

The Security World



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Reforming Bangladesh at its Socio-Political-Economic-Strategic Spectrum: Some Suggested Proposals

The Road to Freedom

Does India Need to Revisit Its Policy Towards Neighbours in General and Bangladesh in Particular?

Shifting Tides: India Encounters New Realities in the Bay of Bengal Region After Sheikh Hasina's Fall

The Unmaking of Rishi Sunak



A TIME OF TURMOIL: THE TRIUMVIRATE'S DECISION

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THE SECURITY WORLD

ABOUT US

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

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A Time of Turmoil: The Triumvirate's Decision

Rabb Majumder

is the Editor and Publisher of The Security World.



In the summer of July and August 2024 Bangladesh was engulfed in turmoil. A fervent student movement had erupted, demanding justice and reform, leading to widespread unrest. Amidst this chaos, three chiefs—General Waker-Uz-Zaman of the Army, Admiral M Nazmul Hassan of the Navy, and Air Chief Marshal Hasan Mahmood Khan—found themselves at a crucial crossroads.

All three were from the same batch of the Bangladesh Military Academy, Batch 13, and shared not only a camaraderie but also a deep understanding of their nation's challenges. As the situation escalated, they convened in a secure location to discuss the future of their country. Bangladesh has never had three chiefs from the same batch before, which also contributed to the impressive performance in tackling the sit-

uation and making decisions.

Army Chief General Waker-Uz-Zaman's leadership was crucial in ensuring a peaceful transition of power. Here's how the military played its role under his command:

Strategic Deployment: The military was strategically deployed to key locations to maintain order and prevent violence. This included securing government buildings and vital infrastructure.

Communication and Negotiation: General Waker-Uz-Zaman emphasized open communication and negotiation with protest leaders. This approach helped to de-escalate tensions and avoid confrontations.

Curfews and Safety Measures: Curfews were imposed in critical areas to prevent clashes between protesters and security forces. The military also set up safe zones for civilians.

Facilitating Resignation: The military facilitated the safe resignation and departure of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina. On August 5, 2024, she resigned and left the country, allowing for the formation of an interim government. ▶▶



Army Chief General Waker-Uz-Zaman



Chief of Naval Staff Admiral M Nazmul Hassan



Air Chief Marshal Hasan Mahmood Khan

► **Public Assurance:** General Waker-Uz-Zaman addressed the nation, assuring the public of the military's commitment to a peaceful resolution and the establishment of an interim government.

These measures were instrumental in handling the crisis without bloodshed, ensuring a smooth transition during a highly volatile period.

The following is a fictional dialogue among the chiefs of Army, Navy and Air Force.

The command centre in the heart of bustling Dhaka was with urgency. The Army Chief, General Waker-Uz-Zaman, stood at the head of the table, flanked by Admiral Nazmul Hassan of the Navy and Air Chief Marshal Hasan Mahmood Khan. The atmosphere was tense, and the streets outside echoed with the voices of protesting students demanding resignation of PM Sheikh Hasina. General Waker-Uz-Zaman addressed the assembly in a forceful voice. "We can't ignore the enthusiasm driving these protests. The Prime ►►

► Minister's resignation has created a vacuum, and we must act decisively." Admiral Nazmul nodded. "The Navy can help maintain order along the coast and ensure that no outside forces aggravate the situation.

However, we must exercise prudence; an overly confrontational approach may increase tensions. Air Chief Marshal Hassan Mahmood stated, "And from above, we must monitor the protests." Drones can provide real-time intelligence. If we detect an outbreak of violence, we can send help right away." General Waker-Uz-Zaman leaned forward, examining his colleagues' faces. "Our initial goal must be to calm the situation. We need to communicate with the student leaders. They have a significant voice in this country, and including them could provide credibility to our efforts." Admiral Nazmul raised his eyebrow. "Are you proposing that we form an interim administration with their input?" "That is a risky move." "Risky, but necessary," General Waker-Uz-Zaman replied. "If we ignore their demands, we risk losing the support of an entire generation." We may organise a council with military control, but directed by the students' future goals. The Air Force Chief considered it. "It may work, but we need a clear message. The military should protect the people rather than suppress them. We must ensure that our presence is seen as calming rather than overwhelming." General Waker-Uz-Zaman nodded, knowing the need of achieving the proper balance. "Agreed. We will present this concept to the student leaders while underlining our commitment to a peaceful transition. It's time to show that the military can be a force for good. As the chiefs discussed logistics and strategies, the room became electrified with purpose. They were more than just leaders in their respective branches; they were stewards of their country's fate, navigating a

cautious path to stability in an uncertain time.

After much deliberation, the trio reached a unanimous decision. They would support Sheikh Hasina in her journey to India. The decision, though spontaneous, stemmed from their shared commitment to national stability.

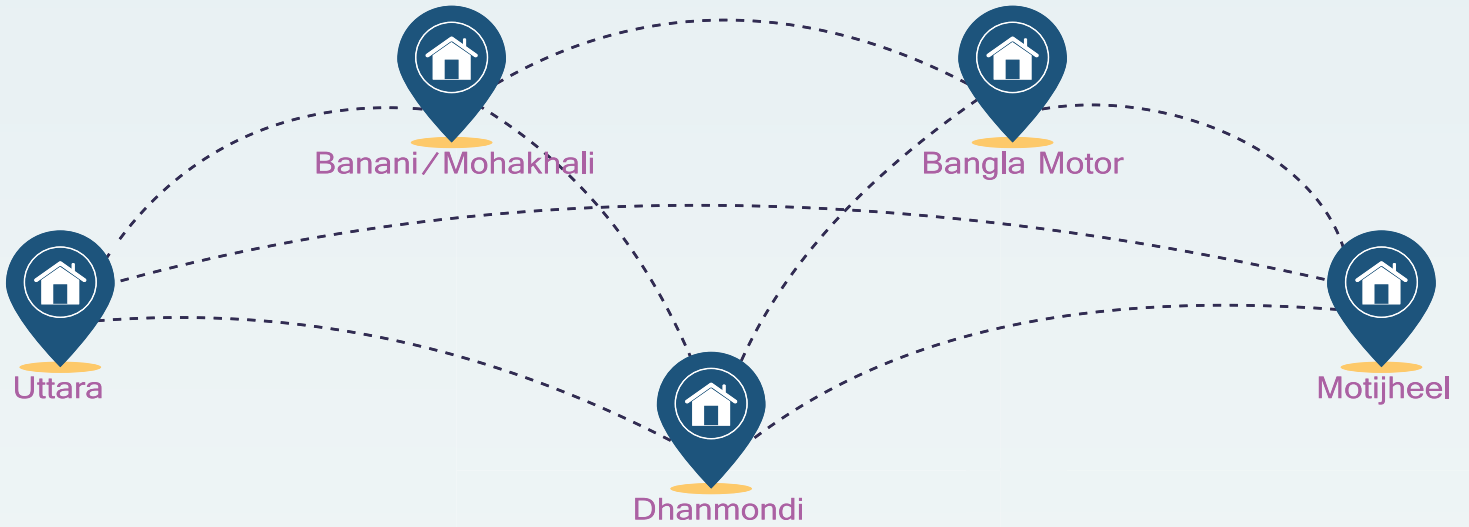
As the news broke, many were surprised by the military's involvement in political matters. Critics questioned the motives, but the three chiefs stood firm, believing it was a necessary step to restore order.

With Sheikh Hasina in India, the political landscape began to shift. The student movement, while still passionate, found a renewed sense of direction. Amidst the discussions, a new figure emerged as a potential leader—Dr. Muhammad Yunus, a respected economist, nobel laureate and social entrepreneur. His vision for a more equitable society resonated with the people.

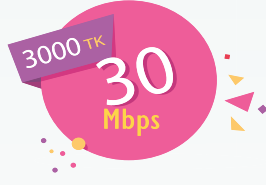
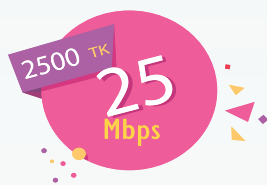
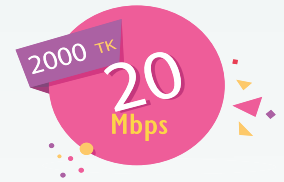
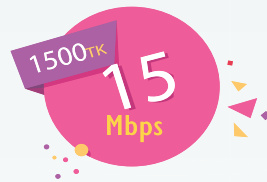
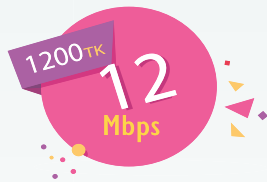
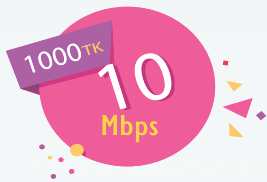
The trio believed his expertise could guide the nation through its economic and social challenges, aligning with the aspirations of the youth.

As the political landscape transformed, the three chiefs watched with a sense of pride. Their decision had not only defused a crisis but also paved the way for a new chapter in Bangladesh's history. The unity and foresight displayed by the Batch 13 leaders became a testament to the power of judicious decision-making in the face of adversity.

