a peace process right away for the betterment for all. Here US is behaving like a declining power with ill temper.

In our part of the world, China is in a process of conflict resolving initiative with mediation in Rohingya repatriation. We have noticed of late, Myanmar Junta has sent a delegation to Bangladesh on this issue. It has to be remembered that China needs a peaceful Bay of Bengal for its energy security. 14% of her energy comes through Myanmar sea port and gas and oil pipeline. My understanding, China doing these for two reasons; primarily to secure her vertical expansion into Indian Ocean and Belt and Road Initiative Projects (BRI) where she has spent trillions of dollars already to avoid being blocked in East and South China Sea by US and her allies through establishing numerous military bases, threatening her energy movement through Malacca Strait and South China Sea. At the same ▶▶



Indian Ocean. Photo: Net

time, her expansion to Indian Ocean through pivot countries like Myanmar and Pakistan through 'Economic Corridors' would not be left alone. US and her allies would like to contain China there too, as such we see both Pakistan and Myanmar are volatile, unstable politically and economically and pushed almost to a 'fragile state' condition that is detrimental to China's strategic interest. As alternative to these corridors to Indian Ocean, China in 2021 signed a 400 billion dollars deal with Iran including developing transportation and railway network connecting Iranian Chabahar Port that would provide another alternative to connect China through Afghanistan-Iran to Indian Ocean. So China's initiative to peace process in case of Iran, Saudi Arabia and Rohingya repatriation are with a strategic purpose. However, how far the Rohingya

repatriation would be helpful for Bangladesh and Rohingya that is another question but certainly Junta would benefit from this most, if there is any.

The other issue is China Dream; the Russia-Ukraine war has given an opportunity to China to transcend from regional to global power status. It comes with some responsibility as well. Actively not taking any side, brokering peace deal, behaving responsibly are some of the attributes of global power so these behaviours are understandable else China will continue to remain as a potential global power not truly a global power.

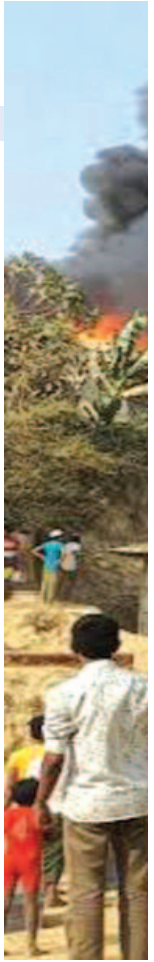
Lt Gen (Retd) Mohammad Mahfuzur Rahman, rcds, ndc, afwc, psc, PhD (Retd), *Former Directing Staff at War Course, National Defence College.*



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REPATRIATION OF ROHINGYA FROM BANGLADESH: IS IT A FAR CRY?

Major General M Ashab Uddin (Retd)



Introduction

Rohingyas, the most marginalized majority Muslim community of Myanmar have been making headlines since 2017. The distressed and officially stateless people have suffered from the most horrific atrocities and human rights abuse from who they thought to be their own government. Almost a million Rohingyas have fled violence that took place in the northern Rakhine state of Myanmar. The atrocity is referred by UN as a textbook example of ethnic cleansing. Bangladesh is now faced with the burden of more than one million Forcibly Displaced Myanmar National (FDMN); mostly from Rohingya Muslim community. The initial influx of Rohingya to Bangladesh dates back to 1978, with a large arrival in 1991-1992. However, a systematic

persecution in 2017 forcibly displaced a mass exodus of more than 700,000 FDMN people to Bangladesh.

Accordingly, the vast FDMN population has become a matter of great concern and worry for the Bangladesh government. The conditions in the FDMN Camps are appalling, raising the possibility of an epidemic, environmental hazards and a spike in crime, including rape, murder, abduction and drug, human trafficking. Therefore, to bring normalcy back to the lives of the FDMN population, a repatriation process from Bangladesh to Myanmar, must be initiated and implemented. In addition, effective measures in regional and international arena can also significantly contribute to the stabilization of the ongoing situation of the FDMN Camps.

It is intended to highlight the current security situation, social and environmental imbalance prevailing in FDMN Camps. Thereafter, it will identify the challenges to mitigate the ongoing situation. Finally, it will recommend the ways for-▶▶



Rohingya houses are on fire. Photo: Net

► ward for a peaceful repatriation of this FDMN population to Myanmar and future strategies for Bangladesh in absence of an organized or a forceful repatriation to Myanmar. It will include the possible roadmap for a peaceful repatriation of FDMNs to Myanmar and future strategies of Bangladesh in view of ongoing insecurity and imbalance in FDMN Camps.

Current Situation in FDMN Camps

The FDMN crisis poses security threats and challenges on the full spectrum of the national, regional and international security landscape. The security situation ranges from human or non-traditional security encompassing transnational security, internal security, militancy and terrorism, border security etc:

Human Trafficking. FDMN Camps are the hub of human trafficking due to their statelessness and desperate determination for a better life. FDMNs are easily exploited by the human smug-

glers and traffickers as it is a profitable business and does not require any passport or visa. As such, various international human trafficking groups are also actively looking at this situation to exploit the vulnerability of these people. Traffickers prey on these individuals, offering false promises of a better life elsewhere. It is to note that many FDMN families have arrived in Bangladesh without any male family members. Therefore, these young women and children are easily falling victim to the trafficking groups and ending up in international markets for prostitution and slave labour.

Drug Trafficking. The geographical proximity of the Golden Triangle and the Golden Crescent makes Cox's Bazar; in particular the FDMN Camps an attractive route for drug smuggling. The international groups are exploiting FDMN as couriers for the drugs and small arms smuggling. The criminals and terrorist groups may eventually pose a threat to the internal security of ►



Part of the Rohingyas who have taken refuge in Bangladesh.

- Bangladesh, as more drug cartels and criminal gangs would mushroom near the border areas. Increase in illegal drug trafficking will certainly increase the number of drug addicts which is likely to affect the youths of Bangladesh.

Armed Militancy and Terrorism. The FDMNs are easy targets for recruitment by Islamic fundamentalists groups and other criminal networks. The stateless and frustrated FDMNs are prone to radicalization as they can be easily motivated with very little money and by exploiting their religious connection. There are many FDMN militant groups namely Arakan Rohingya Islamic Front (ARIF), Rohingya Solidarity Organization (RSO), Rohingya National Alliance (RNA) and Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army (ARSA), which are involved in armed insurgency in Myanmar. These groups have members, supporters and sympathizers within the FDMNs and illegal migrants in Bangladesh. In this regard, the FDMN camps are acting as fertile ground for recruitment of these groups. The members of these groups are frequently trespassing inside Myanmar to bring weapons, ammunitions, drugs etc.

Arms Trade. FDMNs are being involved in il-

legal arms trades. Many of them are carrying those illegal arms to the criminals across the border in exchange of money. They are exploited to do such activities as they need livelihood for survival.

Effects on Internal Security. The massive exodus of FDMN people is altering the internal security scenario of Bangladesh. The camps are overcrowded and have limited security infrastructure, which makes them vulnerable to violence and crime. There have been reports of theft, assault, and rape in the camps.

Social Instability. Influx of FDMNs has greatly affected the socio-economic sectors. Involvement in heinous activities including robbery, plunder, rape and polygamy is posing a serious threat to the social life of entire region. The social vices in the FDMN community: commercial sexual exploitation, fake marriages, fake proposal of work, and the prevalence of sexually transmitted infections (STI) also threaten the local social life. It is to note that, more than 5 thousand FDMN ladies are active prostitutes working in different hotels of Cox's Bazar Area.

Border Security. The FDMN crisis is making the border of Bangladesh vulnerable and unstable. ►►



Rohingya crisis: Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina calls on Myanmar to end violence during visit to refugee camps. (File photo)

► There has been number of violation of the air-space of Bangladesh by the Myanmar Air Force in the last few years since the arrival of FDMNs. This is not conducive for the border security and stability. It is impossible to completely seal off the border due to the porous nature of the Bangladesh-Myanmar boundary. Thus the instability and violence in Rakhine State, especially activities of terror groups with linkages to the FDMN is posing great threat to Bangladesh's border security. This instability at the Bangladesh-Myanmar border are giving rise to the emergence of non-state actors and thus complicating the internal security of the states.

Threat to National Economy. FDMN crisis imposes quite a heavy burden on Bangladeshi economy and scant resources. Moreover, the FDMNs are a source of very cheap labour and snatching away the labour market from the Bangladeshi labours. Besides, many of them managed to travel abroad giving false identity as Bangladeshi and

have involved themselves in various criminal activities. Thus, they are tarnishing the image of Bangladesh in the international job market and as a result damaging to the country's economic stability.

Fire Hazard Incidents in FDMN Camps. The FDMN Camps are made up of makeshift shelters, which are often constructed from flammable materials. Fires can quickly spread through the camps, causing extensive damage and putting lives at risk. Accordingly, a large number of fire incidents occasionally take place in the FDMN Camps. Total 222 fire incident were reported from 01 January 2021 to 01 October 2022. Among these, 99 accidental fire incidents, 60 sabotage incidents and 63 due to unknown reasons were reported.

Demographic Imbalance. Demography of south-eastern area of Bangladesh is threatened and almost undergoing a total change with the influx of FDMNs. The FDMNs have a very high ►►

► rate of growth (4.3%). They produce more children for getting more facilities from UNHCR and different NGOs, thus causing demographic change in the Teknaf and Cox's Bazar area. Against 0.4 million host people, there are presently 1.1 million FDMNs living in the FDMN camps. Accordingly, a lot of changes have taken place in the overall demographic texture of the area.

The Health Insecurity. The FDMN camps are prone to outbreaks of disease due to poor sanitation and limited access to clean water. These are leading to widespread illness and death, particularly among vulnerable populations such as children and the elderly. Any contagious diseases that rely on the human host have the potential to become an epidemic as refugees are living in densely packed camps. Many of the FDMN have carried a number of diseases, including tuberculosis, skin diseases and HIV/AIDS etc. The severe lack of safe drinking water is also contributing to diarrhoea and cholera that is spreading to the local population. FDMNs are also vulnerable to various Pandemics like HIV/AIDS, Hepatitis C and so on. Till date 612 HIV positive cases have been diagnosed in Cox's Bazar area. Amongst these people total 61 FDMNs died in HIV.

Increasing Birth Rate. The birth rate in the FDMN Camps is considerably high. The unaware FDMN population are giving birth to a large numbers contributing to a surge in the overall FDMN population. In last 5 years, more than 1.5 lac babies were born in FDMN Camps. It is note that around 35000 babies are born every year in FDMN Camps at the rate of 3.19%. Accordingly, by the year 2025, total FDMN population may rise to 1.3-1.5 million The estimated FDMN population by the end of 2025 will be approx 12,40,000.

Food Insecurity. There is gross food insecurity within the FDMN Camps. This has resulted in malnutrition and allied problems of food insecurity

within them. The international organizations have also started to decline in providing aid to these large groups of people for such a long period of time.

Ecological Imbalance. The FDMNs are adding extra pressure on the existing crisis of the land and forests in the Cox's Bazar region. Bangladesh has lost considerable area of reserve forest for providing land to the refugees for construction of their shelter. As such there has been widespread deforestation, causing severe land degradation of the locality. Bangladesh is already vulnerable to a new threat from human-induced degradation of the environment that can have a long-term impact on its environmental security. Total Forest Area in Cox's Bazar (2016) was 2,092,016 acres. Due to FDMN influx, initial loss of forest area was 3,500 acres, which is equivalent to 1.67% loss in Cox's bazar forest area and 0.05% loss in total national forest area. The value of forest land occupied by the FDMNs has been estimated to be BDT 500 crore. It is to note that, total 9500 acres of deforestation took place since the arrival of FDMNs in Bangladesh.

Challenges to Manage the Security Situation and Peaceful Repatriation

Absence of Special Tribunal System. FDMNs are living in Camps under the parameter of existing criminal justice proceedings of Bangladesh. Accordingly, the local justice system of our country is being protracted and a huge pressure is being created on the overall law and justice proceedings of Bangladesh. These convicted criminals are getting released in the loophole of this protracted justice system and again getting involved in various criminal activities. Accordingly, there is no improvement in the law and order situation in FDMN Camps.

The Ratio between FDMNs (one million) and Deployed Members of Law Enforcing Agencies

The number of FDMN compared to the number ►

► of law enforcement agencies in FDMN Camps is very low. There is an estimated 1.1 million FDMN living in the Camps. To ensure the law enforcing affairs and security of this large group of FDMNs, there are only three Armed Police Battalion and one company Ansar totalling approximately 2000 personnel deployed in FDMN Camps. It's worth noting that management in FDMN Camps involves not only law enforcement but also distribution of humanitarian aid and ensuring human rights. Presently, elements of Army is deployed as Quick Reaction Force. As such, it is very difficult for this small group of personnel to maintain the security of these camps.

Unwillingness of FDMNs to Relocate to Vashan Char. The FDMN population prefers to live in the cramped and squalid refugee camps of Ukhia, rather than living in a potentially better-sheltered and relatively more comfortable facility on Bhasan Char. Most FDMN refugees are unwilling to relocate there as they fear death by starvation, floods and a lack of humanitarian aid. The unwillingness of the FDMNs to relocate is delaying the relocation plan to Bashan Char.

Lack of Initiative from Myanmar for Peaceful Repatriation. Despite huge international pressure and calls for action, the Myanmar government is showing a lack of initiative in repatriating the FDMN. They are not taking concrete steps to address the root causes of the crisis and failing to create conditions conducive to the safe and voluntary return of the FDMNs. In recent years, the Myanmar government has made some efforts to address the issue, including signing a repatriation agreement with Bangladesh in 2018 and sending a 22 member delegation to FDMN Camps on 15 March 2023. However, progress on implementing the agreement has been slow, with only a small number of FDMN returning to Myanmar in last 5 years. In addition, there is not adequate support for those who have returned to Myanmar, including access to basic services and protection from violence.

Lack of Direct Support from World Super Powers. The world super powers like Russia and China are not showing any initiative and support for the repatriation of FDMNs to Myanmar. It is to note that both the countries have historically maintained close ties with Myanmar's military government. In November 2017, China proposed a "three-stage plan" for resolving the crisis, which involved a ceasefire, dialogue between Myanmar and Bangladesh, and a long-term solution to address the root causes of the conflict. However, they have not directly supported the repatriation of FDMNs to Myanmar. In addition, China and Russia have vetoed number of UN Security council resolution against Myanmar military government. The junta officials continue to visit these countries and exchange in arms trade between them. These factors are resulting in reluctance of Myanmar in solving the crisis.

Lack of Interest of FDMNs to Repatriate inside Myanmar. Most of the FDMNs are unwilling to go back to Myanmar till they have guaranteed peace, equal rights including being able to work and travel freely. Many people specially women, were deeply traumatized by their experiences, including rape and killing, deeply fear returning to Myanmar and facing the same consequences again.

Ways Forward in order to Mitigate the FDMN Crisis

Peaceful Repatriation. The only solution of the FDMN crisis is peaceful repatriation. But the repatriation of FDMN to Myanmar requires a comprehensive approach that addresses the root causes of the crisis, ensures the safety and dignity of the refugees and involves the cooperation of both the Myanmar government and the international community. Few of the ways forward to repatriate FDMNs to Myanmar are enumerated below:

Address the Root causes of the Crisis. The FDMN crisis is rooted in long-standing discrimi-►►

► nation and persecution of the Rohingya minority in Myanmar. Any effort to repatriate the refugees must address these underlying issues, including the need for citizenship, amendment of 1982 Citizenship Law and equal rights for them.

Ensure the safety and dignity of the FDMNs. Any repatriation process must prioritize the safety and dignity of the refugees. This includes ensuring that FDMN are not subjected to violence, discrimination or forced return, and that they have access to basic services such as healthcare, education, and livelihood opportunities once they return to Myanmar.

Involve the International Community. The repatriation process should involve the cooperation and support of the international community, including the United Nations and other humanitarian organizations. International organizations can help to monitor the repatriation process, ensure the safety and well-being of the returning Rohingyas and provide assistance to the returnees.

Engage the Myanmar Government: The Myanmar government must be an active partner in the repatriation process. This includes providing assurances of the safety and well-being of the returnees, allowing independent monitoring of the repatriation process and addressing the root causes of the crisis. It is well understood that only Myanmar can solve this longstanding crisis by either amending or repealing the 1982 Citizenship Law to recognise Rohingyas as an ethnic group of Myanmar. Other discriminatory laws in this regards may also be amended by Myanmar Government.