In the months that followed, the country began to heal, and the student movement evolved into a constructive force for change, advocating for reforms and accountability. The legacy of the three chiefs endured, reminding future leaders that sometimes, the most courageous decisions are the ones made in unity and in the best interest of the nation. ■



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CAUTION: Bangladesh Under Construction

John Dalton, International Development Advisor

is not affiliated with any organization, the ideas and recommendations are his own, personal observations and recommendations. He is a former State government official, advisor to the President of Liberia, the Prime Minister of Zimbabwe, the Anti-Corruption Commission in Zambia, and the Department of Budget and Management in the Philippines, among many international assignments. He has conducted numerous consultancies for funding agencies on public financial management, general management, anti-corruption, and integrity.



Back in the not-so-distant past, before the Prime Minister fled to India, the Ruling Party in Bangladesh had arrived at a decades-long consensus agreement with the population: “Let US steal as much as we want and YOU are free to do whatever you want” That Deal with the Devil would still be flourishing today were it not for the Ides of July/August when Bangladesh’s own Caesar met her match in the collective action of students and other activists.

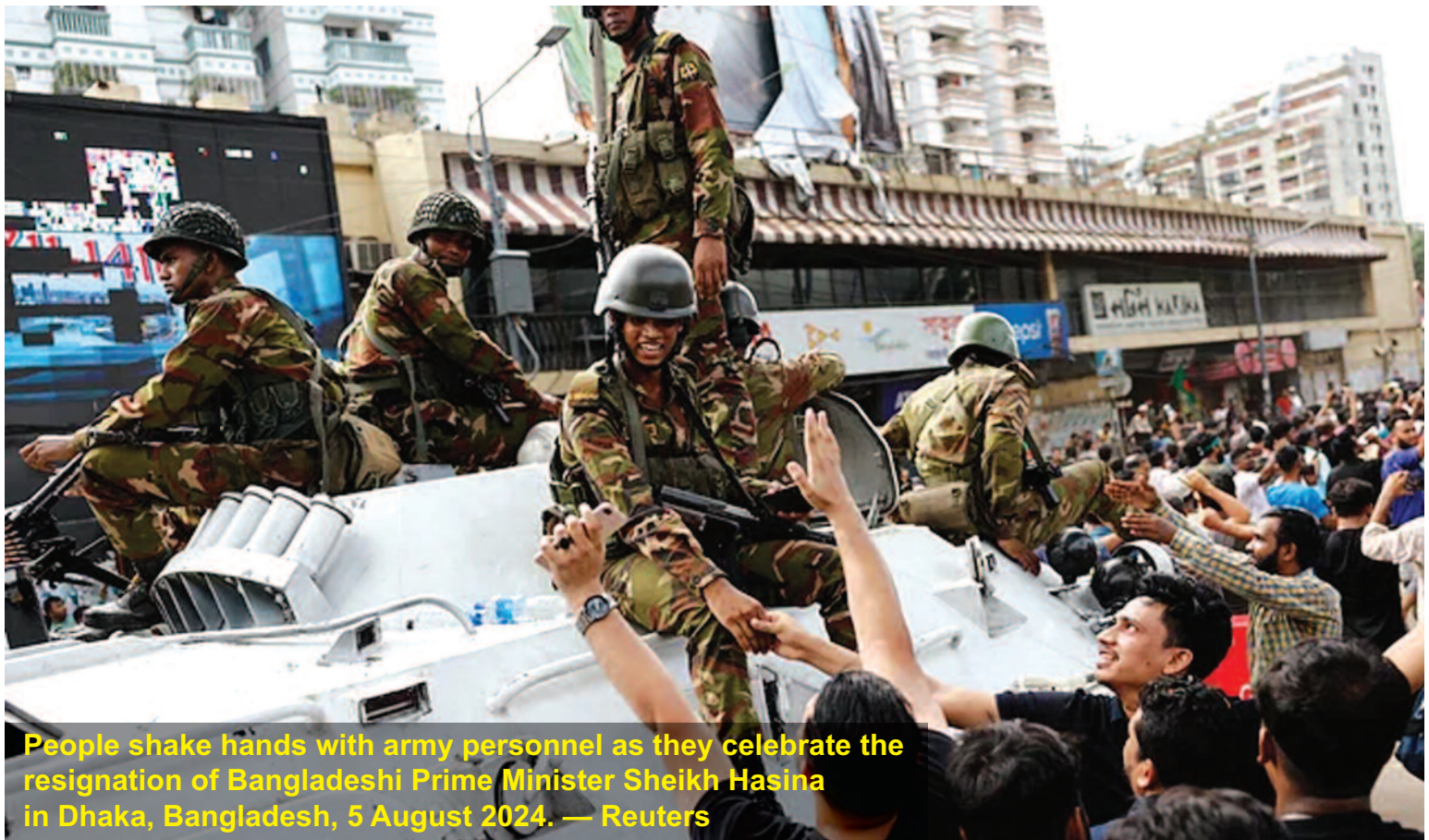
Now, the curtain is just rising on a three-act play, the “Transformation of Bangladesh.” Some characters are being removed from the stage; others are appearing. But the evolving drama needs a plot and, we hope, a clear target. Now, the final scene of the third act is a mystery. Unless properly managed it could be a tragedy.

We can observe that many of the previous peo-

ple-power revolutions confused activity with change; lots of emotion but no motion. These delayed or failed transitions include countries where I have worked and observed, such as:

EGYPT – the 2011 Tahrir Square Revolution that toppled President Hosni Mubarak led to institutional paralysis. Premature elections were held to send a message from the short-lived military regime that democracy would be restored. Dr. Mohamed Morsi was elected President and began almost immediately to limit freedoms, a sort of creeping Sharia Law that closed off the opportunity a beleaguered population craved. In short order, Morsi was also overthrown in 2013 (with the tacit approval of the international community) and General Abdel Fatah el Sisi assumed control... democracy in Egypt died that day. Is this the fate of Bangladesh...moving too fast with no end in mind?

PHILIPPINES – President Ferdinand Marcos was overwhelmed by the People Power Revolution, fueled by popular outrage at the assassination of Senator Benigno Aquino as he set foot on the tarmac at Manila International Airport. This set off ▶▶



People shake hands with army personnel as they celebrate the resignation of Bangladeshi Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina in Dhaka, Bangladesh, 5 August 2024. — Reuters

► wide-spread resistance, leading to the “escape” of Marcos, his family, and his cronies (“Hawaii, I thought you said Paway?”). Mrs. Aquino, a very “nice” woman, was elected as President and systematically set out to empty the pockets of the Marcos Cronies and fill the pockets of the Aquino Cronies. Mission accomplished. Following this, the Philippines was fortunate to have the Great Man, General Fidel Ramos, lead the country for a time, but tragic (Arroyo) and comedic (Duterte) regimes followed. Irony of ironies, the current President is Ferdinand Marcos, Jr, son of the so-called tyrant. Interesting!

ZIMBABWE – In the 2008 Presidential election, Candidate Tsvangirai beat Incumbent President Mugabe. Then Mugabe and his henchmen beat the hell out of Tsvangirai’s followers. The conflict was resolved (poorly and fleetingly) through a power sharing agreement in which Mugabe would remain President and Tsvangirai could act as Prime Minister for several portfolios but not defense or foreign affairs. The whole failed venture was sad to watch. Tsvangirai was an eighth-grade school leaver who, as labor leader, was adept at

challenging power. As the power, himself, he had no idea how to operate. Today Mugabe’s successor, lovingly called, The Crocodile is President in his stead. Any opposition is fragmented and ineffective. Opportunity such as now exists in Bangladesh knocks but once in a lifetime.!

Will Bangladesh miss the “tide in the affairs of men” that could “lead on to fortune”?

There are several other first-hand, post-conflict experiences, from Sri Lanka to Burundi; from Liberia to the Congo. The universal point is this - the excitement of a one-night stand is no substitute for a stable marriage. You must work at it! Elections in late 2027 might allow the time to plan for real change not just abrupt, kneejerk motion, as noted above. And.... there will be resistance both passive and active, even violent. Stay the course!!

In what appears to be a brilliant first move, Nobel Laureate, Dr. Mohamed Yunus, the Students’ Choice as Chief Advisor, has been appointed to shepherd the country to Bangladesh 2.0. Leaving aside the legal and constitutional issues surround-►

▶ing this appointment, acting “as if” you have authority is often all the authority you need. I envision a six-step, multi-year process to create a solid foundation for progress, stability, dignity, and opportunity in a newly re-imagined Bangladesh. The Six Steps are:

REFLECT ... Bangladeshis need to understand “what happened”? How did its government act with impunity? How did the population see it, know it, and accept it as the norm? There needs to be an acknowledgment that the guardians failed in their duty to serve Bangladesh with honesty and integrity. Until this deep wound is treated, until there is a reckoning, the new Bangladesh could be different but not better.

REVIEW...State capture by the governing party was complete and comprehensive, encompassing the Executive, Legislative, and Judicial branches of government. The known policies, laws, protocols, contracts, procedures, and practices of the government need to be investigated through a “who benefitted” lens. All the unknown wink-wink, handshake, verbal approvals at the heart of the corrupt transactions of the past will take time to unbundle. There are multiple layers of fraud involved. I am optimistic that the current process will yield positive results.