Involvement of China, Russia and India: Myanmar has developed a strong relationship with China, Russia and India. These high power nations have re-vitalized their relation with Myanmar due to geo-strategic interest of trade and security due to obvious reasons. A positive and constructive involvement of these countries may

speed up peaceful repatriation of FDMNs.

Develop a Comprehensive Repatriation Plan: A comprehensive plan for repatriation should be developed, which includes a clear timeline, criteria for return, and measures to ensure the safety and well-being of the refugees. The plan should also include provisions for monitoring and evaluation of the repatriation process, and for addressing any challenges that may arise.

Introduction of a Separate Tribunal System and Establishment of Correctional Centre for FDMNs: A special tribunal system may be established in the FDMN Camps with the introduction of separate laws and criminal proceedings for FDMNs. Furthermore, correctional centres can be established in the crime prone areas in FDMN Camps.

Strict Control Over Drug and Human Trafficking: The ministries/ departments of governments, law enforcing agencies should work concurrently in order to control the drug and human trafficking from FDMN Camps. In this case, BGB, Coast Guard, RAB, Bangladesh Police and Narcotics Control Board should take effective control measures to curb drug smuggling and human trafficking.

Effective Employment of FDMNs to Contribute in National Economy: The crime tendency among the FDMN community can be reduced to a great extent by employing them in various jobs. In this case, RMG Sector can be a potential area of their recruitment. Domestic and foreign entrepreneurs can set up RMG factories in Ukhia area under the brand name 'FDMN'. In these factories FDMNs can be employed in low wages under the slogan "We want to go back to Myanmar". Thereby these large number of unemployed FDMNs population can play an important role in the country's economy as well as their own income. In addition, around 51% of the FDMN population are women, who are currently in-►

►volved in various criminal activities in Cox's Bazar Area. As such, the number of crimes in FDMN Camps can be reduced to a great extent by properly employing this large female population in RMG Sector and other jobs. Furthermore, the youth population of the FDMN community can be transformed into skilled human resources by imparting vocational training to them.

Future Strategies In absence of an organized or forceful repatriation of FDMNs; Bangladesh has to live with this crisis and engage the community effectively to the best of each other's benefits involving all stakeholders. In that case, our future strategies can be:

Visible identification marks and instilling microchips in their bodies for acquiring all associated facilities in Camps can be one of the plausible measures to logically integrate them in the system for monitoring their movement and prevent easy mingling with the host community.

A focused approach is required to create strong **FDMN Diaspora** around the world based on a perspective plan. It will include education of the selected FDMNs at different tiers including renowned universities and leadership education to potential male and female leaders.

Women form 51% of the total FDMN population. Effective engagement of these ladies will reduce social crime and birth rate.

Vocational training for the men and youths may be arranged to effectively engage and turn them into skilled manpower.

Group or individual migration to other countries must be encouraged and all other countries must be requested through UN to allow quota for Job opportunity for the skilled or unskilled FDMNs.

Endeavour to instill nationalism and racial pride as a FDMN among the FDMNs.

International Court of Justice (ICJ) to be proactive and identify the perpetrators for Justice.

Conclusion

The Rohingya refugee problem is a creation of the Myanmar ruling Junta; it was created by denying their citizenship rights which are inalienable rights that cannot be taken away by enacting discriminatory laws. The Rohingyas settled in Arakan (Rakhain) long before the British occupation of the country. In fact Rohingyas had entered Arakan from time immemorial and their community is as much as integral part of Myanmar as any other ethnic group.

Bangladesh has been suffering from the FDMN crisis since long. As such there has been widespread upsurge of law and order instability, social and human insecurity and ecological imbalance in the region and entire country. But past experiences of FDMN exodus in Bangladesh and in other countries, as well as the ongoing political impasse at the global and regional level, indicate that this crisis is likely to be persistent for some more years. The resources for FDMNs are scarce now. It is not possible for Bangladesh to carry such huge responsibility. At this backdrop, the well-concerted effort by all the stakeholders should be orchestrated for the crisis resolution. Myanmar's atrocity can only be answered by ensuring the safe return of FDMN to their homes, by holding concerned authorities accountable for such heinous crime against humanity and by bringing them to justice. But, in absence of an organized repatriation to Myanmar, Bangladesh should engage itself in various national strategies to transform these huge FDMN population into skilled human resources.

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WAR, FAMINE AND TURBULENCE: GLOBAL TRENDS 2023

Air Vice Marshal MAHMUD HUSSAIN (Retd)



The year 2023 begins with an ongoing war. This spells ominous impression for a new year. Intelligence reports say that Russia is planning a fresh offensive against Ukraine to recover its conquered territories

which she again lost to Ukrainian forces. One cannot predict that the Russia-Ukraine War will come to an end in 2023. This portrays a gloomy picture of the world already hammered by the pandemic and post-pandemic turbulence.

In the freezing winter Russia could launch a big attack from Donbas in the east, or even from Belarus, a puppet state in the north. Putin may even think of making a second attempt to take the capital, Kyiv. Whatever it is, the consequences of such attempts will be gruesome and tragic for the world. If we go by the words of Carl Von Clausewitz, the great philosopher of War that “War is

an organized violence”, then the Ukrainians have shown that they are better than Putin’s Russian forces in conducting violence in the battlefields. Putin has understood that Ukraine is not alone in its crusade against Russia. The US and Europe have stood by her side by providing military, economic and moral support. This is a big challenge to Russia’s hubris fed by Putin’s revanchist idea that the Old Russian Empire can be recreated once again. If that Russian dream fails, the year 2023 will be an ominous period in the history of the world. I have my own logic.

Ukraine made a great sacrifice in 1994, when it surrendered the Soviet nuclear weapons on its soil. Her sacrifice has proved worthless 20 years later. On the other hand, Putin’s nuclear threats are a proof that Ukraine has marked a superlative edge over Russia in hybrid warfare. If Ukraine is adequately supported, it can recover more territory. Ukraine has used HIMARS, a rocket system the Americans have been supplying since June, to devastating effect against Russian ammunition stores, and command and control system, allowing her forces rapid advance in the north-east and the south. If Putin’s humiliation reaches the ►►



► point of no return, he might retaliate with the choice of tactical nuclear weapons. When it comes to the destructive image of tactical or strategic nuclear weapons, there is no difference. Both are horrendous in terms of human casualties, and in destroying the productive capacity of the soil.

That said, what will be the fate of geo-politics in 2023. The benefits of the war to the West is already clear. Russia has been enormously weakened as a great power, making Europe's flanks much easier to defend. For Ukraine, which has suffered horrific losses, the outcome looks much less certain in 2023.

Europe has always been the soil of turbulence since the last century. Two World Wars were started and fought at its behest. Europe's thirst for wealth has been as voracious as its appetite for war. As a result, its moral strength has depleted so much beyond repair. It could never come out of the psychosis of perpetual fear to its mental make-up. That is why it is so much dominated by the imagination of an irredeemable narcissism

which is largely its own creation. It has also lost its own voice of defense. NATO is a good example whose symbol of unity is located beyond its own geostrategic exceptionality. The constant manoeuvre to create a balance of power by playing out the great powers of Europe has only resulted in its weakening of political power. Germany which was once an emblem of greatness and behemoth is now dwindling on the brink of despair as a state. Constant testing of its indomitable resilience has only come at a great cost.

Due to Russia-Ukraine War, energy crisis will likely put the world into disarray. A simulation exercise played by The Economist Magazine reveals that if Russia faces catastrophic losses on the battlefield, it will, no longer, care about money or even its allies in Europe, say Turkey and Hungary. It will opt for all-out energy war. It has already shut its main gas supply route to Europe, but Europe needs all it can get, so cutting the rest will wreak havoc. In that case, Europe's storage will be emptied by November 2023, and remain bare for the whole of 2024. The more Russian ►►



Photo: Net

fuel cannot get to the market, the more Europe has to pay to other oil-surplus countries to replace it. It will only hike the oil prices in the global market, and become an excruciating economic pain for the developing world.

In early October, Bangladesh suffered from a grid failure that triggered a black out across 75-80 percent of the country. Till November 2022, looming power crisis, where long power cuts and load shedding were common was the result of an exponential increase in oil and gas prices owing to Russia's energy war, OPEC's oil supply cuts and the European Union embargo on Russian crude oil. Being an oil-importing country, Bangladesh is already feeling the pressure through high import payments. With high oil prices, the chain effect is felt through a hike in the prices of gas, fertilizer, and other essentials including transportation and food. 2023 will continue to threaten Bangladesh's energy security.

War is also traumatizing a fragile world towards famine. With the invasion of Ukraine, the War has destroyed the lives of people far from the battlefield on a scale that even the war mongers will regret. It is destroying a global food system already

battered by COVID-19, climate change and energy shock. At the beginning of 2022, the number of people, with access to food was so poor that their lives or livelihoods were at immediate risk, and had risen from 108m to 193m over the past five years, according to the UN's World Food Programme. In 2021, Russia and Ukraine were the world's first and fifth biggest exporters of wheat, shipping 28 percent of the world market. According to the United Nations, nearly 50 countries depend on either Russia or Ukraine, or both, for more than 30 percent of their wheat imports; for 26 of them the figure is over 50 percent. Increase in food price means decrease in real income. If that happens, vulnerable people will be affected by hunger due to inability to pay for higher prices, and with it will be described disproportionate social, political and human damage.

World Bank survey states that about 30 percent people in Bangladesh are facing food scarcity, though the country made a recovery from the pandemic induced shocks. Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina as recent as October 2022 reiterated her call to work together in growing more food bringing every inch of lands under cultivation to protect Bangladesh from the possible global famine ►►

► or food crisis against the backdrop of the Russia-Ukraine war. We should do well by once again reading the effects of the war-induced famines of Bengal in 1943 and 1770. Food insecurity will be one of the great challenges for Bangladesh in 2023.

War coupled with food and energy insecurity, how the World Order will be like in 2023. It is difficult to predict exactly, but some thoughts can be put in place to see things in their clear perspective. It is clear that 2023 will not be a West-dominated US-led World Order. Russia-Ukraine War has broken the confidence in the West-led norms and institutions. Russia's dalliance with China may turn out to be globalization going into reverse. China has a talent for finding partners who are also in search of an alternative to the status quo. Therefore, in 2023, China-US rivalry will clearly dominate geo-politics because it incites China to accept universal values as a tool of American power. Even to Chinese who once saw the unipolar era dominated by America after the Cold War as "benign hegemony" are now disillusioned.

Now the question arises has the United States fared well as a global leader who is capable of organizing world order in a manner that the rest of the world is driven to its organizing principles. The answer surely is in the negative. The idea of ruling the world is morally different than guiding it toward a collective vision. If the US wants to gain back its popular support, it must also ardently espouse its treasury of soft power, something which it so intelligently popularized in the past as a tool of its geo-political aspiration.

So, in 2023, global leadership will matter to steer the world clear of its ensuing turbulence. Which great powers will produce such leaders to restore peace is the question. Europe is the continent which will be in the thick of war-induced turbulence. Can it invoke leaders of the like of Matternich, Castlereagh and Talleyrand, who after the Napoleonic Wars, shaped the politics of Europe for a stable political order? The answer is uncertain. But the Western leaders can, no longer, avoid President Xi, and must not go down the path of confrontation with China as they have with Russia. That will be the test for the hypoth-



► esis of the wisdom of their leadership. After World War II, when Konrad Adenauer and Charles de Gaulle sat together and saw through their tragedies a duty to rebuild Europe in the design of peace and harmony, they demonstrated that they were great visionaries who could overcome their national enmity, and supplant it with a higher goal of achieving a resolute Europe. They were the revivalists of the Concert of Europe long envisioned more than a century and half ago. Can Europe beget such personalities in future again? Europe is in the center of the world. A slight turbulence on its wings flutters through the space across the world, and is felt strongly in Asia. That is what is called “Butterfly Effect” in Physics.

Everyone says that the future is in Asia. But then what kind of future we are talking about. The year 2023 predicts only a grim picture. It is not only the Russia-Ukraine War but also the manner in which the attention is paid to its geo-strategic concerns draws our concerns. China and India are the two adversaries who have so far shown no sign of relief to their acrimonious temperament. This augurs ill for the rest of the continent. This has given encouragement to great powers from other continents to exercise unobtrusive freedom of thought about the Indo-Pacific region. This obviously downplays Asia’s ability to checkmate adversarial intentions of non-Asian powers. The result is one that is not palatable to the reckoning of small states of the region.

For Bangladesh, 2023 will be a remarkable year for many reasons. Most important of them all will be how the political parties avoid the path of conflict and make ways for reconciliation for the greater national good. We must also remember that Democracy does not inhere in economic development only. Economic development is one of the elements of political goals. Had economic excellence been the only institution for enduring democracy than many authoritarian regimes would be the best model for emulation. But it is not the case, at least in terms of human aspira-

tion. People want more than simply the speech-delivery of words.

Therefore, political goal for 2023 in Bangladesh should aim at institutional development. Given the conflictual nature of our domestic politics, the elections in January 2024 foretells a period of turbulence in 2023. It is up to our political leadership to demonstrate that they have the potential and wisdom to rise above parochialism, and steer us away from the turbulence bestriding the year of 2023.

Great hopes are born under great crises. Pandemic and Russia-Ukraine War are the two phenomena that have recently pitted mankind face to face through turbulent years. How the world and the individual nations will fare, will depend on the will of the people. But most will be needed the commitment of great powers in realizing that a negative cycle in political history cannot be allowed to last longer. States are abstract realities. It is their leaders who make and transform histories. In that great act of creation, the wisdom, sagacity and panache of leaders come out as the supreme test of character dedicated to steering the events through a course that drifts away from turbulence and moves towards stability. In the year 2023, it will be time for the leaders of the US, Europe, Russia, China and India to sit down for a conscientious reckoning whether it is appropriate at this critical juncture of history to fiddle with power politik and put the world in peril at the cost of other nations.

Air Vice Marshal Mahmud Hussain 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 Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman Aviation and Aerospace University (BSMRAAU).

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UN “High Seas Treaty” – Looking at the Future Implications

Rear Admiral Md. Khurshed Alam (Retd.)



The United Nations “High Seas Treaty” is an international agreement aimed at regulating the use and exploitation of the world’s oceans beyond limits of national jurisdiction exercised by the coastal states.

Marine Biodiversity of Areas Beyond National Jurisdiction (BBJN) treaty’s text was finally agreed upon by delegates on 04 March 2023, following intense debate and discussion among various stakeholders, including governments, scientists, environmentalists, and the shipping industry. After almost 20 years of talks, UN member states agree on legal framework for parts of the ocean outside national jurisdictions. Subsequently, it has the potential to significantly impact the way ships operate on the high seas, which cover more

than two-thirds of the world's oceans.

Now that the UN High Seas Treaty text has been agreed upon, the focus will shift towards ratification and implementation of the treaty by member states. The next steps will involve the individual states ratifying the treaty through their domestic legislative processes. The treaty shall enter into force once a minimum of 60 states have completed this process. Once a treaty is ratified, the member states must then implement its provisions into their domestic legal systems, involving changes to existing laws, regulations, and policies. The process of ratification and implementation can take time, and the treaty's success now depends on the commitment of the member states to adhere to its principles and comply with its provisions. The historic treaty is crucial for enforcing the 30x30 pledge made by countries at the UN biodiversity conference in December 2022 to protect a third of the sea by 2030. The high seas cover almost half of Earth. They are vast, valuable and vitally important to humankind. They act as a carbon sink that buffers ►►



Photo: Net

- ▶ the planet from global impact assessments; mechanisms to support Global South nations to achieve treaty objectives and access marine technology; dispute resolution; and a funding structure.

The high seas cover almost half of Earth. They are vast, valuable and vitally important to humankind. They act as a carbon sink that buffers the planet from global warming, generate around half the oxygen humans breathe, provide primary protein for more than 3 billion people, and contribute to the livelihoods of more than 600 million. Ocean ecosystems produce half of the oxygen we breathe represent 95% of the planet's biosphere and soak up carbon dioxide as the world's largest sink. Under the treaty's terms, ships will be required to adhere to stricter regulations when operating on the high seas. These regulations include provisions to prevent overfishing and to protect marine biodiversity. In addition, the treaty calls for creating marine protected areas and establishing measures to mitigate the impact of climate change on the high seas. What happens on the high seas will no longer be out of sight, out of mind.