Similarly, a systems audit of financial, management, human resources, procurement, taxation, and similar systems must be undertaken. These have been manipulated and twisted to help elites and power brokers. The guardians were asleep at the gate, specifically, it seems, the Institute of Chartered Accountants of Bangladesh (ICAB), both as an institutional “guardian” and by offering a safe haven for members guilty of fraud, as explained below.

REVISE... based on a deep, thorough and, purposeful reflection and review – an exercise that may extend over 24-36 months uninterrupted by political activity or fake elections –fundamental changes to the rules of the game need to be en-

acted. When self-interest is no longer a driving force a new foundation based on personal dignity, human rights, openness, equality, integrity, fairness, justice, and truth can be constructed.

REIMAGINE... With this new legal, institutional, and ethical foundation, it may be possible to create a better Bangladesh based on a future vision that accelerates opportunity for all, based on a quality education system (*sine qua non*); decentralization of powers and funds transfers; tax fairness; and allocation of funds based on the needs of the total population – no more vanity projects. The co-existence of wrenching poverty with an overhead metro should never again be tolerated.

So, what now, Bangladesh? What would be the basis for this new future? You will decide of course - not some random “bideshi”, like me - but among the foundational principles must be 1) policies geared toward job growth, 2) citizen-led self-government at all levels; 3) fiscal transparency, especially with respect to foreign assisted projects; 4) equality and equity for women; 5) education pathways that led to a variety of viable careers, 6) national security and international cooperation; and, 7) fair and honest public administration including normal elections free from the influence of money and power (aspirational, of course). This - and probably much more - is what democracy looks like.

REFORM

With a clear understanding of what went wrong, and detailed knowledge of what is broken in government, as well as in society, a comprehensive reform agenda can be identified and programmed. The strategic timeframe would be for three years, with the understanding that this first phase is a test bed for reform policy candidates not a final, conclusive plan for reform. Through learning, iteration, and adaptation the reform strategy can adjust to conditions. A five or ten-year plan, obviously, is doomed to failure since so ▶▶

- ▶ many externalities will impinge on implementation. Three? Sounds about right.

The interim administration has already begun the REVIEW stage but much more needs to be done, especially identifying the “unknown” deals made by government to benefit self or party. But – caution - if history is any guide, there are many unknown wink-winks to uncover.

RELAUNCH

The interim leadership will have done its job – really, what more could be expected – if by late 2027 elections will be held for a reconstituted Parliamentary system. Nonpartisan elections, however, will be required at all subnational levels. A proper system of local governance – citizen-led and people powered – based on both own source revenue authority and national grants providing funds for local services. Some SOE’s will be slated for privatization; others for disinvestment, thus creating opportunities for local entrepreneurs to start up new businesses unburdened by political interference. Privatization and disinvestments of these white elephants will also free up fiscal space for national government to allocate to higher priorities.

Elections are a drop in the democracy bucket. Freedom, equity, integrity will be among the guiding principles for good governance, a far far far more important feature of democracy than sticking a slip of paper into a slot once every four or five years.

STEP-BY-PURPOSEFUL STEP

REFLECT

Santayana warned, “Those who choose not to remember the past are cursed to repeat it.” And, so, here we are in a push-pull situation where many of the old guard are counseling Bangladeshis to put the past behind them so that they can return to the good old days of stealing you blind, while the new guard, especially the students, want a pathway to change – they want a new Bangladesh.

Reflecting on the past will expose the extent of public corruption, defined as the “abuse of entrusted power or privilege for private gain.” If the term “corruption” is restricted to what public officials have done – even that is enormous - it will reveal greed and embezzlement and self-aggrandizement and theft and abuse of office and the secret sauce of the past government – gush.

However, even the most complete and in-depth expose of corruption by the past government, and identifying its most egregious corrupters, will not get to the root of the problem. The collapse of morality and ethics was much more widespread. The dishonesty, lack of integrity, embezzlement of funds, and cheating in even the most basic commercial transactions by corporations, businesses, merchants, and individuals must also be acknowledged if Bangladesh is to avoid being forever cursed by its past.

One final comment about the need for a deep reflection, let us focus on the failure of the so-called guardians of truth and integrity. Most prominent among these failed guardians were the financial advisors and professional chartered accountants who knowingly certified the fraudulent financial statements of at least 14000 embezzlers who repatriated their stolen money in 2021 with the blessing of the three blind mice at MOF, BB, and NRB. It appears that the Institute of Chartered Accountants of Bangladesh (ICAB) failed miserably in its mission as a guardian. Individual member companies and individual chartered accountants violated their professional oaths and colluded with the robbers. The past administration offered the embezzlers, money launderers, and their chartered accountants, anonymity and confidentiality. As Santayana advises, it is time to “remember the past” by exposing this sorry chapter in Bangladesh’s history. Publish a list of all those who sought to whiten black money and purge the facilitators/enablers from any future role in public finance. ▶▶

► REVIEW

The interim administration/government has taken up the legal review with purpose. All the laws passed during the administration of the “Name We Dare Not Speak” are being assessed for their negative impact on human rights. This will be cathartic. A comprehensive legislative agenda will follow, I am sure, although acting by executive order or executive decree may be preferable to address immediate concerns. Digging deeper into the Nuremberg-type abuses of authority, e.g., “I was just following orders” will take much longer and may require a broad grant of amnesty to encourage officers to come forward.

Hiding in plain sight, are the legal instruments and administrative decisions derived from these laws, charters, and memoranda of State-Owned Enterprises. Unpacking the legal, financial, and ethical mess of some of these legacy SOEs will take time and courage. Lots of vested interests will need to be challenged. Ideally, many of these burdens will need to be sold off.

REVISE

The focus here should be public administration, human resource management and service delivery. Revising and amending these areas may open cans of worms that are deeply embarrassing, revealing the state of corruption involved in payoffs for jobs (3 lakh to be a sweeper at the airport?); abuse of discretionary authority (10000 “sweets” for No Objection Certificate?); sexual favors for promotions, whether for students or workers; cronyism; kickbacks and bribes, and on and on. This is forensic. This exercise is not for weak hearts and minds. This will shake people’s faith in government, as a democratic principle, to the core.

One huge issue is how to deal with the devolution of powers under a new decentralized model. The long arm of past administration touched every ward, village, union, upazila, district, municipal-ity, and city. Certainly, the immediate priority is

to concentrate on central administrative arrangements, but right now Bangladesh does not work for the people. Great things have been accomplished (recognizing, however, that every piece of data has been twisted and used as propaganda). But in the process, many corners were cut, many eyes were shut, many mouths were muted...right down to the lowest level. The ship of state can accumulate a lot of barnacles in a decade and a half.

REIMAGINE

Ahhhhh, the fun part. It is not advisable to throw the baby out with the bath water, so Bangladesh 2.0 will carry forward some positives to be added to an innovative redesign of a future nation. Bangladesh is still youthful; in the life of man/woman it is in its late twenties or early thirties. Loaded with energy and ready to craft a revised pathway to excellence.

Engaging the youth – students and young professionals – seems to be imperative at this tipping point. Initially, they were against something that was unjust. This morphed into something far more powerful...a national consensus that the whole shebang was out of whack!

Reimagining Bangladesh is a very exciting prospect. It will require a vision, a passion, and a commitment to (i) change what needs to be changed, (ii) save what needs to be changed and (iii) create and introduce totally new drivers that have their genesis in the broader global think-sphere or even percolate up from a village meeting in Barisal. Every idea is welcome.

But caution is necessary...all the empty blather about the game-changing Fourth Industrial Revolution or ESG (greenwashing by a fancy acronym) is a cautionary warning sign that jumping on board a fad is not what reimagine means.

REFORM

This is an interesting word. It does not mean revolution nor deconstruction nor upheaval. Rather, the image that may work best is to re-form ►►

- ▶ Bangladesh using the same blood, sweat and tears from 1971 but focused on the people not the icon. Bangladesh can “re-form” itself into something that looks different and serves a different purpose. Young countries like Bangladesh can change their ways, with the self-recognition that there has been a painful stumble.

It is also true that most spontaneous uprisings, fail in the long run. Not only does the energy wane but there are numerous negative forces that will oppose re-forming Bangladesh, just as there were in the countries cited above, or in the Arab Spring (pfffft, up in smoke, except perhaps Tunisia), or by the tanks crushing “Hong Kong Man”. This will take a national commitment, founded on democracy, human rights, integrity, and mutual respect.

Institutional reform is essential: too many independent approving authorities forcing citizens to run the gauntlet. Governance reform is necessary so that clearly stated rights – the rules of the game – are clear. Administrative reform may be the toughest to address with this cadre or that cadre clinging desperately to the unearned benefits they have achieved. Structural reform...transferring duties, power, and money from Dhaka to a newly shaped and invigorated system of subnational “quasi-local governments” reporting directly to the people they are supposed to serve is a great vision. Fiscal and financial reform will involve a tax on wealth (real estate especially), canceling all TINs that have not paid taxes during the past three years (in other words all those companies that do not make the minimum effort to be legal entities); and, conditioning rights and benefits on the payment of income tax (no study abroad for Farzana if daddy and mummy haven’t paid their taxes).

And.... there seems to be an urgent need for re-



form within a large box marked “NATIONAL VALUES”. Something went haywire during the past fifteen years. Was there a tipping point (the 2018 elections?) or a gradual erosion? Did the citizens observe and know that corruption was the national currency and decide if they wanted to get along, they would go along? Self inspection – but not self flagellation – would be a good thing, before placing a band-aid on the cancer. But the core principle underlying this reform exercise, I believe, is FORGIVENESS

RELAUNCH

A New Bangladesh will not come with a big bang- progressive change has already started and it is reassuring. The recommended three-year strategy is intended to signal urgency, immediacy, and commitment to do something positive and progressive BUT! Like Egypt, rushed elections could be a disaster, ALSO, like Zimbabwe failure to act on the positive momentum for change will lead to finger-pointing, backsliding, and nothing good for Bangladeshis, a very kind and respectful population that want the best for their kids. ■

Reforming Bangladesh at its Socio-Politico-Economic-Strategic Spectrum: Some Suggested Proposals

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The first Episode: Declaration of Independence and Core Values of Bangladesh

Declaration of independence of Bangladesh

“We the elected representatives of the people of Bangladesh, as honour bound by the

mandate given to us by the people of Bangladesh whose will is supreme duly constituted ourselves into a Constituent Assembly, and having held mutual consultations, and in order to ensure for the people of Bangladesh equality, human dignity and social justice on the 10th day of April 1971.”

Social equality refers to a state of affairs where all individuals within a particular group or society enjoy the same rights, liberties, and possibly status. This includes civil rights, autonomy, freedom of expression, and equal access to public resources. In essence, it represents the equitable distribution of resources, opportunities, and privileges, devoid of discrimination based on immutable attributes such as race, gender, or social class.

At its most basic, the concept of human dignity is the belief that all people hold a special value that's tied solely to their humanity. It has nothing to do with their class, race, gender, religion, abil- ➤



► ities, or any other factor other than them being human. “Human dignity” does not appear in the US Declaration of Independence or the Constitution. The phrase as we understand it today wasn’t recognized until 1948. The United Nations ratified the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Article 1 states: “All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights.” Suddenly, dignity wasn’t something that people earned because of their class, race, or another advantage. It is something all humans are born with. Simply by being human, all people deserve respect. Human rights naturally spring from that dignity.

Social justice, in contemporary politics, social science, and political philosophy, the fair treatment and equitable status of all individuals and social groups within a state or society. The accounts define social justice, or justice itself, in terms of broad categories of human rights, including the entire range of civil and political rights (such as the rights to personal liberty and to participation in government), economic and social rights (such as the rights to employment and to education), and solidarity or group rights (such as the rights

to political independence and to economic development). Social justice is the view that everyone deserves equal economic, political and social rights and opportunities.” It is related to distributive justice.

Core Values/ Vital National Interests of Bangladesh:

Sovereignty and territorial integrity. This is non-violable. All means including military should be utilized to safeguard our sovereignty and territorial integrity. Comprehensive national power should be utilized to its maximum.

Spirit of Liberation War. Equality, human dignity and social justice, democracy, nationalism, social and economic security for all, freedom of expression and thought, rule of law, patriotism, corruption-free society, secularism in worldly matters and pluralism etc.

Democracy. Westminster type with certain modifications as agreed to by the two dominant political groups by a constitutional amendment. A balance may be proposed between the powers of ►►

▶ the President and the Prime Minister.

Economic and Social stability. Identify the corporate advantage of BD and turn them into competitive advantage. Like manpower, agriculture, gas and oil, if discovered in the Bay. Coal may be too expensive to extract. Economic solvency and value-driven society should be able to address this. Attainment of a just and egalitarian society, free from exploitation of man by man.

Religious Tolerance and Coexistence. All religions should thrive together in harmony, which is rooted in our history for centuries together. In worldly matters, we should all learn to live like true Bangladeshis. This is already incorporated in our Constitution.

Social and National Values. This is the most critical challenge of our society. This needs to be revived at all levels of society. Family and educational institutions can play a transformational role. Political and social leaders have to take lead. It needs a sustained national movement.

Good Governance and Accountability. Extensive training for our bureaucracy. Strict legal measures to punish the law breakers, and corruption. Anti-corruption Commission needs to be made fully independent without any sort of restrictions. It will only report to the President and the Parliament. The Commission may be upgraded as a constitutional body.

Environmental and Climatic Sustainability. The looming challenge that may destroy the sustainability of this greatest deltaic nation-state. This is looming large to cripple our society. The southern part of our country is already under threat.

Sustainable Blue Economy in the Bay of Bengal - this is future for Bangladesh. We should keep our Sea healthy and ensure its biodiversity is not disturbed. The Bay is a great hub of fisheries. There are reports of a formation of a dead zone,

plastic pollutions and depletion of oxygen in water. These are serious concerns that need to be arrested for our sustenance.

Institutional Vitality for all types of institutions like constitutional, statutory, autonomous, private, educational institutions, family, etc. Vibrant institutions can ensure better security, both human and traditional. These institutions should work independently without unnecessary executive interference.

Episode Two

An Outline on Political Structure—Some Thoughts

In Bangladesh, dominant party state is ruling the roost. That is fine. Seemingly, there is no alternative.

But I can always encourage for more competitive party politics. Bangladesh should have at least another strong political force. We suffer from 'first past the post' or 'winners take it all' lacunae, if I may call it so. I am suggesting revision of this system. This is already under discussion in political and civil society circles. I am producing here the idea of proportional system. However, there is a lack of clear cut idea about this system. I am trying to do a research on this in the following statements.

Proportional Representation aims to create a representative body that accurately reflects the overall distribution of public support for each political party. Unlike winner-takes-all systems, where only the majority or plurality matters, PR ensures that each vote counts toward proportional representation. Used in 85 countries, this system allocates seats to parties based on their share of the vote. This will encourage rise of smaller parties and thus put a check on the dominant party system. ▶▶

- ▶ Montesquieu explained that the human liberty can be safeguarded only if the concentration of powers in a person or a group of persons could be avoided. Under the present dispensation, Bangladesh suffers badly from this syndrome. Elected tyrants need to be avoided.

Mixed-Member PR (MMP): Used in 7 countries, MMP combines single-member districts with party-list seats. Voters cast two votes—one for a candidate and one for a party list. There may be 300 single member seats and another 300 party-list seats.

Germany uses MMP (known as “personalized proportional representation”). Germany uses a mixed voting system that combines elements of proportional representation with features of first-past-the-post voting. Here’s how it works:

1. Two Votes: German voters have two votes represented by two columns on the same ballot paper.
2. First Vote: The first vote is for the voter’s local MP, elected through a First Past the Post system, similar to the UK. Each constituency has one MP.
3. Second Vote: The second vote is for a party, not an individual candidate. This vote determines the percentage of seats a party will get in the Bundestag (Germany’s parliament). Parties publish ordered lists of candidates in advance to fill these positions.
4. Seat Allocation: The first vote elects 299 members of the Bundestag. Candidates only need more votes in their district than anyone else to win. The second vote allocates the remaining 299 seats proportionally based on parties’ overall vote share. No votes are wasted in the list system.

In summary, Germany’s electoral system combines personalized proportional representation with party lists, ensuring a balance between local representation and overall party strength.

New Zealand also adopted MMP, with modifications.

Other countries like Bolivia, Lesotho, and Romania have used MMP in their elections¹².

Two Votes: In most MMP systems, voters cast two votes:

- One vote to choose the representative for their single-seat constituency (similar to first-past-the-post voting).
- Another vote for a political party.

Systems of proportional representation have been adopted in many countries, including Belgium, Denmark, Finland, Greece, Hungary, Israel, Italy, Luxembourg, Norway, Russia, Spain, Sweden, and Switzerland.

Opponents argue further that, by making it possible for small parties to be represented, proportional representation encourages the formation of splinter parties that can result in weak and unstable government.

That is unlikely to happen in Bangladesh today as it is predominantly represented by two major parties. Article 70 may be applied here that is floor crossing by the MPs. No such restrictions are imposed in the Constitutions of India, Malaysia and in the mother country of democracy i.e. the UK on floor crossing. But our political history dictates that there is a necessity of some kind of restrictions in our constitution but not to the extent as it is prevalent.

Article 70 of the Bangladesh Constitution needs to be revised—to what extent? It states, “A person elected as a member of Parliament at an election at which he was nominated as a candidate by a political party shall vacate his seat if he—(a) resigns from that party; or (b) votes in Parliament against that party; but shall not thereby be disqualified for subsequent election as a member of Parliament” .



- ▶ He may be allowed to vote against the party except during time when a motion of vote of no-confidence is moved or during move of a money bill or during election of Speaker or Deputy Speaker.