Marine Genetic Resources

MGRs, which consist of the genetic material of deep-sea sponges, corals, seaweeds and bacteria are attracting scientific and commercial attention due to their potential use in medicines and cosmetics. Genetic resources are the biological material of value for scientific research, conservation, and commercial use, and the high seas are a vast and largely unexplored frontier for genetic resources. Subsequently, there is a framework for managing and conserving genetic resources to recognize that these are part of the common heritage of humankind and should be shared equitably for the benefit of all nations. States must cooperate to conserve and sustainably manage the genetic resources found within the high seas by sharing information and technology, building capacity, and developing best practices for their sustainable use. Furthermore, the regime and legal framework for accessing genetic resources have been done on the prohibitions on certain activities. By restricting human activities in these areas, the treaty seeks to minimize the risk of damage or disruption to sensitive marine ecosystems and habitats and to promote the recovery of depleted fish stocks. Fair sharing of any ▶



Marine Genetic Resources. Photo: Net

► financial and non-financial benefits from MGR discoveries in the high seas, and genetic data sequenced from them, was written in to the treaty. A representative “Access and Benefit Sharing Committee” will review benefits from MGRs discovered both before and after the deal enters into force and advise member states where the money should go. But treaty rules on benefits sharing will not apply to organisms harvested in fishing-related activities, or to military activities. In fact, military vessels and aircraft are exempt from the entire treaty.

Marine Protected Areas (MPAs)

One of the treaty's key provisions is establishing a framework for creating marine protected areas (MPAs) on the high seas, which competent authorities will designate based on scientific and ecological criteria. These serve as a tool for the conservation and sustainable use of marine biodiversity by protecting habitats, ecosystems, and species from human activities such as fishing, shipping, oil and gas exploration, deep-sea mining, , routing requirements, or using specific technologies etc.

The treaty provides for developing international guidelines and standards for ship routing in and around MPAs, to ensure that ships take precautionary and environmentally responsible approaches to their activities on the high seas. Shipping companies may also be required to adopt best practices to reduce air and water pollution, minimize waste, and prevent accidental spills or discharges of harmful substances. The designation of MPAs could also lead to new regulations governing the discharge of waste, ballast water, and other pollutants by ships operating in these areas requiring ships to install additional equipment or modify their existing systems to comply with these regulations, which could also add to their operational costs. Monetary and non-monetary benefits would be shared and an initial upfront fund would be shared and an initial upfront fund would be set up under the treaty. The fund will also hold the monetary benefits from MGRs, genetic data sequenced from them and other contributions from state and private organizations. The new Access and Benefit Sharing Committee will advise member states on how to equitably allocate money in the fund to finance , capacity building projects including marine tech-►

► nology, training and conservation Ships operating on the high seas are subject to the provisions on genetic resources requiring them to take measures to avoid or minimize any adverse impact, including implementing environmental impact assessments and developing best practices for sustainable shipping.

In addition to MPAs, the treaty establishes a process for identifying and protecting vulnerable marine ecosystems (VMEs). VMEs are areas of the ocean where certain species, such as deep-sea corals and sponges, are particularly vulnerable to human activities. As a result, ships operating in or near VMEs will need to take extra care to avoid damaging these ecosystems, including avoiding anchoring or trawling in the area and using technologies that minimize the impact on the seafloor. The establishment of MPAs on the high seas will also have implications for shipowners and operators concerning liability, as they may face increased risks of environmental damage or accidents, which could result in claims. The treaty seeks to address these concerns by encouraging the development of international liability and compensation regimes for ecological damage caused by shipping activities on the high seas.

With the agreement on the high seas Treaty, we take a crucial step forward to preserve the marine life and biodiversity that are essential for us and the generations to come. Principle of the fair and equitable sharing of benefits ,ensuring that any commercial use of these resources benefits both the country of origin and the wider international community. In addition to MPAs, the treaty establishes a process for identifying and protecting vulnerable marine ecosystems (VMEs). VMEs are areas of the ocean where certain species, such as deep-sea corals and sponges, are particularly vulnerable to human activities. As a result, ships operating in or near VMEs will need to take extra care to avoid damaging these ecosystems, including avoiding anchoring or trawling in the area and using technologies that minimise the impact on the seafloor.

Capacity-Building and Technology Transfer

In recognizing the need for capacity-building and technology transfer to enable developing countries to participate fully in the conservation and sustainable management of the high seas, the treaty has emphasized their importance through ►►



► incorporation to support their effective implementation. Subsequently, it requires states to cooperate in programs on training, education, and knowledge transfer activities. As a critical part of the managing and conserving process of the high seas, shipping companies will need to support developing countries' capacity-building and technology transfer programmes through their participation in sharing information and knowledge.

Fishing

Overfishing and unsustainable fishing practices are major threats to the world's oceans' health. The treaty recognizes the need to conserve and manage fish stocks within the high seas and to ensure their sustainable use by establishing a framework for conserving and managing these resources based on the best available scientific information and ensuring that fishing activities are going to be conducted sustainably and responsibly. The treaty requires states to cooperate in collecting and sharing information on the status of fish stocks and the impact of fishing activities on the marine ecosystem. Furthermore, it establishes measures to regulate fishing activities within the high seas, including adopting conservation and management measures, such as quotas,

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Environmental Impact Assessments (EIAs)

Another provision of the treaty is the requirement to conduct Environmental Impact Assessments (EIAs) before engaging in any activities within the high seas. The purpose of the EIA requirement is to ensure that engaging in activities on the high seas considers the potential impact of their activities on the marine environment and to help decision-makers identify and mitigate any adverse environmental effects that may result from the activity. The EIA requirement will apply

to all activities undertaken by ships on the high seas, including but not limited to fishing, deep-sea mining, oil and gas exploration, scientific research, and shipping.

The EIA content must consider the activity's potential impact on marine biodiversity, including ecosystems, habitats, and species. The EIA must also consider a range of other factors, such as the type and scope of the activity, the location and characteristics of the high seas area where the activity will take place, and its potential impact on the marine environment. The design of the comprehensive approach is to ensure that ships consider all possible environmental effects of their activities on the high seas and take measures to prevent or mitigate negative impacts.

The EIA process will involve a series of steps, including scoping, baseline studies, impact analysis, identification of mitigation measures and monitoring and evaluation. International guidelines and standards will guide the process and be subject to review and approval by competent authorities, ensuring the process is transparent, consistent, and of high quality. Suppose the EIA indicates that the activity is likely to have a significant negative impact on the marine environment. In that case, the ship may be required to modify or cancel the activity or take mitigation steps to reduce the impact, such as using less harmful fishing gear, avoiding sensitive areas, or minimising noise pollution, which ensures that ships take a more proactive approach to environmental management and are held accountable for any negative impacts of their activities on the high seas. Ships will also be required to monitor and report on the implementation and effectiveness of the mitigation measures identified in the EIA to ensure that the activity catch limits, and closed areas. It also requires states to implement and collaborate on these measures to ensure the sustainable use of fish stocks and the long-term health of the marine ecosystem. ►►



Marine Pollution. Photo: Net

- ▶ Ships engaged in fishing activities on the high seas must comply with this conservation and management measures to ensure that fishing activities are sustainable and responsible and that the long-term health and productivity of fish stocks are maintained. They must also adhere to sustainable and responsible fishing principles, including using selective fishing gear, avoiding by-catch and discards, and adopting measures to protect vulnerable marine ecosystems.

Marine Pollution

Marine pollution is a significant threat to the health of the world's oceans caused by various human activities, including shipping. The treaty recognises the need to prevent, reduce, and control pollution on the high seas. Accordingly, it has established a framework for cooperation between states to encourage the development and the implementation of measures to prevent, control, investigate and enforce pollution incidents. Furthermore, it acknowledges the need for awareness campaigns to promote consultation participation and input of the public and

non-governmental organisations on marine pollution prevention and control measures. Ships engaged in international trade must comply with the provisions related to marine pollution by adopting all the mandatory measures to prevent, reduce and control pollution, including the discharge of pollutants into the sea. It also requires ships to carry and maintain records of the use and disposal of pollutants and to report any pollution incidents to the appropriate authorities. Furthermore, states must ensure that ships flying their flag comply with these provisions. The high seas are estimated to contain as much as 51 trillion microplastic particles, and this pollution poses a significant threat to marine life. Therefore, there are provisions aimed at reducing plastic pollution and single use plastics. Subsequently, ships will be required to find alternatives to single-use plastics, such as reusable containers and utensils, to reduce the amount of plastic container's waste they generate.

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If it does not significantly impact the marine environment establishing that ships are constantly ▶▶

▶ monitoring the impact of their actions on the high seas and are taking steps to ensure that their activities are sustainable and do not harm marine biodiversity. The treaty also contains provisions which promote the safe and environmentally sound recycling of ships to help address the problem of shipbreaking in countries with lax environmental and safety standards. A combination of compliance and enforcement measures will ensure EIA requirements are met, including inspections of ships engaged in activities on the high seas, penalties or fines for non-compliance, and other measures. In addition, ships will be held accountable for any negative environmental impacts of their high seas activities to incentivize compliance.

Liability

Recognising that ships operating on the high seas can pose significant environmental risks, including pollution and damage to sensitive marine ecosystems, the treaty establishes liability rules to ensure that ship owners are held responsible for any damage caused by their vessels. Ships operating on the high seas must maintain insurance or other financial security to cover liability for damage to the marine environment. In addition, the basis of the liability regime is established on the principle of strict liability, meaning that ship owners are liable for any damage caused by their vessels, regardless of whether they were at fault. The compulsory insurance system requires a ship's insurance cover to be done by a recognised insurance provider or to demonstrate sufficient financial security to cover their liability. This system ensures that ship owners have the financial resources to pay for any damage caused by their vessels. It also provides a mechanism for compensating victims of marine pollution and other environmental damage. In addition to these liability rules, a system of enforcement measures are in place to ensure that ships comply with their obli-

gations under the treaty, including inspection and monitoring of ships and penalties for non-compliance.

Dispute Settlement

The treaty recognises the importance of resolving disputes related to the interpretation or application of the treaty in a timely and effective manner. Therefore, dispute settlement is essential to ensuring the effective implementation of the provisions related to protecting and preserving the marine environment. The establishment of a dispute settlement mechanism provides for the settlement of disputes related to the interpretation or application of the treaty. It is based on the principle of peaceful settlement of disputes in international law, intending to be a flexible and efficient process through negotiations, mediation, conciliation, arbitration or means of peaceful settlement of disputes.

Furthermore, to hear and settle disputes a tribunal composed of independent experts in the field of international law and the protection of the marine environment will be set up. The tribunal will have the authority to hear and settle disputes related to the treaty's interpretation or application and issue binding decisions. Subsequently, ships engaged in international trade may be subjected to the dispute settlement mechanism and the binding decisions of the tribunal.

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Scientific Research

Scientific research plays a crucial role in understanding and managing the complex ecosystems of the high seas. Therefore, the treaty encourages states to promote and facilitate scientific research on the high seas, improving our knowledge of the marine environment, and informing decision-making on the sustainable use of marine resources. In promoting the importance of ▶▶

► international cooperation in scientific research on the high seas, states are encouraged to share data, information, and expertise and coordinate their research activities to maximise the scientific value of their efforts. Furthermore, the treaty provides for developing international standards and guidelines for scientific research on the high seas to ensure that research conduct is consistent and scientifically rigorous. Ships operating on the high seas play a critical role in supporting scientific research by providing platforms for research activities and equipment, transporting scientific personnel and supplies, and collecting data on the marine environment. Under the treaty, ships engaged in scientific research on the high seas must follow established guidelines and procedures to ensure that their activities are conducted safely and have minimal impact on the marine environment. These guidelines may include requirements for collecting and managing data, using specialised equipment, and adopting best practices to minimise pollution and other environmental impacts. Furthermore, ships operating on the high seas may also benefit from scientific research by receiving valuable data and information to support their operations. For example, the collected ocean currents and weather patterns data can optimise shipping routes and reduce fuel consumption. At the same time, information on marine biodiversity can assist them in the development of sustainable fisheries practices.

Compliance and Enforcement

Compliance and enforcement are critical to the treaty, ensuring that ships operating on the high seas comply with established rules and regulations. These measures include the establishment of a system for monitoring and assessing compliance, as well as the development of guidelines and best practices for sustainable shipping on the high seas. The treaty also encourages states to cooperate with each other to promote compliance

with the provisions involving sharing information on best practices, providing technical assistance to developing countries, and collaborating on enforcement measures and a move seen as an attempt to build trust between rich and developing countries, the EU pledged 42m dollar to facilitate the ratification of the treaty and its early implementation. Ships operating on the high seas may face significant penalties for non-compliance, including fines, revocation of licenses or permits, and even criminal sanctions in some cases. In addition, ship owners may also be held liable for any damage caused by their vessels under the strict liability regime established.

Overall, the UN "High Seas Treaty" has the potential to significantly impact the shipping industry, particularly in creating new marine protected areas and imposing new regulations governing certain activities on the high seas. However, it also contains provisions that could benefit the industry, such as promoting safe and environmentally sound ship recycling, and recognising the importance of scientific research and monitoring on the high seas. As the treaty moves closer to implementation, it will be necessary for the shipping industry to engage in the process and work with governments and other stakeholders to ensure that its interests are considered. This may involve investing in new technologies or practices to reduce the environmental impact of shipping activities and engaging in advocacy efforts to shape the implementation of the treaty. Ultimately, the success will depend on the cooperation and collaboration of all stakeholders, including the shipping industry. Working together will ensure that the high seas are protected for future generations, and the shipping industry.

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Defence Diplomacy in the Bay of Bengal Region: Bangladesh Perspective

Major General Sheikh Pasha Habib Uddin



Background:

Defence diplomacy, in addition to traditional methods of diplomacy, has been recently emphasised by scholars and practitioners for achieving a country's national interests. Although not a new concept, there are various discourses about defence diplomacy in the existing literature. Throughout human history, many of the great strategic thinkers recognised the far-reaching effects of the military beyond the battlefield. Centuries of debate on military theory and practice illustrate not just the military's ability to function outside of pure combat but also the need to employ their talents wisely throughout the range of national power. Defence diplomacy is an idea employing

both old and new instruments, measures and strategies of diplomacy. Many of the world's great powers have utilised defence diplomacy to pursue their goals and grow their global influence across decades and centuries.

Origin and Development of the Concept:

The origins of defence diplomacy may be traced back to ancient times. The Roman Republic used to invite sons of neighbouring rulers to come to Rome to get educated. At the same time, the Greek Ptolemaic dynasty built Alexandria's Great Library for similar purposes. Defence diplomacy in the later years had been revived in the Napoleonic era. However, its evolution witnessed little substantial modifications until the end of the Cold War, since it was centred on military relations and hence restricted to the typical military sphere. The start of a new era in international relations in the 1990s, the gradual increase of inter-▶



Photo: Net

► dependence, the emergence of new actors on the global stage, and the advent of public diplomacy - all allowed a place for new conceptualisation of defence diplomacy.

In 1998 the British strategic defence review was the maiden official source that specifically cited the 'defence diplomacy' as one of its 'new missions'. The study also noted that it was, intended to "dispel hostility, build trust, and take part in developing armed forces under democratic control, thus helping conflict prevention and resolution".

Glimpses from Literature:

However, scholars like Juan Emilio Cheyre defined defence diplomacy as an example of network diplomacy, which connects the implementation of foreign policy aims to those of the defence sector. He argued that defence diplomacy fits at least partially under the broader concept of public diplomacy, and also more widely under the notion of network diplomacy,

and may play a significant role in achieving a country's foreign policy aims. Moreover, as Peter Viggo Jakobsen noted, "the military has traditionally been a means for achieving a government's foreign and security policy either through the threatened or actual use of coercion in diplomacy."

Therefore, in broadest sense, defence diplomacy is a set of all peaceful and non-violent foreign-policy activities and initiatives of a state in order to ensure its external security. The defence wing of the government, through other means, can have a direct influence on foreign policy. Furthermore, defence connections among countries can provide a base for future relationships between countries.

Regarding various tools, techniques and strategies of defence diplomacy; Cottley and Foster, in their research, have come up with outlining the various parameters and contours of defence diplomacy activities. According to them acts of defence ►



Indian Defense Minister Shri Rajnath Singh inaugurated the conference.

diplomacy range from bilateral to multilateral interactions between senior military officials to defence cooperation agreements, exchange of training for foreign civilian and military personnel, the appointment of defence attaches to foreign missions, and bilateral and multilateral military exercises or training.

“strategic engagement” process for conflict prevention that includes a range of military collaborative arrangements that work in multiple ways and operate on different levels.