Separation of Power

According to Montesquieu, absolute power tends to corrupt absolutely. By separating the functions of the executive, legislative and judicial departments of government, one may operate as a balance against another and, thus, power should be a check on power. He laid greater emphasis on the political and natural liberty of a citizen. He has explained that the union of executive and legislative powers would lead to despotism of the executive. This is palpable in the Bangladesh Constitution.

Balance in the Powers between the President and the Prime Minister (Executive Organ).

The President, apart from appointing the Prime Minister and the Chief Justice , should also appoint all the judges of the Supreme Court and their equivalents like in the Election Commission or Anti-corruption Commission etc. without being advised by the PM. However formation of committees for nomination remains valid for suggesting names to the President.

The President should be able to declare a state of emergency, when he feels of such a necessity, without being advised by the PM. After six months, the parliament may decide on its continuity.

The President should also appoint the defence services chiefs and the vice-chancellors of the universities without being advised by the Prime Minister. The president may, however, receive recommendations from the government or through a committee formed for the purpose.

That said, the services chiefs and the services shall remain accountable to the executive government for all practical purposes. All selected ranks in the armed forces should get vetted by the president, being the supreme commander.

The President should have power to grant pardons, reprieves and respites and to remit, suspend, or commute any sentence passed by any court, tribunal or other authority without being advised by the PM. He may, however, entertain recommendations from the government for his consideration.

The President himself may head the interim government to oversee the conduct of the general election. Tenure of the interim government may be extended up to six months. A council of ministers may be formed, in consultation with the major political parties in the parliament, to run the routine activities of the government. Members of the council shall be forbidden from contesting in the general election. This may be treated as a doctrine of necessity, given the confrontational political culture of the country.

The President may be elected by a wider electorate consisting of members from all tiers of local government up to Union Councils and municipalities , over and above the members of the Jatiyo Sangsad and provincial parliaments, if introduced.

I am not suggesting universal adult franchise here as that will create confrontation between President and the Prime Minister. This is bad for the functioning of the executive government. Pakistan is a bad example of this practice. They have now corrected it.

The French and Sri Lankan systems may be studied for reference and direction. We may get clear direction from their systems. I have, in fact, taken this idea from the French and Sri Lankan models. Bangladesh is a good case for such models. Well, this is, how I think. ▶▶

► Episode Three

Thoughts on Parliament, Judiciary, Federal/ Unitary Structure, Election Commission, Freedom of Press, etc.

The Parliament

The tenure of the parliament may be reduced to four years. This may contribute to minimize political instability. This may also reduce corruption. Elected representatives may better concentrate on the demands of the electorate. Accountability to the electorate is the essence of democracy.

Political parties should devise strategies to nominate more number of women in the general or local elections. There is, probably, now a suggestion from the Election Commission to nominate one-third of the candidates from the women. This should be taken forward in right earnest.

An upper house may be introduced like that of the UK and India to put a check on the Lower House. Over and above this, there will be another check from the President.

The Upper House of the Indian Parliament, known as the Rajya Sabha or Council of States, currently has 245 members. Among these, 233 members are elected from states and Union Territories, while the President of India nominates the remaining 12 members for their contributions to art, literature, science, and social services¹. The Rajya Sabha's strength cannot exceed 250 members according to constitutional limits. Similar is the structure in the United Kingdom.

Selection of Judges for the Higher Judiciary.

We may introduce a system like that of Indian of selection of judges. I am much convinced about the selection of judges in the Indian Judiciary.

Practically, here the executive has hardly any interference in its selection.

The Indian collegium system, which involves consultation among judges, has been the traditional method for selecting judges in India's top courts. It ensures transparency and independence in the appointment process. The Chief Justice of India (CJI)'s opinion for the appointment is formed in consultation with a collegium of the four senior-most puisne judges of the Supreme Court.

In India, judges of the Supreme Court and High Courts are appointed as per the provisions of the Constitution. Here's how it works:

1. Supreme Court Judges:

- o The Chief Justice of India (CJI) and other judges of the Supreme Court are appointed by the President of India.
- o Article 124(2) of the Constitution specifies this process.
- o When a vacancy is expected to arise in the Supreme Court, the CJI initiates a proposal and recommends a candidate to fill the vacancy.
- o The CJI's opinion for the appointment is formed in consultation with a collegium of the four senior-most puisne judges of the Supreme Court.

2. High Court Judges:

- o The appointment of judges to High Courts also follows a similar process.
- o The Chief Justice of the High Court is appointed by the President.
- o For permanent judges of the High Court, the Chief Justice initiates recommendations, and the President appoints them. ►

- ▶o The collegium system plays a crucial role in these appointments.

I am so impressed with this system. This needs more detailed deliberations.

The Election Commission

The Commission should be fully empowered to conduct the elections independently. All state agencies should extend all possible support and cooperation to the Commission for conducting a free, fair and peaceful election. Such cooperation should be binding as spelt out in our Constitution. This should be followed in letter and spirit.

Returning officers (RO's) for the general election may be selected from the Commission's in-house officers, District Judges or the equivalent armed forces officers. Deputy commissioners and superintendents of police of the district may be placed at the disposal of the Ros for the election purpose.

The Election Commission should conduct training of its officers round the year, irrespective of the election time or not. This training may be extended to the nominated RO's, when needed.

The Election Commission may develop a linkage with the concerned organizations of the United Nations for necessary technical or specialized support and training.

Creation of Provinces/ Federal Structure

I am not suggesting immediate creation of provinces but I am just broaching the idea. In fact, this idea has already been floated by some of the politicians. Rationales are: Dhaka is highly congested. A unitary government sitting at the capital city is trying to control almost all activities of the State, mostly through bureaucratic chan-

nel. This is almost an impossible task. There is a huge system loss. Development should be decentralized and that is the call of the day. It is an uphill task to administer 180 million plus people from one central capital. Moreso, development is skewed in Bangladesh like eastern part is more developed than the western.

To start with, the original four administrative divisions that existed in 1971 may be upgraded to provincial structure. This will pave way to develop these cities and areas ensuring a more balanced and equitable development. Dhaka should survive as a viable city as it is one of the most polluted cities of the world. Its population concentration is just the double than that of Manhattan in New York. This is happening due to climate migration and unemployment so people are moving from rural south to Dhaka and Chattogram cities.

Stronger local government system, as envisioned in the Constitution should be implemented in letter and spirit. We can gradually move towards municipal government, especially in Dhaka and Chattogram, to start with. This is of dire necessity. Municipal government will greatly reduce system loss and enhance coordination.

Freedom of the Press

Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights states: "Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers."

Freedom of the press, which gives media like newspapers and TV news the right to communicate and express opinions, is essential to democracy and the protection of human rights.▶▶

- Democracy is a process, which should also be upheld by a free and independent press.

Investigative reporting

Freedom of the press is essential to investigative reporting. Investigative journalists need to report on serious issues, such as political corruption, crimes, major corporate scandals, human rights abuses, siphoning of money abroad, over invoicing and under invoicing in international trade, favouritism, cronyism, mysterious murder cases and so on.

Political Criticism and Communication

Freedom of the press gives journalists, publishers, and TV channels the freedom to criticize any politician or legislation, regardless of how the target feels about it. Political communication is essential to creating sound democracy. Political communication is also necessary for educating the electorate.

Editorial Independence

Editorial independence gives editors the freedom to make decisions and draw inferences without interference from the publication's owners. There are allegations of such interference in Bangladesh. Why is this so important? If a big story about the publication's owners or an advertising client emerges, editorial independence lets the journalists cover it without retaliation. Editorial independence is important to freedom of the press. I find this freedom existing in Dailies like the Daily Star, New Age, Prothom Alo, etc. This spirit should be followed by all, if not already doing so.

All black laws related to independence of press should be scrutinized by a special commission cre-

ated for the purpose. At this point in time, this aspect should be seriously looked into.

All said and done, there should be effort to make the journalists work as one unified professional group. Government and the owners may sponsor advanced and specialized training for the journalists. They should be encouraged to learn one or two foreign languages. Bangla is our state language. That said, English is an international language or lingua franca, which we cannot avoid. There may few TV channels dedicated to 24 hours English broadcast like NDTV, BBC etc.

Episode Four: Thoughts on Economy and Corporate Governance, Self-reliant Economy, Climate Change, Health and Higher Education, Water Sharing in our Common Rivers, etc.

Economy and Corporate Governance

I do not intent to dwell much on it, because I am not competent to do that. But as a citizen, I will only raise few issues.

In a recent case of recruitment in Malaysia, a Syndicate of 100 Bangladeshi recruitment agents siphoned off over 1 billion USD out of Bangladesh. According to an agreement between the two countries, a worker would need to spend just Taka 98, 990/ to get his job and fly there. But in reality, he had to spend taka 5.44 lakhs or USD 5,000. Employers, certain officials of the Malaysian government and even the Bangladesh High Commission in Malaysia, as reported in the press, get a share of the extra money.

Default loans at six state-run banks rose by 42 per cent year-on-year to Tk. 85, 869 crore at the end of March, 2024. This indicates their fragile financial health condition due mainly to weak corporate governance. As the press reports, most of these loans were taken through irregularities and scams so it is difficult to recover such loans. That ►►

► said, there should be concerted efforts to bring back that money.

Seven large borrowers account for 57 per cent of the total default loans at Janata Bank, as reported in the press. The borrowers hold Tk. 14, 210 crore out of Tk. 25, 008 crore total defaulted loans of this state-run bank. At the end of 2023, Janata Bank's default loan stood at 64.55 per cent to Tk. 25, 008 crore, the highest in the Banking sector.

Corporate governance is totally lacking in reining in these banks. Political elites are ruling the roost. All should appreciate there is a great difference between corporate governance and top management. The two cannot be amalgamated. There is a law on this but corporate governance like board of governance/ trustees etc. behave like routine managers. They should confine themselves to policy-making mostly.

Political economy is critical. If politics and governance are not correct, economy cannot be put on track. Economy will continue to go for nose-dive. Oligarchs are controlling the money. Siphoning off money is rampant. Eight different departments are supposed to oversee such flight of capital. Looks like they are failing or helpless. Financial intelligence should be revitalized.

The last government was planning to heavily borrow from the banking sector, which would crowd out investment. Both internal and FDI are faltering. 64 percent of the total budget deficit will be covered by domestic borrowing so it would exacerbate pressure on taka and further affect dollar liquidity in the banking system. This was concluded during the last budget. The Interim government is to arrest it as much as feasible.

In 2021-22, the debt servicing went past 2 billion USD, in 2022-23, it paid 2.67 billion USD and it is going to be over 3 billion in the current fiscal year. With reserves less than 20 billion, it would

be difficult to repay 5 billion USD range per year because the payment has to be made in foreign currencies.

There should be zero tolerance on capital flight, which often takes place in Hundi. Hopefully the Interim government may be able to arrest it.

Ease of doing business is problematic in Bangladesh. In world index, we are pretty low. FDI is almost missing. Local investment is also not encouraging. Capital market has just collapsed. Bank is not the source for huge and protracted investments. Corporate management for the banks should be revitalized, with Bangladesh Bank strongly monitoring it.

We should take immediate steps to diversify our exports as our export basket is too thin. This is likely to be risky during the crunch time.

Inflation—9 percent or more on basic essentials—is taking its toll on the poor. There were indications of poverty reduction but inequality is increasing. Ginn co-efficient is increasing. This is likely to create social unrest. These factors contributed to the nation's last mass upheaval.

There is growth in economy but it is not ensuring employment. Now is time to stabilize the economy instead of going seriously for GDP growth. India is also suffering from this problem. These factors also contributed to the last mass upheaval, resulting in the fall of the government.

Around 14.5 billion USD from export earnings are not brought back due to mal-invoicing. This is a conservative estimate. In reality it may be much more. Over and under invoicing are the great hurdles.

18 companies have been cleared by the government to invest outside BD. But only in Dubai, 1300 Bangladeshi companies are investing. There are more in other countries. This is a great irregularity. Can the Interim government arrest this situation? ►►

► Social safety net covers 1.3 percent of GDP. Pension benefits are also counted here. Its distribution mechanism is also problematic. Here there is a serious lack of governance. The Interim government may now seriously consider expanding its net, along with ensuring better governance. Open market sales should also be increased.

Return on investment from mega projects is problematic. Priority of selection of projects—Karnaphuly river tunnel or more storage facilities in the oil refineries? We do definitely need more refineries for storage of our crude oil, a vital and strategic commodity.

Central bank should be made fully independent in its operations but must be transparent and remain accountable to the President and the Parliament. The Banking Division of the finance ministry may not have any operational control over this bank. Governor of the central bank may be upgraded to a constitutional appointment.

Creating a Self-reliant Economy

We should continue to expand both our backward and forward value-chains in the production cycle. We have serious scarcity of in-house raw materials on shore so we have to look for the resources in the Bay of Bengal.

As examples, we do not, any more, depend on foreign countries for cattle-supply, eggs, chickens, fruits like mango, guava and banana, all kinds of vegetables, fish, fabrics, toiletries and cosmetics, furniture, handicraft etc., and we are 98% self-sufficient in medicines.

We are now in a state to be able to export mango and tea, if certain standards are maintained. Good news mangoes are being exported to China. Our Jamdani, Muslin and Tangail sarees are now far better. We even export medicines and leather products to developed countries like the USA, the EU, and Canada.

We can easily be self-sufficient in onion, ginger, motorbikes, bi-cycles and light engineering products, provided we ensure better governance and support from the government.

We have world-class tourism, and hotel and resort facilities in places like Cox's Bazar, St. Martin's, Sylhet, Kua Kata etc. So, we can restrict our visits outside the country for at least next three to four years. This should be taken as a social movement. We have the largest natural sea beach and the largest mangrove forests in the world. We need to brand them well.

We need a good team of renowned economists, agriculturists, entrepreneurs, sociologists and management specialists of the country to wriggle out of this beleaguered economy and take the economy forward.

Climate Change

Soil degradation is happening faster than it was initially thought. Every year, the physical, chemical, and biological or economic condition of soil are getting degraded in and around 270 sq. km area, roughly the size of Dhaka city. Chief Scientific officer at the soil Resource Development Institute of the department of Environment concludes if this trend continues, there will be no cultivable land left within the next 63 years. This will badly affect the food security of the nation. It is deteriorating mainly due to the excessive use of chemical fertilizers, rising salinity, industrial pollution, deforestation, and the improper dumping of electronic and medical wastes. Of the 23 lakh hectares of forest land, 5.3 hectares got degraded. The degradation rate is about 10,000 hectares a year.

The Constitution Article 18 A states, “ the State shall endeavour to protect and improve the environment and to preserve and safeguard the natu- ►►

► ral resources, bio-diversity, wetlands, forests and wild life for the present and future citizens.” This is a clearly stated goal in the Constitution. I have already indicated it should be the core/ vital national interests of Bangladesh. The Bay of Bengal, which is our next frontier for resources and development, is dying at an alarming rate. There are reports of dead zone, fish poaching, and plastic pollution in the Bay of Bengal. Our only mangrove forest the Sundarbans is under threat.. This forest is dying due to paucity of sweet water, and there is a presence of a huge dead zone-60,000 sq. kilometres- in the Bay.

The Bay of Bengal, as part of the blue economy, needs to be explored. I have very recently published a research paper on the blue economy of Bangladesh in the Springer-Nature.

Bio-diversity of our nature is under threat. Difficult to get huge foreign fund so we should develop our in-house mechanism. Siltation is rising in the forest as sweet water flowing is decreasing in the big rivers that originate in the neighbouring countries.

Water Sharing in our Common Rivers

The UNGA adopted the Convention on the Law of Non-Navigational Uses of International Water Courses, which created a legal framework for the equitable utilisation of the waters of transboundary rivers. It lacks a binding enforcement mechanism. Present state of the Ganges, Brahmaputra, Jamuna, Teesta etc. rivers. Unilateral withdrawal of waters by the upper riparian country. Bad luck, we are the lower riparian. This also has its knock-on effects on the health of the Bay of Bengal and the Sundarbans,

India-BD should come forward to resolve the sharing of waters as per this Convention.

For the Ganges, guarantee clause should be ensured in the coming agreement like it was in the 1997 Treaty. The upper riparian country should ensure our fair share of water at the Faraka point. For Teesta, proposed deal should be inked asap.

No body talks about the UN Convention shown below on this and principles to be followed by the stakeholders. Should we not remind our friendly foreign country about this Convention? Was it really done? This is also true for the more than 50 other common rivers that flow between these two countries including the Ganges. It is also obligatory the negotiations should take place between two sovereign states, based on sovereign equality, not the provincial or state governments. How many dams have been built along the Teesta in Sikkim state before it enters West Bengal? Is it not a logical question?

Public Health and Higher Education

There is a saying, for real growth, invest more into education and health. Bangladesh spends less than one percent of its GDP in public health sector, compared to Nepal's 5.6 per cent, and Sri Lanka and India's 3.8 percent. Developed economies like the UK spends about 10 percent of their GDP. The UNESCO suggests spending four to six per cent in education sector. In Bangladesh, individuals bear up to 72 percent of all health care costs through out-of-pocket payments. This imposes heavy burden on impoverished families thus forcing them to forgo treatment or incur debt. World's Food Security Monitoring says 36 per cent of Bangladesh's population suffers from food insecurity coupled with poverty and malnutrition. 8.61 million people in the country were pushed below the poverty line due to out of pocket payments in 2016. Over 20 percent of the health budget are embezzled. Due to sorry state of public health in Bangladesh, ►►

- ▶ Bangladeshis accounted for 57.5 percent of medical tourists in 2009. The number surged by 83 percent from 2017 to 2019.

Our government hospitals need thorough overhaul and expansion. These should be made self-sufficient with modern amenities as far as possible. China has offered to invest in our health sectors. That should be availed as soon as possible. If possible, we have to have a complete general/ specialized hospital in each district. We should introduce referral system in our public health.

Medical universities, outside Dhaka, should start functioning with latest medical and research facilities. Dhaka is getting crowded.