However, contemporary scholarship of defence diplomacy has also highlighted some new strate-▶▶

A significant part of the literature on defence diplomacy also focuses on confidence building measures and conflict prevention. It is considered a less expensive and risky mechanism for building cordial defence and security relations, diminishing the possibility of international conflicts. Evan A Lakshmana, a Southeast Asian expert on defence diplomacy, highlighted that this notion of confidence-building and conflict prevention role of defence diplomacy finds its relevance in cases of “relatively weaker” countries who conduct defence diplomacy for different rationales and policy directions. Hence, Cottey and Foster also referred to defence diplomacy as a

► gies of defence diplomacy, such as: acknowledging defence diplomacy as a component of national soft power, expanding ‘outreach’ to regional collective security and stability, recognising it as a component of national diplomatic manoeuvring and finally, also acknowledging it as an area of expertise.

Trends of Defence Diplomacy in the Bay of Bengal:

The revitalised importance of the Bay of Bengal region is manifested in the contemporary trends of defence diplomacy. The littoral states are engaged in different types of bilateral and multilateral defence relations among themselves as well as with different extra-regional powers who have their presence across the Bay. These manoeuvres incorporate elements of both strategic competition and strategic convergence to secure the national and collective interests of the states.

Over the last few years, defence diplomacy in the Bay of Bengal has been reinforced by large-scale defence trade agreements, high-level visits, dialogues, joint exercise and training programs.

In 2022, Bangladesh and India signed their first defence contract under the US\$ 500 million Line of Credit (LoC), which secured the procurement of Bridge Layer Tanks, portable steel bridges and Mine Protective Vehicles. Recently, India has also asked Bangladesh to jointly produce defence equipment. Nevertheless, the partnership remains vibrant with the fourth round of annual defence dialogue and the 10th round of joint military exercise between the two countries. Both Bangladesh and India also maintain strong diplomatic ties with other states in the region. The ten-day military exercise “Shantir Ogroshena” comprising Bangladesh, Bhutan, India and Sri Lanka in 2021 illustrated the impact of multilateral defence diplomacy in the neighbourhood.

The current trend of defence diplomacy in the re-

gion cannot be explained without considering the changing global order. The strategic posture of global powers like the USA and forums or pacts like QUAD and AUKUS signifies the trends of defence diplomacy in the region. Bangladesh, India and Sri Lanka became part of the US Department of Defense’s Maritime Security Initiative since 2019. At the same time, China’s growing interest in various forms of defence cooperation also demonstrates the geostrategic significance of the region. It includes diverse arrangements, ranging from defence procurement deals to high-level visits. In this respect, new realities of the region emphasise that the states of the region need to promote a framework where they can consult the issues of concern and address the non-traditional security threats jointly.

Over the years, the idea of defence diplomacy has become more multidimensional and comprehensive. Now it emphasises issues beyond the traditional security paradigm, including climate change, counterterrorism and disaster management. Initiatives like the annual Pacific Resilience Disaster Response Exercise and Exchange organised by US Army Pacific (US-ARPAC) and Bangladesh’s Armed Forces Division are examples of those changes aimed at safeguarding humanitarian needs. Moreover, participating in the United Nations Peacekeeping Operations is another important trend of defence diplomacy that nations perceive as an opportunity to enhance their reputation and influence on the world stage.

Bangladesh and Defence Diplomacy:

In the context of Bangladesh, Father of the Nation, Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, realised that in a world of realpolitik that was stained by war, conflict and competition - it would be essential to defend multilateralism. Since then it has remained Bangladesh’s diplo-►►

► matic forte, where Bangladesh has been engaged as a proactive actor in numerous normative and policymaking platforms and initiatives. As a responsible actor in the community of nations, Bangladesh has upheld its commitment by promoting international peace, stability and security through participating in peacekeeping and peace building engagements and started to practice defence diplomacy to strengthen its ties with many countries from the region and beyond.

Over the last few years, as part of its defence diplomacy, Bangladesh armed forces have participated in bilateral and multilateral military exercises, provided training to foreign military personnel, and participated in post-disaster relief efforts in many regions of the world. We shared our sage and expertise in defence, peacekeeping and disaster management through our centres of excellence, such as the Bangladesh Institute of Peace Support Operation Training (BIPSOT), the National Defence College (NDC), Defence Services Command and Staff College (DSCSC) and so forth.

The realm of non-traditional security issues such as violent extremism, drug trafficking, human trafficking, transnational crimes, piracy and natural disasters, pandemics, among others, have acquired increased attention within the purview of security studies and global politics. On the other hand, states understood the value of multilateral cooperation and, conversely, the price of non-cooperation to face these challenges. In other words, non-traditional security has reinforced the neo-liberal faith in institutions as the guardians of international norms and values. In this respect, there is a growing expectation that, the countries of the Bay of Bengal region can play a more active role in ensuring peace and stability in this region. As one of the littoral state, Bangladesh believes in a peaceful and prosperous coexistence. Therefore, the country focuses on a stable Bay of Bengal as well as a peaceful Indo-Pacific region. In this

regard, Bangladesh promotes peace and cooperation through practicing multilateral arrangements and committed to address the growing geopolitical uncertainties of the region.

Way Forward:

In this backdrop, Bangladesh's defence diplomacy is focused to create a conducive environment for generating trust and friendship among the regional and global powers for achieving peace and stability. The country also tries to engage all the stakeholders bilaterally and multilaterally to counter the non-traditional security challenges of the region. In addition, Bangladesh believes that defence diplomacy can facilitate understanding and deepen the confidence among the defence forces of the region to work together. Since the Bay of Bengal region's security and stability is deeply connected with Bangladesh's national interest; the country seeks to extend its relations with the neighbouring countries. In this regard, I believe the promotion of peace and cooperation through practicing multilateral defence diplomacy is a necessity to face today's growing geopolitical uncertainties of the region. No need to mention that India is one of the vital partners of Bangladesh in the Bay of Bengal region and here, the interests of Bangladesh and India have a strong convergence. Both countries have many common grounds to facilitate defence diplomacy in the region. Therefore, Bangladesh and India can take the lead in the region since both of them have shared history and common stakes in the Bay of Bengal.

[The author presented the article at an international conference on defense, finance, and economics held in New Delhi.]

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Matarbari Deepsea Project, Courtesy: BSS

Matarbari Deepsea Port: A Strategic Chess Match Unfolds in Bangladesh

Commodore Kazi Emdadul Haq (Retd)



Prologue

Bangladesh is again at the centre of a heated debate over the Japan-led Matarbari Deepsea Port construction, which would connect Indian North-east states with the Indian Ocean.

The significance of this port is insurmountable in the Indo-Pacific which placed Bangladesh

under a myriad of uncertainties due to the great powers' coercive diplomacy to sway Bangladesh in their favour, respectively. Indian media and some think-tanks view the Matarbari Deepsea Port as a triumph of Quad (Quadrilateral Security Dialogue) and a success against China-led BRI (Belt and Road Initiative).

India is reconfiguring its Indian Ocean strategy to prevent China's convergence in the Bay of Bengal (BoB). It would otherwise fulfil the objectives of Quad and thus allowed Quad to establish a strategic foothold to counter China. Bangladesh finds it hard to maintain neutrality amidst the ▶▶

► confluence of great powers in the BoB. Recent activities postulate that Bangladesh started oscillating between the East and West. Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina accused the United States of meddling in the internal affairs of Bangladesh, but after a couple of weeks, making a U-turn, the announcement of Bangladesh's Indo-Pacific Outlook (IPO) and the strategic partnership agreement with Japan, Bangladesh is back at the forefront of media discussions.

It advocates that there exists a conflict of interests in the region which compelled all great powers to converge in the BoB focusing primarily on Bangladesh. How Bangladesh will maintain its well-ingrained foreign policy adage: "friendship to all and malice towards none", is a matter to unfold.

Matarbari Deepsea Port

Bangladesh has needed a deep-sea port for many years, as large ships could not enter Chittagong Port. Bangladesh allowed China to conduct a feasibility study for making a deepsea port at

Sonadia for many years, but under Indian coercive diplomacy, Bangladesh had to change its decision. Finally, Bangladesh awarded the [contract](#) of Matarbari Port, which is only 25 KM north of Sonadia, to Japanese firms in September 2020.

Matarbari Deepsea Port will have enough depth to allow ships of 18-meter draft to enter the port. The port will facilitate similar ships that enter the Port of Colombo or Port of Singapore, which means a considerable cost reduction for Bangladesh on feeder's vessels to and from Singapore. The overburden on Chittagong Port will also ease.

The Matarbari port will undoubtedly provide fantastic connectivity to the Indian Northeastern States, known as the "Seven Sisters". Indian political commitments of 'Act East' policy and "people-to-people connectivity" would be fulfilled to a greater extent through this port. India was trying to connect this underdeveloped hinterland region with the BoB through the Kaladan Project that started in 2010. However, the [project was hung in limbo](#) due to various complexities, such ►



Kaladan Project, Courtesy: The Print

► as its 110km road needing to be constructed through an ethnic conflict-prone zone and, on top of that, 158 km of Kaladan River needing to be navigable at all times. Such perilous journey through this Kaladan route cannot be a profitable one for the businessmen. Besides, ethnic conflict in the region may offer a serious security threat.

On the 20th March 2023, while visiting India, Japanese PM Fumio Kishida [said in the 41st Sapru House Lecture](#), “...we will promote the Bay of Bengal-Northeast India industrial value chain concept in cooperation with India and Bangladesh to foster the growth of the entire region”. The following month, the same Japanese desire was reflected at the Japan-Bangladesh Joint Statement on Strategic Partnership on the 26th April 2023 in Tokyo, which was signed while Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina visited Japan. The two consecutive events signal the pre-ambles a bigger game of great power competition. The strategy seemed well planned, which ignited discourse.

Quad Nexus and Bangladesh

Although the Quad idea – a four-party alliance of Australia, India, Japan, and the United States – was initiated by Japanese former Prime Minister Shinzo Abe in 2007, the Quad did not gain much traction mainly due to Quad members’ disinterest at that time as they gave more importance to improve the relationships with China. However, later when China became more assertive in the Indo-Pacific region and China attacked India at the Ladakh border in 2020, members realised the requirement of the Quad alliance, and India became a very active member of the Quad.

India prefers its archrival China to remain away from the Indian Ocean, which India considers their backwater and a net security provider. Fortunately, India’s policy in the Indian Ocean is very well in favour of the [US-led IPS](#) (Indo-Pacific

Strategy). And Quad is one element of IPS which aims to achieve the IPS’ objectives. Matarbari Port has provided India a platform to alleviate some regional issues around BoB, which are desirous objectives of the IPS in many ways.

First, India and many maritime strategists consider China to have encircled India through China’s so-called “[String of Pulse](#)”. Japan-led investment in Matarbari Port was considered a diplomatic win for India to disrupt the String of Pulse. If China could obtain the contract for Matarbari port, it would offer an excellent advantage for PLAN (Peoples Liberation Army, Navy) to operate their naval vessels and protect Chinese fishing trawlers in the BoB.

Secondly, the economic growth in this region, as committed by Japan, is seen as the success of Quad. The US-led IPS defined Quad as a cooperative framework to deal with the non-traditional security that includes economic security in Indo-Pacific. Despite India being labelled as “shaky” by President Joe Biden, the United States need India to counter China. It could be why the Japanese PM said, “India is indispensable for peace and stability in the Indo-Pacific”.

Finally, Nikkei Asia said the port would provide a [strategic anchor](#) for Japan and India. It means the port would become an anchor for Quad as well.

Bangladesh is not a party to Quad and was never invited to join by any members. However, it appears that Quad members are interested in achieving the objectives of Quad utilizing the geopolitical position of Bangladesh. So, all contesting parties including China started all forms of diplomacy with Bangladesh to secure an advantage.

Despite casting votes in favour of Russia on many UN resolutions, Bangladesh was under heavy Russian criticism for its decision to ban Russian ships from calling at Bangladeshi ports, for which ►►

▶ [the Bangladeshi ambassador was summoned to the Russian foreign ministry](#). Previously, China's ambassador [warned Bangladesh](#) not to join Quad (which is an absurd example of Chinese wolf warrior diplomacy). China also would not be happy with Matarbari Port being given to Japanese firms.

The United States also kept Bangladesh under diplomatic pressure by imposing sanctions on some personnel of the army and police and expects some political agendas to be fulfilled. The PM of Bangladesh possibly became annoyed and outburst her righteous indignation in parliament on the 10th April 2023 against the United States, [saying](#), “the United States can overthrow the government in any country....”

Neighbouring India's sphere of influence appears more exhaustive and guileful. One hundred seventy million people of Bangladesh believe that India will exert some influence over Bangladesh

as a regional power but expects to follow the manners and etiquette according to international relations.

Indian Home Minister termed Bangladeshis as termites and threw them into BoB, which created anti-Indian sentiment among many Bangladeshis. Indian media is also very aggressive against Bangladesh. An article [published in the Indian Express](#), “Bangladesh on razor’s edge: Why India must wake up to the looming economic crisis and political instability to its east”, written by Avinash Paliwal; another [article published in Swarajya-mag](#), Dragon Breathing Down India’s ‘Chicken’s Neck’: Why This Chinese Project In North Bangladesh Is A Grave Security Threat; these are few examples of the Indian media’s attitude towards Bangladesh. Feeling apprehensive and frustrated, Bangladeshis at home remain unvocal about their concerns.

Some of these writers are suggesting what to do ▶▶



► and what not to do within the politics of the Bangladeshi government, then suggest, if necessary, intervention by India. On the contrary these writers have shown comparatively less interest in studying how China, which was once poor, became an economic superpower.

Strategy of Bangladesh

Bangladesh aspired to graduate from the Least Developed Countries (LDC) list by 2026, and its economy was also making steady progress through a cautious approach among the great powers. But the unfortunate dual events, Covid-19, followed by the Russian invasion of Ukraine, greatly affected Bangladesh. To sustain the burgeoning economy, Bangladesh needs great powers' investment. In the pursuit of the economy along with political aspirations, Bangladesh may be tempted to succumb to great powers.

Amidst the great powers' influence, Bangladesh announced its Indo-Pacific Outlook (IPO), followed by the [Japan-Bangladesh Joint Statement on Strategic Partnership on the 26th April 2023](#). Due to the neutral approach, the IPO may not alienate any great powers. Like the ASEAN outlook, Bangladesh used the “inclusivity” of all Indo-Pacific nations. Although the IPS does not portray “inclusivity”, most Indo-Pacific nations and EU countries have used inclusivity, which otherwise implies the inclusion of China.

Also, it needs to understand the wording used in



Source: Net

the US-led IPS: the United States prefers to use “US and its allies and partners” carefully, avoiding the term “multilateralism” which China staunchly prefers in the present days. The United States has mentioned many Indo-Pacific nations in their IPS, except Bangladesh; the Indo-Pacific Economic Framework for Prosperity (IPEF) launched in Japan in May 2022, omitted Bangladesh; the future decisions by the Bangladeshi policymakers should be given due diligence. The announcement of the IPO does not necessarily mean that Bangladesh has joined IPS. Bangladesh would be in a very awkward situation to exercise FOIP (Free and Open Indo-Pacific) in the South China Sea (SCS) if requested by the US.

However, the joint statement with Japan contains many contentious issues directly related between ►►

► Japan and China, i.e., both countries have overlapping claims on the Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands in the East China Sea, interminable maritime disputes to resolve by UNCLOS, respect the rule of law, etc. As a signatory to UNCLOS, China claimed almost all SCS by drawing a 9-dash line over well inside the EEZ of littoral countries of SCS, giving no respect to the rule of law. [China also rejected](#) the international tribunal decision on the maritime dispute with the Philippines.

As such, the Japan-Bangladesh agreement is likely to affront China where China can retaliate in terms of economic coercions. The world has seen China's wolf warrior diplomacy retaliate against Australia for simply enquiring into the origin of Covid-19. Australia and many Pacific nations feel the throes of China's economic coercion. How Bangladesh is going to appease China is a matter yet to be unfolded.

On the Rohingya refugee issue, besides the United States, Bangladesh did not get much support from other Quad members. Although China is the archrival of India, on the Rohingya issue, China, India and Japan are in entente on espousing Myanmar SAC (State Administration Council) rather than resolving the security issue created by the ousted Rohingya people.