Higher Education

On education, which is hailed as a great equalizer, the government spends a meagre 1.64 percent of the GDP. This is significantly lower than the averages for the LDCs, which is above three per cent. According to the UNESCO's Global Education Monitoring Report 2022, Bangladeshi families cover 71 per cent of the total education costs. This creates serious disproportionate pressure on fixed-income and poor families. This factor contributed to the last student-led mass upheaval.

Given the goodwill, we can easily upgrade the quality of our university and medical education, and hospital management. With the assistance of countries such as Singapore, we can establish many varieties of training centres for transforming our people, willing to go abroad for an employment, into competent human resources.

University education should concentrate more on research and publications in order to get a higher ranking in world ranking of universities. There is

a saying universities are primarily meant to create new and unique knowledge for the society. Teaching is, of course, important. Academic posts in the universities may be decided, primarily based on meritocracy and management abilities. There is serious lack of publications in the Clarivate-indexed journals. To be a professor, you got to have fifteen Clarivate-indexed journal papers published. This is a conservative estimate. There is doubt if this is followed in our universities. Research Budgets are extremely negligible in our universities. Private sector should be drawn to the process.

University teachers and administrators should have a separate pay scale. They should be paid handsomely to retain the best brains in the country.

A dedicated research university may be created immediately. It will offer PhD programs, as an example. Publication in Clarivate-indexed journals may be made a pre-condition for the award of this degree.

Functions and powers of the University Grants Commission may be upgraded and revitalized. Separate Ministry for higher education may be created.

Episode Five and Concluding Episode

Thoughts on Foreign Relations, and Defence Policy and Military Modernization.

Foreign Relations

National interest should be the foremost factor in deciding the course of our foreign relations. National sovereignty and territorial integrity may not be compromised at any costs. However, there is a concept called shared sovereignty, which needs to be honoured to function better in this ▶▶

► complex interdependent world. Territorial integrity can, under no circumstances, be accepted. So our issues with the CHT, Rohingya refugee issue with Myanmar, occasional killing of our unarmed citizens in the border areas by the BSF, siphoning off people's money out of the country through illegal means, climate change impacting life and property of Bangladesh etc. may be treated as issues of vital national interests. As such the concept of blue economy in the Bay of Bengal should be promoted across the world for its exploration.

Diplomacy should be backed by military and para-military forces. No diplomacy is workable unless backed by potent military forces at the brink time. They should work in unison and harmony. Again a nation's foreign policy typically works in tandem with its domestic policy, which is part of public policy. Together, the two policies complement one another and contribute to strengthen the country's position both within and without. A vibrant and duly-elected parliament can add vitality and weightage to its foreign relations.

We should pursue multilateralism, regionalism etc for our security and development. Despite many limitations of the United Nations, we should steadfastly follow the UN Charter and its rules and conventions. We should continue to contribute our forces for the UN peace support operations.

We should put our best efforts to revitalize our regional organizations, both in South Asia and beyond. We may even try to reach out to the ASEAN and the BRICS. It is a good to learn we are already a member of the ARF. Bangladesh may strongly pursue China-Myanmar-Bangladesh connectivity as part of the BRI, as BCIM has faltered. Bangladesh should remain engaged with

the Indo-Pacific strategy of the USA. Both Western and Asian countries may be cultivated for better relations and economic support, keeping in view our national interests. Under no circumstances, should we follow appeasement and bandwagon, as we are a self-respecting nation. Once Pakistan's democracy stabilizes, there should be efforts to revitalize the SAARC.

Full transparency should be maintained in all our foreign relations initiatives. The Parliament should be kept posted on all important matters in our foreign relations. All foreign treaties or understanding reached with any foreign countries should be discussed on the floor of the Parliament before these are put into action, as spelt out in our Constitution.

Bangladesh may not allow transit or corridor for goods and cargos to any foreign power that wants to connect one part of its territory with its another part. There is a possibility Bangladesh may get entangled as a proxy, for no fault of it, in a case a war breaks out between the two neighbours. There can be no assurance that no war materials will be carried during crunch time.

There is a recent history of war breaking out between the two neighbours in the north of Bangladesh. These two militaries are still standing eyeball-to-eyeball, with occasional skirmishes, mostly along the McMahon line.

Connectivity is a welcome gesture but not at the cost of our sovereignty and territorial integrity. Bangladesh should not get caught up in the fighting between outside powers. Connectivity may be pursued in region like South Asia or Asia or East Asia. Connectivity between only two countries may not be cost-effective, and win-win.

Thus said, Bangladesh should not allow its terri-►►

► tories to be used by any foreign insurgent groups.

Balancing is a good concept in foreign relations but that needs to be handled most maturely. Slight maladjustment may bring disaster to Bangladesh because of geopolitical realities.

All our foreign ministry officials should be trained in all segments of diplomacy, both at home and abroad. Craftsmanship for economic diplomacy should specially be congregated. Expertise in one or two foreign languages should be encouraged or made mandatory.

There should a formal arrangement for better working relationship between the Ministries of Defence, Foreign Affairs and Home. A coordination committee may be formed for routine consultation. Ministry of Foreign Affairs may be the coordinating Ministry.

Defence Policy and Modernization of Military

Bangladesh should pursue a defensive defence policy. Unless a war is imposed on the country, Bangladesh should not show any inclination to aggressiveness or offensive posture. So its armament and logistics provisioning policy should be crafted as such. Defence economics should be adjusted in accordance with growth and fall of its GDP. Bangladesh should aim for modernization and technological improvement of its military. Improvisations and self-sufficiency should be aimed at both in armament procurement and training. Thus said, Bangladesh's equipment procurement may be made more diversified. Bangladesh should aim to develop its armament production capabilities within the country, as much as feasible.

As part of its modernization program, Bangladesh should prioritize its air defence segments in all three services. If we can create an effective air defence umbrella, we should then be

able to fight comfortably, and for that we have enough assets. Bangladesh should undertake extensive research and development program to make military expenditure more cost effective. It should go for more storage facilities spread around the country. More specialized forces should be raised in all its services. Bangladesh should now go for more quality than quantity. Bangladesh should develop amphibious operations capability as the Bay of Bengal is our potential repository for essential resources. Bangladesh Navy should be made an effective three dimensional force.

Bangladesh should also develop an extensive and exhaustive para-military forces to be able to fight alongside the regular military forces. These forces should be trained to undertake independent guerilla type minor operations, working under the operational control of regular forces. Bangladesh military should undertake continued joint and collective training, at regular intervals. Bangladesh should develop itself as a regional hub of the UN peace support training.

Military intelligence may be revamped to primarily collect strategic level operational intelligence. Political intelligence may be its secondary tasks.

National command authority may be clearly articulated for knowledge of the nation.

People's awareness should be generated, which works as great deterrent. Deterrence is a concept that works well when such an intention is clearly conveyed. We should draw lessons from our War in 1971, which practically drew its strength from people's hopes and aspirations.

Military personnel should be allowed to challenge Court Martial verdicts in the Supreme Court. This is allowed in countries such as in India and Malaysia, etc. Article 26 of the Constitution that prohibits such an action may be reviewed. ■

The Road to Freedom

Air Vice Marshal Mahmud Hussain (Retd)

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



It was an extraordinary spectacle. The roads to the Ganobhaban, were blocked by countless platoons of moving crowd. There was no respite in their march forward to reach the Prime

Minister's official palatial residence mirroring the ramparts of a fortress. It was a perfect imitation of a military parade stepping up to the fortuitous dais. The crowd was peaceful but lively as though tapping their footsteps to the fast beat of a rhythm tuned to the tenor of a revolutionary song. Opposite the crowd, the security forces, both police and military, not few in number but unused to public rage and solidarity on this millionaire scale, tried frantically to bar their ways to the Prime Minister's hitherto formidable bastion. But still the crowd came from all directions and descended on the capital marching to their avowed destination.

At some point, the crowd was some distance away

from reaching the gates of Ganobhaban. In that milieu of radiant and revolutionary passion, the crowd's sheer size and unrelenting conviction proved unstoppable. Then everything changed when reports of firing at the crowd by police spread in the air. Bullets struck the crowd but the crowd did not disperse. Unbowed by this lethal threat, the mobs grew even bolder. They were ready to turn the capital into a battleground of the cowardly armed, and the brave-hearted unarmed. The forward march by now had gathered momentum, and there was no way that they would ever fear death at the price of freedom. It seemed that the bullets possessed by police were numbered but the indomitable courage of the crowd was fathomless. The inner contours of the popular defiance to the state coercion had pulled it down to pieces.

Something was in the making. The crowd changed its character, and turned into furious mobs. The features of the enraged mobs transformed into desperate rebels. They morphed into million revolutionaries beating the cauldron of a boiling anger. Their fury burst forth with a violent sentiment. The rebellious voice explicitly shouted to the régime: *Enough is enough* ►►



Protesters storm Gono Bhaban, PMO, parliament building. Photo: Net

► *and no more. You must leave. We are coming to burst in on you.*

The heated tension of the probable bloodbath suddenly ended when the morally defenseless Prime Minister gave way to her doomed exit. Prodded by the three Services' Chiefs and aided by her guardsmen, the Prime Minister fled to India in an air force plane leaving her acolytes to an uncertain but internecine future. Finding no leader to take instructions from, the terrified party men on receiving the news of the Prime Minister's escape ran and hid from the attacks of the angry public across the country. It was a time to avenge the injustices perpetrated by the legislators and party henchmen upon the terrified public during the party's rule under the shadows of authoritarian decree. For those who shared the public sentiment of ever-memorable vengeance, it was a glorious revolution in the history of Bangladesh worthy of being declared as the *Second Liberation* since 1971 when the country truly became independent after nine months of *War of Liberation*, thus breaking free from its erstwhile national identity called Pakistan. But how this putative *liberation* came about, one needs to go back to some seventeen years back.