China, till now, invested [USD 7 billion out of promised 26 billion](#) but captured 23 billion contracts in different sectors of Bangladesh, which would surely echo China's "debt trap" diplomacy. Is the time ripe for Bangladesh to lessen its dependence on China by announcing IPO and agreeing on such issues in a Japan-Bangladesh joint statement? It would be a major policy shift by Bangladesh towards the West.

The depicted above scenario posits that the US-China competition allowed the great powers to exercise influence over Bangladesh excessively, to achieve the objectives of IPS and their own na-

tional interests. It undoubtedly pushed Bangladesh to take a decisive role in the Indo-Pacific concept. Without being a member of Quad, Bangladesh became a playing field for Quad members.

Conclusion

Amidst the great power's rivalry, the geopolitical position of Bangladesh has forced the country drawn into the chessboard of Quad and China. Bangladesh may turn this competition into opportunity if the strategic decisions are made correctly. Steering through tumultuous competition would be challenging but could be favourable if the people's voices become united and heard. The fear is that the extreme diplomatic influences by the great powers may compel Bangladeshi government to take unwarranted political benefit in a quid pro quo, which would be a long-term detriment to the sustained economy to graduate from LDC.

Bangladesh may strife to take full advantage of Matarbari Deepsea Port, allowing all neighbouring countries, including landlocked countries Nepal and Bhutan. All efforts should be made to turn the port into a regional hub of port connectivity.

Great powers cannot expect a panacea from Bangladesh to appease all. Instead, Bangladesh gave all great powers the opportunity to invest.

Bangladesh should continue its present policy of engagement with favourable nations between the "US-led allies and partners" policy vs China's "multilateralism" policy.

Commodore Kazi Emdadul Haq, BSP, ndu, psc, BN (Retd), *Founding Member, Bangladesh Institute of Maritime Research and Development (BIMRAD).*



Agriculture — The Saviour

Dr. Atiur Rahman



The world is now in the middle of the perfect storm of economic crisis with no sign of abating. The war in Ukraine in the wake of massive disruptions in supply chains of food and energy due to

the unprecedented global pandemic has only intensified the speed of intensification of that storm. The global recession is already on. The recently concluded Annual General Meeting of the World Bank and IMF has aptly articulated the dangers of persistently high inflation amidst the fast slowing down of global growth and the looming food crisis leading to substantial food insecurity and the spectre of famine in many countries. The World Bank Chief has rightly appealed to global policymakers to be more humane in responding to this food crisis. The Bank has allocated thirty billion US dollars from the newly created 170 billion US dollar emergency fund to respond to this growing concern. In addition, new threats of geo-political tensions in the South China Sea and increasing existential threats related to climate change are making the operating environment of the global economy even more complex. Given this uncertain perspective of choppy waters all around to navigate, Bangladesh

Premier has been calling the shots on target by urging the global community to ‘stop the war, stop politics with food.’ Besides many such far-sighted utterings both at home and abroad, she made this passionate call on October 17, 2022, at the inaugural session of the FAO World Food Forum of this year at FAO’s headquarters in Rome while presenting her keynote address virtually. She urged the international community to do more to reach food to all as more than 800 million people still go to bed without a meal. The food insecurity has further worsened due to the Russia-Ukraine war, she said. She also urged them to stop the wastage of food. Instead, she appealed, “Please ensure food supply to areas of food shortage and famine. As human beings, we must believe everyone has the right to survive with food and have a decent life.” Like her father, she too reminded the global community to divert a part of the money invested in manufacturing weapons to spend on food production and distribution to avoid hunger for transforming the agri-food system for good of the many. Despite remarkable progress in science and technology, she was pained to see widespread food deprivation in a world with abundant resources. To her, the existing scarcity of food was man-made. In her words, “politics and business interests with food, challenges of climate change, and pest and disease attacks are all putting pressure on our agri-food systems.” Simultaneously, she invited foreign direct investors to invest in Bangladesh’s agricul-▶▶



► tural sector, particularly in agricultural-processing industries taking advantage of its welcoming liberal and incentivized investment environment.

The Bangladesh Premier then gave a short history of the focused attention that the agricultural sector got from the policymakers led by Bangabandhu right from the early days of our development journey. Despite aberrations in the post-1975 policy regimes, the country made a heroic comeback in 1996 with Premier Sheikh Hasina forming the government focusing on desired policy planning, prioritizing self-sufficiency in food by investing heavily in agriculture. Bangladesh's agriculture has made significant progress during her tenure as the Premier. Food production has more than quadrupled in the last fifty years, surpassing forty million metric tons. Back in 2008, this was 28.9 million metric tons. In addition, Bangladesh made stunning progress in non-cereal food, vegetable, eggs, meat, chicken, and fish production. Today, Bangladesh is ranked second in jute and freshwater fish production, fourth in tea production, and first in Hilsha production. Indeed, under her able leadership, Bangladesh has been able to transform itself into a food-sufficient country from its earlier status of food deficit. To give you some concrete examples, the per capita rice production was 140 kg in 1973 which increased to 240 kg in 2018. This must have crossed 250 kg by now. Similarly, fish production per capita increased from 11kg to 25 kg, meat from 3kg to 44 kg, the egg from 15 pieces to 101 pieces, and milk from 6 kg to 58 kg during

this period. The figures are much more robust now. All this has been made possible through committed home-grown solutions embracing enabling public policies and complemented by the innovative private sector. Besides supportive power supplies and favourable infrastructures, the hard work of the field-level agricultural officials, and the contribution of the agricultural scientists with abundant Research and Development support made this transformation possible. The enabling policy environment has been facilitated by investment (subsidies and extension support) for massive mechanization, modernization of agricultural education, integration of education with the field, innovations, and research, continued growth in agricultural credit through bank accounts and digital agricultural services complemented by door-to-door extension services by the field level officials. The central bank in Bangladesh has been playing a significant developmental role by adopting a well crafted agricultural and rural credit policy paving the way for infusion of nearly three billion USD as agricultural credit to both farm and non-farm sectors. Twenty million farmers have been receiving agricultural input cards with Ten-Taka bank accounts over a decade or so. The loans and subsidies are sent to these accounts directly minimizing the scope of leakages.

Recently, I had an opportunity of interacting with the grass-roots level agricultural officials and modern farmers at the Krishibid Institute where both the Minister and Secretary of the Ministry of ►►



► Agriculture were present. I was indeed highly impressed by the level of commitment by the field level officials for taking the appropriate messages to the farmers for modernization of the farm sector. I also met a few of the successful farmers in that convention. The women officials and farmers were extremely focused on their roles in improving the agricultural production by adopting modern varieties the seeds of which were delivered by BADC and farmers' groups facilitated by the extension officials. This also included how to expand cultivation of mustard seeds cultivating improved varieties. This called for more research and extension activities.

One of the farmers who have been awarded many times by the government for her exemplary achievements in pushing frontiers of agricultural production was so confident that she said in loud voice that the spectre of famine will never haunt Bangladesh as there has been so much done by the government and private sector to increase food production. She also echoed the Prime Min-

ister that not an inch of land will be left unutilized this year to cope with the challenge of food insecurity created by the pandemic and the war. The government will have to just focus on good quality seeds and better distribution of fertilizer and credit to take the campaign of enhanced food production forward, the farmers said. The extension officials also supported them.

However, that does not mean that there are no challenges in the field of agriculture. As the Premier identified, there are serious challenges of climate change and natural calamities. The floods in Sylhet and sea-water surges in the coastal belt have certainly affected rice production. The higher level of food insecurity in Sylhet and Barisal divisions, as indicated by the recently conducted survey by the World Food Program, confirms this apprehension. The level of poverty must have been much higher in these affected regions. The recovery from the pandemic has also been slower in these areas, with the substantial prevalence of unemployment, lack of purchasing ►►

► power, and enhanced level of malnutrition. So, these areas need to be prioritized in providing more subsidized agricultural inputs and a higher proportion of social protection. The Aman production has been salvaged by the last-minute monsoon rainfall, which will help sustain moisture in the field for better Boro production. The policymakers and the field officials will have to remain alert in terms of providing all the inputs in time at a reasonable cost as desired by the farmers to complete the cycle of Boro production and harvesting with adequate monitoring of the field actions. So far, my knowledge goes, Aman harvest will be more than what we expected and other winter crops will also follow in lines if we can provide the necessary support to the farmers. If we can coordinate well, we will be able to avoid the spectre of famine in Bangladesh, contrary to what is being anticipated by some of the onlookers of the food landscape. Certainly, the war in Europe has been affecting the grain supplies to the world. We, therefore, need to procure rice both from within and import from abroad to build up the food stock to nearly three million metric tons, to say the least. Apparently, the government is aware of this tricky situation and do its best to keep Bangladesh food self-sufficient at any cost.

Beyond these short-term measures we may now look for some medium and long-term policy measures to bolster our indigenous defence mechanism against the raging global economic crisis stoking high inflation and slower growth to augment higher levels of food supplies. The proposed measures fit in very well with the expectations of Agriculture Minister of Bangladesh Dr. M.A. Razaque that he echoed in a recent write-up in 'White Board' (September 2021). In his words, "Bangladesh is pursuing three potential game-changers—1) strengthening market linkages and export linkages to enhance farmers' income and youth employment; 2) forming farmer's institutions such as producer organizations, common interest groups, and water user associations to overcome the constraints of land fragmentation;



and 3) focusing on high-value non-traditional crops along with the vertical expansion of rice. These game-changers need increased investment. To this end, Bangladesh Government is committed to forging partnerships." Partnerships we must develop. This could be with other ministries and as well as the private sector (both for-profit and non-profit).

Against the backdrop, let's now identify how to take agriculture further forward to make it the strongest driver of inclusive growth and the vanguard for facing the tide of the global recession.

1) Continue to invest more in agriculture as it acts as an import-substituting sector that helps cost less of the foreign exchange, which would have been needed if we were to import many food items, including rice.

2) Further strengthening price support and close market monitoring for providing farmers the appropriate value for their hard-earned agricultural produces. ►►



- ▶ 3) Facilitating farmers to have access to the market and last-mile delivery of symmetric information.
- 4) Linking local farms to the international market requires conformity with standards and protocols. So, we will have to focus more on improving the standards of agricultural products for both regional and global exports.
- 5) Mechanization has gained significant momentum. To further pace it up we need to learn more from the experience of public-private partnerships and then scale up.
- 6) Add investment support for solar irrigation pumps to ease the pressure on import of conventional fuels that are costly and adverse to the climate.
- 7) Some examples of success in helping the farmers with marketing are there. E-commerce-based platforms can be further leveraged for this. The digital backbone has already reached the villages. It is high time that we exploit this digital infrastructure to have better access to urban markets.
- 8) Educated youth are now more interested in agriculture. Enabling environment needed to ensure their growth as agri-entrepreneurs. They need investment support from the central bank to access start-up capital and credit guarantee scheme. These budding entrepreneurs can be encouraged to go for green agriculture, technologically improved aquaculture, and livestock farming.

9) He small entrepreneurs may be supported for getting involved in agricultural processing industries for both domestic and export markets.

10) Also, a lot could be improved in the agricultural research field. Private sector must also come forward for further research and development as they know better the pulse of the market.

11) The food security and modern food storage should get appropriate policy priority to live up to the expectations of both domestic and international consumers.

12) Continue expanding food support by enhancing the number of family cards to respond to the growing demand for food rationing in the context of increased loss of income of many as inflation is still riding high.

13) Provide similar low-cost food support to the garments and other export-earning workers where the owners of the factories can also join hands by sharing the cost. Each factory can organize this distribution of food packages fortnightly for their workers. The payments can be made through mobile financial services.

I have mentioned here only a few ways to cope with the ongoing global economic crisis exacerbated by rising food inflation. Let's have faith in our indigenous strategies of self-reliant development focusing on agriculture, the saviour from the raging recession. We can certainly draw our strength from our own resources, which used to be highlighted by our Father of the Nation while coping with the economic crisis.

He used to say: "Bangladesh will certainly overcome the challenges of today. We have human resources, land, jute, natural gas, tea, forests, fish, and livestock. If we can develop these resources, we will surely be able to overcome today's challenges." (Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, 26 March 1975 (Speech at Suhrawardy Uddyan)).

The writer is an eminent economist and former Governor of Bangladesh Bank.



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Part-II

The pros and cons of Currency Crises and the Bangladesh Narratives

Dr. Jamaluddin Ahmed



Recovery from the 1997-1998 East Asian Currency Crisis: Asian Financial Crisis in order to stabilize their economies, the crisis-struck countries requested bailout packages from the International Monetary

etary Fund (IMF). According to Ardiansyah (2002), Thailand requested for \$17.2 billion, Indonesia for \$40 billion, and South Korea for \$57 billion, from the IMF. In addition, the IMF provided \$36 billion to the countries worst hit by the crisis—namely Thailand, Indonesia, and South Korea—to support governmental and economic reform programs (IMF Staff, 1998). For instance, the IMF demanded the Indonesian government to eliminate the subsidies and tax cuts that it grants to the country's monopolies; and the South Korean government to implement free market reforms and open its market to foreign investment and ownership (Ardiansyah, 2002).

These requests of reform were met with an initial hesitation on the part of the authorities, which further exacerbated the crisis by causing declines in the currencies and stock markets (IMF Staff, 1998). Eventually, however, the necessary commitments were made and the proposed reforms were implemented. Apart from the reform programs introduced by the IMF, additional measures were taken by East Asian countries to manage the financial crisis. One of the most remarkable among them is the reorganization of the financial sectors, where many of the ailing banks and financial institutions in the region were shut down (Kim & Haque, 2002). Throughout 1997 and 1998, Thailand liquidated 56 of its 91 financial institutions; Indonesia closed 16 of its commercial banks; South Korea suspended 14 of its 30 merchant banks; and Malaysia restructured its 39 financial institutions (15 were restructured into six anchor groups, and 14 were absorbed by their parent banks) (Radelet & Sachs, 1998; Chotigeat & Lin, 2001). These actions were taken, according to Radelet and Sachs (1998), to minimize the losses that were being accumulated by these financial institutions, as well ►►



► as to send a strong message that the East Asian governments were determined to implement reforms and restore confidence in their countries' banking systems. Overall, this strategy helped the East Asian economies recover from the 1997-1998 financial crisis.

How Future Financial Crises Could Be Prevented: Prior to the 1997-1998 Asian financial crisis, Singh (1998) notes, the East Asian economic model was characterized by the following: (1) close relationships between governments and businesses; (2) frequent government interventions through a system of “*administrative guidance*” (as opposed to formal legislation); (3) long-term relationships between corporations and financial institutions; (4) cooperative relationships between corporations' managers and labor; (5) governments' deliberate management and restriction of competition in markets; and (6) strategic and limited integration with the world economy. To overcome the challenges of globalization and prevent crises of this sort, he writes, it is crucial for East

Asian countries to redefine their roles as states and strategically reposition themselves. Pang (2000) goes on to describe what the new East Asian economic model should look like.

The new economic model or developmental state, he writes, should entail the following: (1) the pursuit of market-driven, as opposed to state-centric, development; (2) limited state domination in political, economic, and social life; (3) little to no interference of political affairs with the market; and (4) the preservation of ethnic cohesion and solidarity, built on economic prosperity and equality. In order to achieve this, East Asian states would need to reduce their role as financiers, planners, and producers; increase transparency and public accountability; invest in physical and human infrastructure; and propagate democratic values. There is, lastly, a need for East Asian countries to maximize trade and financial integration with Japan, Taiwan, Australia, the European Union, and North America. In the post-financial crisis era, according to Singh ►

► (1998), East Asian countries face a number of policy challenges: (1) restoring the confidence of international investors to resume normal capital flows into the region; (2) ensuring long-term economic growth; and (3) providing immediate aid and assistance to the people who have, as a result of the financial crisis, *become unemployed or pushed back into poverty*. In order to tackle these challenges, East Asian countries would need to encourage cooperation not only between governments and corporations, but also between labor and civil society organizations. A state of “*political unity*” needs to be achieved, which would, in turn, ensure the implementation of credible economic policies that are supported across the domestic political spectrums. The developing countries in Asia have many lessons to learn from the 1997-1998 financial crisis, and should harness this knowledge to better position themselves in the 21st century world economy.

The foreign currency management-Bangladesh story: Examination of a larger number of research papers on the currency crises across the globe with historical evidence, found that Bangladesh suffered from the negative current account balance since the independence in 1971 excepting couple of years since last couple of years. The country never faced the situation of *currency crises* in line with the *generic* and *theoretical* definition of the currency crisis. In the earlier section, we have explained on the theory, currency crises models, indicators, warnings indicators, leading indicators, traditional approach, recent models, review of empirical literatures on indicators, indicators, various approaches and their indicators of currency crises. The currency crises in the emerging market economies-causes and consequences of Asian financial crises, revisiting of Asian crisis, recovery, and path for going forward. In case of Bangladesh, the country has no record of currency crisis in the last 50 years of independence. However, the impact of economic liberalization

with globalization Bangladesh become the part of global economic and financial system. Meantime, Bangladesh become second largest player of ready-made garment next to China thus the country import and export business is playing crucial role in augmenting exports proceeds and making payment for imports.

Imports: In September, October, November and December, 1977, April, June and November, 1978, January, February, April and August, 1979, data of imports exceeded 90 percentile of the observations when exchange rate was pegged to British Pound Sterling. In addition, the data also exceeded 90 percentile of the observed data in March, May, June and July, 1980, and October, 1981, when exchange rate was pegged to a basket of currencies with Pound as the intervening currency. Bangladesh moved towards another exchange rate regime in 1983. Exchange rate was pegged to a basket of currencies with US Dollar as the intervening currency, instead of Pound. This regime was followed for a relatively long span of time dating 1983-1999. Data of imports exceeded 90 percentiles of the observations several times during this regime. In April, 1983, January and August, 1984, February, 1985, June, 1986, October and November, 1987, January and May, 1988, May and October, 1989, September, 1992, October and November, 1994, March, April and September, 1995, and January, 1999, the data of imports exceeded its 90 percentile of observation. From 2003 and onwards, Bangladesh is following floating exchange rate system or in true essence, it is following managed floating system. In February, 2005, and August, 2010, data of imports exceeded its 90 percentile; but in 2011, it exceeded 3 times: in January, February and May.

Exports: Export and growth of an economy are found to be interlinked. But the export base of Bangladesh is extremely narrow both in terms of composition and destination. For instance, ready-made garments (RMGs) including both woven ►►

► and knit, accounted for 77% of total export earnings in Bangladesh in 1999-2000. And country wise, USA, Canada and EU contributed for the market 85% of the export. This combination has made Bangladesh vulnerable to external shocks. Previously, the European ban on import of shrimp from Bangladesh had a severe impact on the industry. Generalized System of Preference (GSP) aided RMG sector of Bangladesh to flourish but contemporary EU crisis may have proven to be a threat to Bangladesh.

Terms of trade can be explained as the share of export earnings in import payments. It steadily increased from 31% in 1981 to 67% in 2000. Data of terms of trade fell below its 10 percentile in quite a few times. When Bangladesh adopted pegged exchange rate to a basket of currencies with UD Dollar as the intervening currency reserves fell below its 10 percentile in February, March, May, July, August, September and November, 1985, October, November and December, 1989, January, February, March, April, May, June and July, 1990, January, March, April, May, June and July, 1996. In the era of floating exchange rate regime from 2003 and onwards, Bangladesh experienced the data of reserves lower than its 20 percentile in November, 2005 and November, 2011.

There has been great excitement and much commentary on recent developments of the Bangladesh economy. This is the first of three articles on these issues (Forest Cookson 2022). This article examines the changes in the balance of payments. The second article deals with exchange rate management and outlook through FY25. The final article deals with three long run methods of balance of payments adjustment. In particular three developments have attracted attention: (1) The preliminary estimate for GDP growth for FY22 was 7.25%. The strong growth arose from the continuing recovery of the manufacturing sector. (2) The sharp rise of the current

account deficit of the balance of payments, that over the first nine months of FY22, increased to -\$14.1 billion from a deficit of -\$100 million in the first nine months of FY21. (3) The inflation rate has risen above 6% for five consecutive months. Common opinion is that this underestimates the inflation rate. As 5 sub sectors command 92.6 percent of the total export earnings. Tens of dozens of other products make just 7 percent or little more. However, among those commodities and products, significant earner is shrip, fishesn and engeering products. Iron steel, engineering equipments and electric products performed well. Govt has also set a, close to, billion dollar annual earning target for this subsector. Almost 75% of the dollar earned from Exporters are used for payment of their Back-to-Back L/C at the prescribed BC Selling rate (Taka 94.5 per dollar). Banks buy rest 25% from the exporters at a negotiated rate which is higher than the BC Selling rate (on an average around Tk.2/- per dollar higher). This amount (25%) is relatively small for banks.

Large amount of dollar comes from inward foreign remittance. Banks have to compete with hundi market to keep the country's inward foreign remittance at last year's level. As such banks offers Tk.110-111 per dollar to the exchange houses. Now if we make an average of buying prices of dollar (25% of exports and 100% of inward foreign remittance), it comes to Tk.106-108 per dollar. However this rate will be less for these banks which have higher export than remittance. But those banks are not able to open import L/Cs due to dollar shortage. Large amount of dollar comes from inward foreign remittance. Banks have to compete with hundi market to keep the country's inward foreign remittance at last year's level. As such banks offers Tk.110-111 per dollar to the exchange houses. Now if we make an average of buying prices of dollar (25% of exports and 100% of inward foreign remit-►

▶ tance), it comes to Tk.106-108 per dollar. This may be achieved by arresting hundi specially the digital hundi which is of around same size of formal channel. At this moment the selling price of dollar is totally determined by the rate of inward foreign remittance. This can be stabilised by temporary capping the rate of inward foreign remittance offered by the banks. “the digital hundi which is of around same size of formal channel.” Striking estimate and comment on the BB, MoF, MoC all should work on it. Policy makers need to pay full attention, work with due diligence & resolve issues sooner to avoid a likely crisis.

Calculated Actions of the Bangladesh Government: Bangladesh has sought a \$4.5bn loan from the International Monetary Fund, the country’s leading newspaper reports, joining South Asian neighbours Pakistan and Sri Lanka in seeking help to cope with mounting pressure on their economies. In the first 11 months of the fiscal year that ended on June 30, imports jumped 39 percent but exports grew only 34 percent. Remittances from overseas Bangladeshis fell 5 percent in June to \$1.84bn, the central bank said, as many migrant workers lost their jobs because of the COVID-19 pandemic and many of them could not get home because of the travel disruption it caused. Economists say the Bangladeshi taka has effectively slid against the US dollar by approximately 20 percent in the past three months. *Austerity measures:* Bangladesh’s financial position has also been under pressure by unprecedented floods in the northeast, inundating the homes of millions of people and causing nearly \$10bn in damage, according to government estimates. Elsewhere in South Asia, Sri Lanka, facing its worst economic meltdown in seven decades, is currently in negotiations for an IMF bailout.

How deep is the crisis comparison with Pakistan, India and Sri Lanka: Bangladesh is running with parliamentary democracy applied for the IMF support with good and robust sustainable development

indicators for climate facility. The foreign exchange reserve with 5-6 months imports bill payment with export lead supported by positive workers remittance flow the Indian figure is USD 640b. Foreign investment in stock market are bought by the local investors which is a good that could a threat to currency pressure if taken to foreign country. In Bangladesh the inflation figures ranges from 7.5-10 percent. Bangladesh Taka is getting weaker from 85-107 against USD in the recent time compared to Pakistan Rupee against 1 USD/per Pak rupee 230. On the other hand, Pakistan has foreign exchange reserve for 5 weeks import bill payment which is in danger level. Bangladesh current account negative balance stands at 17b USD. Bangladesh has easy credit facility from USSR, Japan, World Bank, ADB, JICA and others on long term basis with lower interest. Economists, considering the current economic situation consider, in terms of different economic parameters India at the top, Bangladesh in the second, Pakistan in the third, and the worst position in Sri Lanka as crisis-hit country in the south Asia.

IMF support to Bangladesh, India, Pakistan and Sri Lanka-History: The IMF support is utilized in stabilizing macro-economic management of its member countries. In the southeast Asia, Pakistan is ranked as IMF addict country after its birth as independent nation. Pakistan economy was better than India immediate after 1947. Pakistan availed IMF support 1958-2022 for 22 times in 66 years complying with IMF conditionalities. Sri Lanka between 1965-2022 at 15 times. Again in 2022 the negotiation is going on at the ongoing severe financial crises. Bangladesh took support from the IMF first in 1974 and continued up to 2012 in 10 times 5.6 years per bailout. From 1957-1991, India availed IMF support USD 2.8b in 6 times bailout in 65 years, 1 bailout every 11 years.

It seems that currently exchange rates are managed on an ad-hoc basis without having clear tar-▶▶

► gets or objectives. However, this management can be rated as good as the exchange rate remains very close to its equilibrium as warranted by economic fundamentals. Certainly there is scope to improve exchange rate management under a managed floating regime. There are at least three channels identified in this study by which exchange rate instability is transmitted to the domestic economy.

(i) *Pass-through (inflation) effect*: A high pass-through coefficient is estimated for Bangladesh Taka. A one percent change in international prices translates almost 100 percent of that change into domestic prices. Since Bangladesh's trade is dominated by imports, a depreciation of taka easily translates inflation into the domestic economy. This high exchange rate pass-through is also likely to increase external debt burden. (ii) *Competitiveness effect*: Although Bangladesh achieved average competitiveness during the period 2000-2008, it is not stable. Competitiveness against European markets is unstable, and since the overall REER moves in tandem with the real Euro, it is very likely that it would destabilize trade relations with other countries. Unstable euro already hurt exports to the European Union. Regarding the long-term determinants of the REER, an increase in net foreign assets leads to REER appreciation, that is, the loss of international price competitiveness. An improvement of terms of trade works in favor of REER depreciation because of the substitution effect due to increase in import prices. (iii) *Domestic credit effect*: This is an indirect channel through which exchange rate is affected in Bangladesh. An increase in domestic credit causes the exchange rate to depreciate or the foreign reserves to deplete or some combination of the two, leading to exchange market pressure. It is observed that sterilized intervention causes extra pressure in the foreign exchange market.

Note that there is no simple formula for exchange rate management to achieve two important goals

of exchange rate management, such as competitiveness and price stability, simultaneously (Ohno, 1999). In the absence of a solid consensus on the proper target of exchange rate management, we propose to adopt the following pragmatic policies: Stabilization of REER: In normal times the exchange rate should be managed so as to stabilize overall competitiveness. For this purpose, the REER index, properly constructed to measure the average competitiveness of the tradable sectors, should be constantly monitored. Bilateral real exchange rate of Euro must be stabilized. To stabilize the REER as well as the RER of Euro, adjustments must be made against movements of other currencies as well as of inflation differentials. This can be accomplished either by a prescribed formula or more informally through timely corrections. REER basket: Currently there are eight currencies in the REER basket. Since Bangladesh's commodity trade is dollar-denominated, we propose to create a REER basket of four major currencies including the US dollar, the euro, the UK pound sterling and the Japanese yen with proper weights. This kind of basket would be easier to manage and monitor. Although trade with Japan is not significant, Japanese yen should be included because it matters for debt burden, official development assistance (ODA) and grants. Crisis management: Bangladesh has not yet been faced any currency crisis, and therefore the capacity of exchange rate management has not been tested yet. With gradual economic development, shocks such as sudden shifts in FDI, export demand or the terms of trade, large business swings, significant resource discovery (or loss), major natural disasters etc. may occur. In that case a trigger mechanism needs to be adopted for additional adjustments. On the other hand, in the face of a currency attack or other severe financial turmoil in the region or in the global economy, REER stabilization policy may be suspended temporarily to minimize contagion, credit crunch, reversal of capital flows etc. ►►

- ▶ However, during a crisis or global economic meltdown, it is better to stabilize the NEER instead of the REER when other trading partner currencies are fluctuating against each other. Accumulation of Reserves: To maintain managed floats, Bangladesh needs to accumulate a sufficiently large stock of reserves.

Bangladesh has reserve accumulation already proceeded beyond the optimal point. The stock of international reserves stood at USD 48 billion in 2022 (May), which can afford hardly 5.5 months' import payments. Since the standard practice is to maintain international reserve for 3-months import payments, current reserve position has met the necessary condition, but it is not sufficient. For maintaining stability in the foreign exchange market, it is necessary to accumulate additional reserves. In this context, the management of capital inflows is very important for avoiding any crisis. Since maintenance of large stocks of reserves is a costly activity, exchange rate stabilization policies should be based on frequent and small adjustments rather than large and rare ones. Institutional Development: The foreign exchange market of Bangladesh is in an embryonic stage and thin in terms of daily transactions, which is USD 32.70 million on average. Currency forward market and other derivatives are absent. Bangladesh Bank still controls the market by following net open dollar position of commercial banks. However, if the economy embarks on a middle-income growth path, the market will need to expand and forward transactions will need to be entertained. Therefore, to reap the maximum benefits of the managed floating regime, there is no alternative other than building institutions and bringing efficiency and depth to the foreign exchange market. Particularly, it is necessary to develop inter-bank bond markets as well as capital markets with further financial liberalization.

This study analyzes currency crisis through litera-

ture review at the international level East Asia and of Bangladesh. When Bangladesh is under a floating rate regime in a comprehensive manner. It analyzes both the behaviour of the nominal exchange rate and the real exchange rate. Although Bangladesh was committed to maintain a freely floating regime, our findings suggest that its exchange rate policies were not consistent with the characteristics of freely floating regime. Generally speaking, Bangladesh pursues a managed floating rate regime. Given the thin foreign exchange market, high exchange rate pass-through and exchange rate shocks (exchange market pressure), it appears to be difficult for Bangladesh to maintain a freely floating regime. Bangladesh Institute of Development Studies (2009) study finds that the REER depreciated around 20 percent from the year 2000 in an unstable fashion. One of the sources of REER instability is the real euro, which has served to destabilize trade relations with other major partners. The country, since its birth has the record of facing currency crises in 1973 oil crisis, 1997-98 East Asian Financial Crises, and facing the current currency crisis routed from COVID-19 including Russia-Ukraine war which is turning into a full scale a currency war. The estimated export demand functions reveal a positive and negligible but significant effect of REER volatility on exports, indicating that more positive impact of the REER on exports would have been achieved with a stable REER. Given the vulnerable financial system, this study suggests that it is better for Bangladesh to continue a managed floating regime with frequent and small interventions. Simultaneously, Bangladesh Bank needs to work on developing mechanisms for inflation targeting policies, ensuring efficiency in the financial system, and building necessary institutions in order to manage exchange rates efficiently. Maintaining short-term stability and medium-to-long term flexibility should be the general objective of exchange rate management policy of Bangladesh. In the recent development of world economic ▶▶

► problems Bangladesh authority is keeping close watch on the developments and signals from the prevailing economic impact routed from the crises both internationally and locally and take remedial actions.

Recommendations

Establishing discipline in currency management: In the absence managing uniform system of managing exchange rate there exists many rates. The Central Bank maintains official exchange rate the State-Owned Banks follows the rate in case of government transactions in case exhausting the quota they buy from other banks at higher different rates. The private banks also follow similar practices as State Owned but buys at different rates in case of diminished quota of foreign exchange. There are approximately 750 money changers (250 are said to be authorized and 500 are unauthorized) who applies different rates obviously higher than central bank and commercial bank's rates. Moreover, in the more than 61 banks in their foreign exchange branches would be 1200 branches (10% of total branches), if each foreign exchange branch overage has 5 brokers, then 6000 brokers are active in the market dealing in different rates most of them are *unauthorized foreign currency dealers* who buy and sale foreign exchange different rates higher than the banks apply. Given all these, one can conclude that there exists multiple exchange rate in Bangladesh market where the scope of currency manipulation is high. Time has come to bring uniformity of operators should come to a win-win ground by imposing restrictions on the illegal operators in the foreign currency market to stabilize. Critics say that most of the illegal brokerage houses are *either owned by managers of the branches or directors PLCs, Share Brokerage Houses, and private limited companies; Banks, NBFIs, Insurance Company directors officially or unofficially (benami) taking advantage of weakness of regulatory institutions work-*

ing in the corporate gatekeeping job. There should be *expert committee* with specific terms of reference to reform the conflicting issues to be resolved.

Boosting exports: Current export from Bangladesh need to boost up by discovering new corridors along with diversified basket of new products from traditional location and products and identify those new products and new locations. Current main basket of ready-made garments can be added by adding hides converting them into shoes and other leather products allowing branded companies in the special economic zones established by the government and private sector economic zones. Traditional export products need be upgraded to meet the demand of foreign countries. Bangladesh embassies, External Resources Division of Ministry of Finance should be assigned with export target on quarterly and annual targets of exports in the foreign destinations.

Augmenting migrant remittances: With draw current restrictions on buying foreign bond by the Bangladeshi migrants allowing them to invest in the foreign currency bond at a lower interest rate. *Engaging Mobile Financial Services (MFS) operators* in foreign destinations is considered as remittance corridors given the faster, reliable and less expensive compared to Banking channel. *Involving all the Bangladesh Embassies by setting monthly/quarterly/ and annual targets of remittances with monitoring mechanism.* Effective measures required to build up a strong foreign currency reserve position. These measures include *curbing the hundi and hawala payment system, cross boarder black marketing inward and outward transactions, illicit transfer of foreign exchange from the country, illegal foreign employees working in different sector of the Bangladesh economy, stringent regulatory enforcement towards the stock market scammers turning into foreign currency scammer dealers. Digitizing financial transactions, revenue collection, introducing central bank digital currency, and gradually* ►

- ▶ moving towards a *cashless society* in Bangladesh.

Reducing current size of informal economy: The current size of informal economy to be formalized by taking appropriate action by curbing the sources of black money creation, digitalization revenue collection, increasing tax/GDP ratio by creating cashless society and introduction of central bank digital currency. *Reducing fiscal deficit* through substantial reform of NBR. Improving governance of banking sector through formation of banking commission. Execute the stock exchange *demutualization* effectively.

Ensuring strict compliance to Anti Money Laundering activities: (a) Over invoicing of imports; (b) under invoicing of exports; (c) putting stringent and restrictive on money changer companies; (d) illicit cross boarder trading textile and jeweler and similar products to Bangladesh; (e) unearthing black money; (f) black money created from tax avoidance can be helpful to increase internal resources strength of Bangladesh.

Conducting continuous research on the currency crises by making *diagnostic study* over the issue as regular process following an accepted methodology by selecting the *various economic factors*, to assess the *signals*, *early warning parameters*, to make *prediction* on the currency crises under *different options*. *Continuous monitoring* on the *movement and changes* on different factors over time need be analyzed and *share with policy makers* for decision considering economic, social and political aspects. Prepare a *short, medium, and long-term action plans* for the benefit to the country. Finally, the Prime Ministers' office should open a special cell equipped by professionals to follow up all the economic matters suggested here to report and review the ongoing practices and report to the concerned authority for necessary actions to address the current and evolving situation.

Action plans

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There are approximately 750 money changers (250 are said to be authorized and 500 are unauthorized) who applies different rates obviously higher than central bank and commercial bank's rates. In the 61 banks in their foreign exchange branches would be 1200 branches (10% of total branches), if each foreign exchange branch overage has 5 brokers, then 6000 brokers are active in the market dealing in different rates most of them are *unauthorized foreign currency dealers* who buy and sale foreign exchange different rates higher than the banks apply. one can conclude that there exists multiple exchange rate in Bangladesh market where the scope of currency manipulation is high. Critics note that most of the illegal brokerage houses are either owned by managers of the branches or directors PLCs, Share Brokerage Houses, and private limited companies; Banks, NBFIs, Insurance Company directors officially or unofficially (benami) taking advantage of weakness of regulatory institutions working in the corporate gatekeeping job. There should be expert committee with specific terms of reference to reform the conflicting issues to be resolved.

Boosting exports: Current export from Bangladesh need to boost up by discovering new corridors along with diversified basket of new products from traditional location and products and identify those new products and new locations. Current main basket of ready-made garments can be added by adding hides converting them into shoes and other leather products allowing branded companies in the special economic zones established by the government and private ▶▶

► sector economic zones. Traditional export products need be upgraded to meet the demand of foreign countries. Bangladesh embassies, External Resources Division of Ministry of Finance should be assigned with export target on quarterly and annual targets of exports in the foreign destinations.

Augmenting migrant remittances: With draw current restrictions on buying foreign bond by the Bangladeshi migrants allowing them to invest in the foreign currency bond at a lower interest rate. Engaging Mobile Financial Services (MFS) operators in foreign destinations is considered as remittance corridors given the faster, reliable and less expensive compared to Banking channel. Involving all the Bangladesh Embassies by setting monthly/ quarterly/ and annual targets of remittances with monitoring mechanism. Current External Resources Division need to work with Foreign Ministry in this regard meaning redefining the traditional role of these ministries to enhance migrant remittance in a safe-secured, faster and cheaper costs.

Effective measures required to build up a strong foreign currency reserve position: These measures include curbing the hundi and hawala payment system, cross boarder black marketing inward and outward transactions, illicit transfer of foreign exchange from the country, illegal foreign employees working in different sector of the Bangladesh economy, stringent regulatory enforcement towards the stock market scammers turning into foreign currency scammer dealers. Digitizing financial transactions, revenue collection, introducing central bank digital currency, and gradually moving towards a cashless society in Bangladesh.

Reducing current size of informal economy: The current size of informal economy to be formalized by taking appropriate action by curbing the sources of black money creation, digitalization revenue

collection, increasing tax/GDP ratio by creating cashless society and introduction of central bank digital currency. Reducing fiscal deficit through substantial reform of NBR. Improving governance of banking sector through formation of banking commission. Execute the stock exchange demutualization effectively. *Ensuring strict compliance to Anti Money Laundering activities:* (a) Over invoicing of imports; (b) under invoicing of exports; (c) putting stringent and restrictive on money changer companies; (d) illicit cross boarder trading textile and jeweler and similar products to Bangladesh; (e) unearthing black money; (f) black money created from tax avoidance can be helpful to increase internal resources strength of Bangladesh. *Conducting continuous research on the currency crises by making diagnostic study:* Over the issue as regular process following an accepted methodology by selecting the various economic factors, to assess the signals, early warning parameters, to make prediction on the currency crises under different options. Continuous monitoring on the movement and changes on different factors over time need be analyzed and share with policy makers for decision considering economic, social and political aspects. Prepare a short, medium, and long-term action plans for the benefit to the country. Finally, Honorable Prime Ministers' office should open a special cell equipped by professionals to follow up all the economic matters suggested here to report and review the ongoing practices and report to the concerned authority for necessary actions to address the current and evolving situation.

Jamaluddin Ahmed FCA PhD is the Chairman of Emerging Credit Rating Limited and Tier 1 Solutions Limited, ex-President of ICAB, ex-member of the Board of Directors of Bangladesh Bank, ex-Chairman of Janata Bank Limited, and ex-General Secretary of Bangladesh Economic Association. Email: jamal@emergingrating.com



Rosoboronexport launches import-substituted Typhoon-K MRAP vehicle in foreign markets

SW Desk Report

Rosoboronexport (part of the Rostec State Corporation) has started promoting fully import-substituted Typhoon K-53949 mine resistant ambush protected (MRAP) vehicles in foreign markets.

"Rosoboronexport presents to its partners an armored vehicle of the Typhoon-K family assembled exclusively from Russian-made components. This vehicle has proven to be a reliable and highly

protected personnel carrier. The Typhoon-K is in service with the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation and has substantiated its performance under actual operating and combat conditions. Moreover, many of Rosoboronexport's partners are operating armored vehicles based on this family of vehicles and give them positive feedback," said Rosoboronexport Director General Alexander Mikheev. "This MRAP vehicle is of great interest for Middle Eastern, African, Latin ▶▶

► American, Asia-Pacific and former USSR countries. Independence from foreign components in the production of the Typhoon-K gives us and our partners confidence in timely and complete after-sale service of the vehicles supplied, their modernization and development."

The Typhoon-K vehicles feature high reliability, maneuverability, cross-country ability and innovative approaches to their protection, ergonomics, layout and equipment. They can ford up to 1.5 meters without preparation and climb 30-degree slopes. With a new generation 350hp diesel engine, the Typhoon K-53949 can reach a maximum speed of 100 km/h.

All models of the Typhoon-K family are equipped with an onboard information management system, a central tire inflation system, bullet-proof tires, an all-round video surveillance system, an automatic fire-extinguishing system, and a diesel auxiliary power unit (APU). In addition, remotely controlled weapon stations with stabilized armament can be mounted on them. The armament suite varies depending on customer needs.

The 4x4 vehicles are equipped with a hinged ramp in the rear to allow troops to board and disembark from them quickly and easily.

Vast experience in the development and operation of army vehicles has been complemented by new approaches to design and state-of-the-art technologies of protection against the most dangerous threats.

Typhoon K-53949 armored vehicles are distinguished by enhanced mine and ballistic protection corresponding to NATO STANAG 4569 Level 3 with the possibility of strengthening it to Level 4.



A high level of protection is provided by composite armor, including an armored hull and add-on armor plates with ceramic elements, as well as a streamlined hull design and removable anti-mine plates. Troop seats have a suspended system of attachment to the roof, are equipped with blast energy absorbing elements, safety belts and head restraints for fixing the head. In addition, the designers have provided for the possibility of installing additional protection – internal spill liners, as well as special hinged mats to increase the level of protection against anti-tank grenade launchers.

Vehicles for various purposes are being developed from the Typhoon-K chassis by installing weapons, process, engineer and other special equipment.

"Rosoboronexport sees great interest from foreign customers and is ready to cooperate in the format of industrial partnership in the production of various versions of Typhoon-K vehicles, including localization of their production. Today, we have a significant portfolio of completed projects on licensed production, cooperation within joint ventures, as well as building an infrastructure for the maintenance and modernization of Russian military equipment on the territory of partners," Alexander Mikheev added. ■

BRIEF NEWS



US Navy Fields 'Revolutionizing' Maritime Aviation Training System

The US Navy has begun fielding a live virtual constructive (LVC) system to "revolutionize" flight training for maritime aviation.

Facilitated by the US Naval Aviation Training Systems and Ranges and the F/A-18 and EA-18G program offices, the program seeks "significant positive impacts" and "considerable changes" for the service's flight training syllabi.

LVC uses a "Link Inject-to-Live" approach to integrate high-fidelity simulated air-to-air and surface-to-surface weapon systems with F/A-18E/F Super Hornet fighter jets and EA-18G Growler electronic warfare aircraft.

Through this capability, the US Navy will save millions of dollars annually on training while honing greater readiness in naval airspace.

"The Link Inject-to-Live trainer enhances the F/A-18 and EA-18G training capability by enabling them with the ability to train against realistic air and surface threats," Naval Aviation Training Systems and Ranges Program Manager Capt. Kevin McGee explained.

"The capabilities LITL brings for both deployed and home station operations are quite impressive."

'Game-Changer'

LVC's portable and cost-conscious fea-

tures enable the service to cover complex and dynamic preparations in all weather conditions for aviators.

The training system relieves naval aircrews of the need for live aircraft adversaries to complete sortie and training event timelines.

In addition, it reduces administrative burdens, logistical costs, fuselage, and maintenance efforts whenever red air adversary support is required for training in detachment sites.

"In naval aviation, we train like we fight, and Link Inject-to-Live makes training more realistic and easier, so it's a win all around. This capability is a game changer," F/A-18E/F Deputy Program Manager Cmdr. Sarah Abbott said.

"We are currently testing connections to other platform simulators that will facilitate integrated training that will accelerate air-to-air training," Naval Aviation Training LVC and Strategy Department Team Lead Chuck Terry added.

Taiwan in Talks for \$500M Weapons Package From US: Defense Minister



Taiwan is expecting a fast-tracked \$500 million weapons package from Washington this year to make up for delays in arms procurements, the island's defense minister said on Monday.

The self-ruled, democratic island lives under constant threat of an in-

vasion by China, which claims Taiwan as part of its territory to be seized one day — by force if necessary.

With Beijing increasing its saber-rattling towards the island, Taiwan's key ally the United States in September approved the Taiwan Policy Act — which would see new legislation provide billions in military aid to Taipei.

But there have been reported delays in delivering weapons, and Taiwan's Defense Minister Chiu Kuo-cheng on Monday confirmed that Washington has been discussing a separate — and fast-tracked — weapons package with Taipei.

"The use of the \$500 million package is aimed at prioritizing supplying us with spot goods (available for immediate delivery) over any delay or late delivery in our arms procurement," Chiu told lawmakers when questioned in parliament about the "military aid" package.

"It should be implemented this year," he said, adding that the \$500 million package "is not counted into (previous) arms sales" and that Taiwan would be asking first for its "priorities."

However, he did not elaborate on what type of equipment would be prioritized in the \$500 million weapons package, saying only that the details would be thrashed out by both sides soon.

"For the delayed arms sales, they will make up by providing some of their spot goods or simulators or training equipment," he said. "So when the arms are delivered in the future, we can start using them right away."

The United States has for decades sold weapons to Taiwan.

But the decision in September goes a step further — providing US security assistance to the tune of \$4.5 billion over four years, a move that ▶▶

► has infuriated Beijing.

There have been some roadblocks in deliveries.

Taiwan's defense ministry revealed last year it was looking for replacements after Russia's war in Ukraine led to a shortage of Stinger anti-aircraft missiles.

Last week, the ministry announced it was notified by Washington that the first of the 66 advanced new F-16V fighter jets it had previously ordered from the United States would come "out of the factory" in the third quarter next year.

This puts it almost a year behind schedule, and was blamed on pandemic-spurred supply disruptions.

Cubic Team Offers Tactical Language Translation Capability for US, Allied Forces



Cubic DTECH Mission Solutions has teamed with communication platform developers Instant Connect Software and Rally Tactical Systems to offer a language translation capability for US defense and allied militaries.

The consortium aims to support and improve "seamless" coalition communications between partner forces by advancing their tactical radio interoperability.

Instant Connect will provide its frontline push-to-talk (PTT) platform powered by Rally's internet protocol-based Engage Engine communications application.

The platform will be integrated with Cubic's Vocality, M3X, and M3-SE radio gateway dispatch solutions.

"The Instant Connect PTT platform... offers coalition forces a range of best-in-class features that includes automatic language translation, super-lightweight serverless deployment, and superior interoperability across Mobile Ad Hoc Network and other radio environments," Instant Connect CEO Forrest Claypool said.

"The caliber of our joint offering is irrefutable. For example, our PTT software solution is Joint Interoperability Test Command (JITC)-certified and included on the DoD Information Network (DoDIN)-approved product list, joining a select cadre of software products."

Delivering Multilingual Collaboration

Once completed, the resulting tactical language capability will be distributed to command posts and military personnel, from dismounted soldiers to first responders.

This approach enables warfighters to maintain missions through communications flexibility, situational awareness, and instant exchange of information by eliminating language barriers.

"Our collaboration with Instant Connect Software and Rally Tactical Systems further enhances and extends our Mission Forward focus and provides warfighters with the Radio over Internet Protocol (RoIP) environments they need to accomplish the mission," Cubic DTECH Mission Solutions Senior Vice President Anthony Verna stated.

"The integration opens a world of opportunity to provide even greater radio and IP interoperability, performance and encryption, along with multiple-force, multilingual collaboration."

Australian Navy Taps Rheinmetall for Anti-Ship Missile Defense System



The Royal Australian Navy has awarded Rheinmetall a 125-million euro (\$138 million) contract to deliver anti-ship missile defense systems.

The service will deploy the Multi Ammunition Softkill System (MASS) on its Hobart-class destroyers and ANZAC-class frigates with an option to equip its entire fleet for 1 billion Australian Dollars (\$678 million).

The first systems will arrive by the end of 2023 and achieve full operational capability by 2027.

Multi Ammunition Softkill System

The system comprises up to six launchers, each capable of firing a maximum of 32 Omni Trap decoy munitions.

The vessel-borne system protects against sensor and laser-guided anti-ship missiles in all "relevant wavelengths of the electromagnetic spectrum," the manufacturer claims.

The system can be outfitted on all vessels operating on the high seas, littoral waters, or rivers.

Rheinmetall Australia's First Naval Contract

Rheinmetall Defence Australia will produce, equip, and commission the systems locally under the contract, which includes technology transfer.

"The contract, the first naval contract awarded to Rheinmetall De-



► fence Australia represents a significant milestone as the company grows its local industrial footprint with further advanced assembly and training system capabilities in Australia,” noted Rheinmetall Defence Australia managing director Nathan Poyner.

“Rheinmetall is committed to building Australian industry capability and creating advanced manufacturing Australian jobs in trades including mechanical, electrical, ammunition, and software.”

Germany Receives First of 13 Medical Transport Containers from Airbus



Airbus Defence and Space has delivered the first of 13 medical transport containers to German Armed Forces medical personnel.

The protected-wounded transport containers (GVTCs) enable sick, wounded, and injured warfighters to be moved between hospitals and field centers.

The GVTCs also permit specialists to provide patients with medical care during transportation.

Airbus Protected-Wounded Transport Containers

The new German GVTCs are based on international ISO standard 20-foot (6-meter) logistics containers.

Each box has an integrated hook roll-off mechanism to easily mount to German military trucks. The GVTC can be transported without cranes or

other special equipment through this approach.

While moving, two paramedics can treat up to eight soldiers inside the container. The specialists can perform vital monitoring, defibrillation, and ventilation through the unit’s oxygen-generation system.

The GVTCs are also equipped with power generators and air-conditioning systems for self-sufficiency during long operations and extreme climatic conditions.

Meanwhile, the container’s layering protects personnel from chemical warfare agents, open fires, and heavy explosions.

Enhancing German Defense’s Medical Operability

The first transport container serves as a “proof-of-concept” that will be employed to train German medics.

As the preparation commences, the remaining containers will be produced and delivered from 2024 to 2026 in partnership with military installation provider Drehtainer and special-purpose vehicle developer Binz Automotive.

“Our protected-wounded transport containers improve the Bundeswehr’s rescue chain and ability to recover, transport and treat the wounded in crisis areas,” Airbus Defence and Space Managing Director Harald Mannheim stated.

“In this respect, the GVTC is further proof of how we and our state-of-the-art technologies help all those who help others.”

UK Royal Air Force Commences Training for Future Protector Drone Fleet in US

The UK Royal Air Force has begun training for its future Protector RG Mk1 medium-altitude, long-altitude

drone fleet in the US.

The effort supports procuring remotely piloted aircraft systems (RPAS) that will replace the service’s MQ-9A Reaper aircraft.

In 2021, a contract was signed for additional RPAS units, increasing the order to 16 drones.

Industry partner General Atomics delivered the initial Protector to the UK Ministry of Defence last year.

The first Protector technicians who will maintain the aircraft and associated systems graduated earlier this year.

Training in North Dakota

The Royal Air Force’s 54 Squadron is the first Protector pilot team currently training at General Atomics Aeronautical Systems’ facility in Grand Forks, North Dakota.

Preparations include flying Protectors armed with Paveway laser-guided bombs and Brimstone programmable fire-and-forget missiles.

The simulations and live flying activities will run for 12 weeks. Lessons will focus on intelligence exploitation through the multi-spectral targeting system and synthetic aperture radar integrated with the drone.

Meanwhile, mission intelligence coordinators will take a six-week course to operate the Protector’s mission intelligence station.

‘Phenomenal’ Drone

Once deployed, the Protector is expected to provide critical armed surveillance and enemy targeting using advanced capabilities and precision strike weapons.



► Furthermore, the drone’s “detect and avoid” technology and endurance of more than 40 hours will enable the air force to operate in various air-spaces.

“I am delighted to see our first cohort of Protector crews commence training on this phenomenal platform,” Royal Air Force Commander Air Cdre. Simon Strasdin stated.

“Reaper has been at the core of RAF combat operations in Afghanistan and the Middle East for almost two decades, demonstrating the utility and effectiveness of RPAS in the modern battlefield.”

“The increased capability, flexibility and lethality Protector brings will see a step change in how we support UK Defence.”

Israeli Forces Kill Two Palestinians in West Bank



Israeli troops killed two Palestinians in the occupied West Bank on Saturday, the Palestinian health ministry said, as the army claimed to have targeted the perpetrators of a “shooting attack.”

“Two martyrs, shot by the occupation (Israeli forces) arrived at Thabet Thabet government hospital,” in the city of Tulkarm, the health ministry said.

It named the two men as Hamza Khreish and Samer al-Shafei, both 22, and said that one other person was wounded in the raid.

The Israeli army said the pair were “involved in the shooting attack in

Avnei Heftz on May 2, 2023 during which an Israeli civilian was injured.”

“The two gunmen were shot and killed after attempting to flee the scene,” an army statement said, adding that two others were arrested in the operation.

“Two M-16 rifles, military vests, and magazines” were confiscated.

Hundreds of mourners later gathered for the funerals of the two men, whose bodies were carried through the streets of Tulkarm, shrouded in the Palestinian flag.

Avnei Heftz is a settlement in the West Bank deemed illegal under international law.

The Tulkarm Brigade, a local militant group linked to the Al-Aqsa Martyrs’ Brigade, the armed wing of the ruling Fatah party, claimed the two men as members.

The group also took responsibility for the Avnei Heftz attack, calling it a “revenge operation,” according to a statement.

A general strike was called in Tulkarm.

Palestinian prime minister Mohammad Shtayyeh said the men were “two new victims of the organised terrorism practised by the occupation soldiers against our people.”

On Thursday, Israeli security forces shot dead three Palestinians blamed for killing a British-Israeli woman and two of her daughters in the West Bank last month.

Palestinian Islamist group Hamas, which controls the Gaza Strip, said all three men killed in what it termed an “assassination” were from its ranks, hailing them as “heroes of resistance.”

Earlier in the week, Israel carried out air strikes in Gaza in response to rocket fire by Islamic Jihad militants following the death in Israeli custody of Khader Adnan, a Palestinian pris-

oner on hunger strike.

The latest violence brings to 108 the number of Palestinians killed in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict so far this year.

Nineteen Israelis, one Ukrainian, and one Italian have been killed over the same period, according to an AFP count based on official sources from the two sides.

These figures include combatants as well as civilians and, on the Israeli side, include three members of the Arab minority.

Israel has occupied the West Bank since 1967.

Blast Targeting UN Convoy Wounds 7 Peacekeepers in Mali



Seven United Nations peacekeepers were wounded in central Mali on Saturday when a roadside bomb exploded under their convoy, the UN force in the West African country (MINUSMA) said.

The UN said on social media the soldiers were “receiving appropriate treatment” without detailing their condition or giving their nationality.

A MINUSMA spokeswoman confirmed the information to AFP.

The improvised explosive device (IED) blew up as the convoy went over it 34 kilometers (21 miles) north of the town of Douentza.

There have been six similar roadside bomb attacks this year in central Mali, where jihadists are known to operate, the UN force said. ►►

► Landmines and IEDs are regularly blamed on the jihadists, who have been targeting foreign forces and symbols of the state in Mali since 2012.

The attacks kill scores of people every year, both soldiers and civilians, with 80 UN peacekeepers dying in such attacks over the past decade.

The 12,000-member UN force in Mali has suffered the most casualties in recent years among the agency's peacekeeping missions deployed worldwide.

A total of 185 MINUSMA members have been killed since it was established in 2013.

Wagner Chief Says Moscow Promised More Ammo After Bakhmut Pull-Out Threat



Russian paramilitary leader Yevgeny Prigozhin said Sunday he had received “a promise” of more ammunition from the Russian army after he threatened to pull his frontline Wagner troops out of Bakhmut.

“They promised to give us all the ammunition and armaments we need to continue the operations,” said Prigozhin, following his blistering attack on military chiefs over the situation in Bakhmut, the epicenter of Ukraine’s fight against Moscow’s forces.

He said they had been assured “that everything necessary will be provided” to fighters around Bakhmut.

Prigozhin’s Wagner group has spearheaded the grinding, months-long Russian assault on Bakhmut, almost capturing the city in the longest and bloodiest battle of the campaign.

Prigozhin however threatened to leave his positions in Bakhmut on May 10 due to a lack of weapons, which he blamed on Russian army chiefs.

He warned that he would “pull out Wagner units from Bakhmut because in the absence of ammunition they are facing a senseless death.”

While Prigozhin had made similar threats to pull out in the past, the emotive language used in Friday’s video statement and the scathing personal criticism of the leaders of Russia’s campaign in Ukraine were unprecedented.

The rivalry between his private military group and the conventional army have come to the surface during the battle for Bakhmut.

On Sunday Prigozhin said that “all decisions” regarding Wagner’s operation would be taken by General Surovikin.

“He is the only decorated general that knows how to fight,” Prigozhin said.

Surovikin, an army veteran with a reputation for ruthlessness and who had been praised by Wagner, was named military commander in Ukraine in October.

Only three months later, he was replaced again by Valery Gerasimov, regularly criticized by Prigozhin.

Surovikin then became one of Gerasimov’s deputies.

Russian Jet Intercepts Polish Plane Over Black Sea: Romania

A Russian fighter intercepted a Polish plane patrolling for the EU’s border agency over the Black Sea,



Romania’s defence ministry said Saturday, denouncing Moscow’s “aggressive and dangerous” behaviour.

The Polish border guard plane was on a routine Frontex patrol with Romanian border police Friday when it was intercepted by repeated “aggressive and dangerous maneuvers,” performed by the Sukhoi Su-35 fighter, said a ministry statement.

Romanian and Spanish planes were put on “pre-alert” by NATO when the incident happened, but the Polish crew managed to land safely, the statement added.

The incident took place “in international airspace over the Black Sea,” around 60 kilometers east of Romania’s airspace, said the ministry.

“This incident is further evidence of the provocative approach of the Russian Federation in the Black Sea,” said Bucharest.

Contacted by AFP, the European border agency Frontex did not immediately respond. Polish border guards declined to comment, saying a statement would be issued on Sunday.

The Polish plane has been deployed in Romania from April 19 and is due to stay there until May 17, part of a Frontex operation organized by Romania that also includes Spain and Sweden.

Taiwan to Receive 19 Indigenous Sky Sword II Missile Launchers

The Taiwanese Ministry of National Defense (MND) has announced that it will receive indigenously-developed ►►



Sky Sword II mobile missile launchers beginning next week.

The move is part of the country's 23.65 billion New Taiwan dollar (\$771.6 million) Sea and Air Combat Capability Enhancement Plan to build various missiles, launchers, and military facilities.

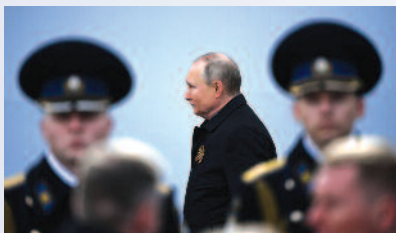
The National Chung-Shan Institute for Science and Technology has so far produced 19 Sky Sword II missile launchers to prepare the country for a potential Chinese invasion.

According to the MND, the rate of progress for production and procurement is currently at 95 percent.

The figure is on par with the recorded rate of progress for missile procurement of 100 percent.

The defense ministry expects that around 1,000 Sky Sword II and other types of missiles will be produced domestically this year.

Putin Focused On Consolidating Ukraine Gains: US Intel



Russian forces in Ukraine are so degraded they cannot mount any significant offensive moves and are focused for now on consolidating control of occupied territory, the US intelligence chief said Thursday.

As Ukraine prepares for its own offensive in the coming months, Russian President Vladimir Putin still likely aims to prolong the conflict until Western support for Kyiv wanes, said Director of National Intelligence Avril Haines.

"Putin probably has scaled back his immediate ambitions to consolidating control of the occupied territory in eastern and southern Ukraine, and ensuring that Ukraine will never become a NATO ally," Haines told a hearing of the Senate Armed Services Committee.

But she said that whatever the outcome of Ukraine's offensive — whether it recaptures much of the occupied south and east or the current stalemate remains — Putin is unlikely to offer any concessions to advance peace talks.

"The challenge is that even as Putin may be scaling back his near-term ambitions, the prospect for Russian concessions to advance negotiations this year will be low unless domestic political vulnerabilities alter his thinking," Haines said.

While Western allies bolster Kyiv with arms, ammunition, and training in advance of its planned offensive, Haines noted that Russian forces have "significant" shortfalls in ammunition and personnel.

"Even if Ukraine's counter-offensive is not fully successful, the Russians are unlikely to be able to mount a significant offensive operation this year," Haines said.

To sustain even a modest offensive campaign, Putin would have to order a mandatory mobilization of army recruits as well as secure significant ammunition supplies from other countries beyond what it gets from Iran, she said.

Still, she added: "We continue to assess that Putin most likely calculates that time works in his favor and that prolonging the war may be his best remaining pathway to eventually securing Russia's strategic interests in Ukraine."

Haines said Moscow's losses are such that its military requires "years of rebuilding."

With a weakened conventional military force, Moscow will become more reliant on nuclear, cyber, and space capabilities for deterrence, she said.

Haines added it was "very unlikely" that Moscow would use nuclear weapons in the conflict.

Lockheed Wins \$1.4B Contract to Develop Critical F-35 Capability

Lockheed Martin has received a \$1.4 billion contract to develop a critical warfighting capability for the US military's F-35 Lightning II fighter aircraft.

As part of the deal, the aerospace giant will produce and integrate the Multi-ship Infrared Search and Track Increment 2, the Electronic Warfare Band 2/5 Radar Warning Receiver, and a Beyond Line-of-Sight communication system.

It will also develop a Modernized Countermeasure Controller for the fifth-generation fighter.

All products and services under the contract are meant for F-35 lots 16 and 17 in service with the US Air Force, US Navy, US Marine Corps, and international allies.

A majority of the work for the contract will be carried out in Texas and New Hampshire with an expected completion date of March 2028. ■

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



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

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

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

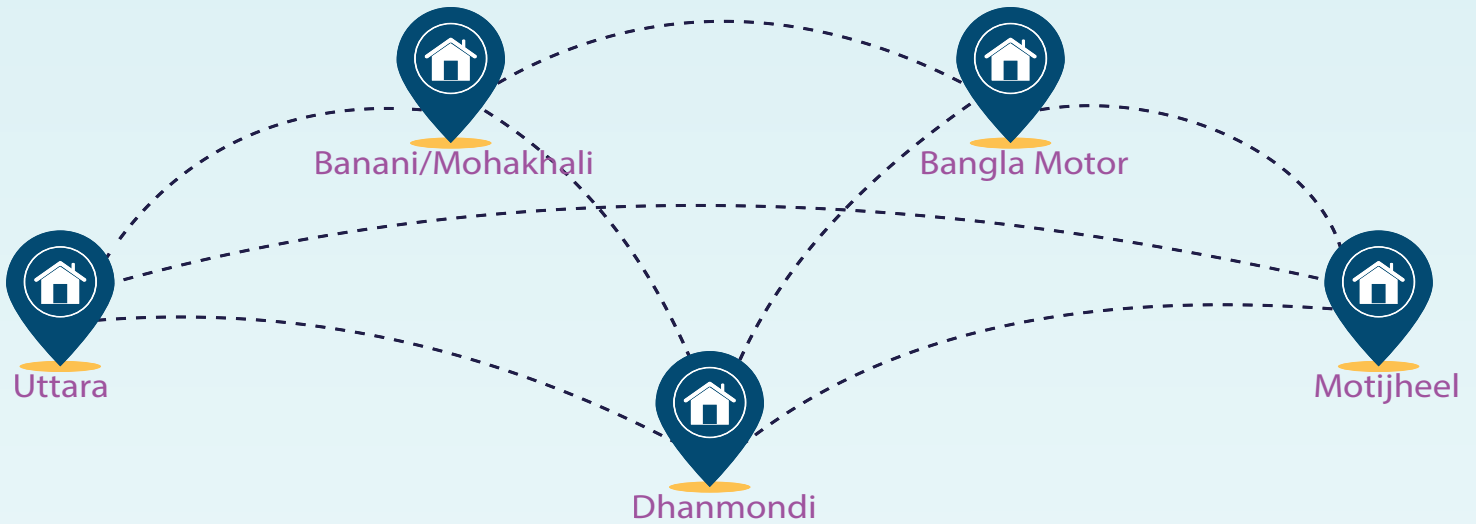


Trusted name in Life Insurance
Popular Life Insurance Company Limited

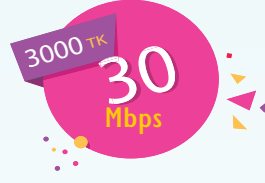
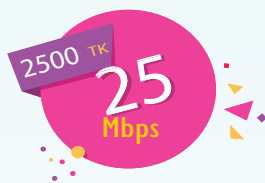
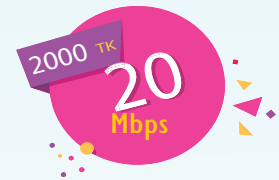
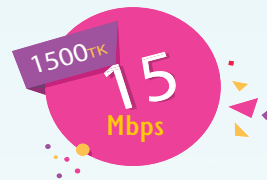
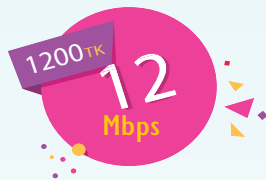
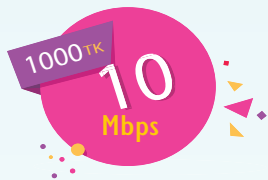
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