The General Who Dishonored Democracy

General Moeen U Ahmed was the Army Chief when Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) left power for the Interim Caretaker Government to hold a neutral free and fair national elections in 2007. He was an over-ambitious army General whom BNP had nominated as the Army Commander surpassing many of his seniors hoping that he would be instrumental in manipulating the elections for them to victory. The irony of Bangladesh politics is that political parties, despite their puritanical democratic rituals, have always used the army as their base of support for winning the elections. On the other hand, the army top brass has enjoyed this confidence without realizing that by doing so, they were driving their institution to non-professional unscrupulous practice.

In Bangladesh, the system of neutral Caretaker Government was in place in 2007. It was a crude principle to guarantee that free and fair elections were held after the sitting government resigned on completion of its fixed tenure of governance. However, the Caretaker Government was mandated to remain in office only for three months to complete parliamentary elections, and not to ►

- manage anything other than routine work.

At one point, while in office, General Moeen, on receiving secretly the news of his unjust removal as the Chief of Army Staff by the Caretaker President Iajuddin Ahmed in connivance with the outgoing BNP backing, orchestrated an emergency with the help of a few disgruntled Generals. The scope was further suitably trussed up when the political parties, prior to elections, embarked on a melee of politics of annihilation resulting in the deaths of many in the streets. The disarmed President without any political support fearing an assault on his presidential honor and position had no choice but to declare emergency on 11 January 2007, a phenomenon widely known as 1/11 relativising to the phenomenon of 9/11 on global scale.

The Chief Advisor of the Caretaker Government was Fakhruddin Ahmed, an economist, civil servant, Princeton University doctorate and former Governor of the Central Bank of Bangladesh, called in from the United States where he was residing with his family to take over the reins of administering the country. But Fakhruddin was a simply titular head. Behind the scene, General Moeen was the main driving force helping the Caretaker Government retain power after constitution's stipulated three months duration. Moeen's anti-corruption drive was widely criticized for its alleged motive of getting rid of two former Prime Ministers — Sheikh Hasina and Khaleda Zia - surreptitiously framed in the so-called *minus 2* formula. But in the final attempt, it suffered the ignominy of a *political coup*. This once again proved that political establishment in Bangladesh owed its allegiance to the family legacy of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and General Ziaur Rahman.

The brighter side of General Moeen's work was the preparation of the Voter ID Cards for which he must be praised. The system has, at least, been able to instill in the minds of the people the value of individual's accountability to the state as a cit-

izen. In response to the demand of the major political parties, on 17 December 2008, the two-year-long state of emergency was lifted. Elections were held by the non-elected Caretaker Government on 29 December 2008.

The voter turnout was 80 percent, the highest in the history of Bangladesh elections. This was the first-time elections using national ID cards with photographs to avoid fake voting with an UN-funded initiative created a digital electoral roll. The confident aspect of the elections was removal of 11 million false names from the voter lists. However, the lop-sided results produced a landslide victory for the Awami League-led grand alliance, winning 263 of the 300 directly elected seats. The main rival Bangladesh Nationalist Party received only 32 seats.

In politics, absolute majority is too complacent an option for the public. The landslide victory of Awami League was to cast a spell of inordinate rule for the subsequent years in the history of Bangladesh. For the party which had regaled so much in obsessive narrative of exclusive claim to sacrifice during liberation period, the moment of absolutism had arrived. In a democratic polity, no matter how much a popular sentiment is regarded as part of due process of freedom of choice, brute majority will always widen the gap between the political *apparatchiks* and general mass. There is a natural instinct in human beings to enjoy excessive power as part of the activity of superlative textual narrative to solidify party ambitions. In that form, democracy resembles the authoritarian spirit of totalitarian manifesto. The axiomatic claim of "Knowledge is Power" is upended to "Power is Knowledge". Awami League's political realignment for the next fifteen years took a distinctly anachronistic path. *Balance of Power* is not only an apothegm in international relations but also a decree to be followed in domestic politics.

The Banality of Totalitarianism

If for anything, Awami League's second tenure ►►

► will ever be remembered for two despairing national crises. The first ensconced the seeds of tragic consequences, and the second bred sprouting of democratic hopelessness.

Immediately after Awami League took over power, the Bangladesh Rifles (BDR), a para-military force staged a coup on 25 and 26 February 2009. The event is also referred as the “Pilkhana Tragedy” after the name of the place in Dhaka where the headquarters of the BDR was located. The rebels killed 57 army officers including the Director General and 17 civilians. After the surrender of the mutineers when things cooled down, the Prime Minister held a meeting with the aggrieved army officers at Dhaka Cantonment. The atmosphere of the meeting was riotous. After the meeting, seven army officers were dismissed by General Moeen U Ahmed because of disrespectful conduct towards the Prime Minister. But “The Pilkhana Murder” has left a permanent scar of anger and intrigue in the military.

The murder of so many army officers after independence was forbiddingly shocking, and has left an interminable mark of wound in the soul of army as an institution. Though the Government effected the inquiry against the BDR rebels in civil courts many of whom received death sentence, it was largely a decrepit display of justice to the wider public. Later officers were subjected to persecution by their own military seniors through intelligence agencies for raising voice against such brutality of the incident. Now after the revolution, there is a clarion call to demystify the true story of the conspiracy behind the BDR revolt.

To many extrapolations of the causality of the Pilkhana incident indicate to the political hands of the party-in-power. Some of the Awami politicians were reported to have established contact with the BDR personnel before the carnage. Many army officers, recently posted to BDR, were marked for their high-handedness of the politicians who were rounded and harassed for corruption during army backed Caretaker Government

in 2007-2008. Egged on by BDR members’ angst against their own officers for discriminatory treatment to soldiers, these politicians saw the moment a ripe time to take revenge against army. Awami League as a political party has suffered from an irretrievable anti-military psychic disorder since 1975 when Sheikh Mujib and his family were murdered brutally in a political coup staged by some of its own members aided by few mid-level army officers. It is in circulation that there was also a foreign hand in the killing of BDR officers. India was angry about BDR’s actions against the killing of some of its Border Security Forces (BSF) members that happened in the past.

Till today, the underlying truth of what happened in Pilkhana is not known, similar to Bangladesh’s other unsolved mysteries such as, who ordered the killing of Sheikh Hasina’s father, Sheikh Mujibur Rahman on 15 August 1975. Hasina’s nemesis, Khaleda Zia also lives with a mystery of the assassination of her husband. Ziaur Rahman. But in the hindsight, there is no denying the fact that the *ultima ratio* of the BDR incident was to denude the morale of the army, and push the military to become an institution of weaklings. In the void of professional pride, the institution was to be revived now with perks, privileges, bribery, and a *Lucifer* intelligence mind-set geared to serve the political masters. First time, in the history of Bangladesh, the military was cowed to the machinations of totalitarian politics.

The second national crisis was constitutional devaluation. In 2011, the party-in-power Awami League abolished the system of Caretaker Governments by injecting a constitutional amendment. The 13th Amendment of the Constitution of Bangladesh introduced the Non-Party Caretaker Government (NCG) system in 1996. The purpose was to hold free and fair elections for the national parliament. This unique system of holding elections was brought into effect due to extreme distrustful animus prevailing between the ruling and the opposition parties with regard to the veracity of elections. Under the NCG system, ►►

- ▶ three elections were successfully carried out in 1996, 2001 and 2008. The people were mostly satisfied with this system, as NCG performed its duties successfully.

The story about the details of the abolition of NCG reveals a most disturbing alliance between Awami League and the then Chief Justice of Bangladesh. Earlier the Awami-dominated Parliament sent the case of NCG for judgement to the Supreme Court hoping a complete purging of the system. Awami League wanted to give their resolve a judicial sanctum. However, the problem started when the verdict of the Supreme Court's Appellate Division judges secured a 4-3 majority in favor of the annulment of NCG with a caveat that the next two parliamentary elections could be held under an interim Caretaker Government. The Chief Justice had remarked about the judgement in the open court. Justice Khairul Haque retired soon after the verdict.

Justice Khairul Haque submitted the written verdict sixteen months after his retirement. His written judgement annulled the NCG system, and did not mention of the next two interim NCG. To many it was a complete travesty of truth by the former Chief Justice, and was deemed to have been submitted on the advice and pressure of the ruling party. There was, no doubt, that Awami League had planned egregiously to destroy the backbone of the opposition through a politico-judicial collusion.

However, the abolition of NCG brought Awami League and BNP face-to-face in confrontation. Politics was sparked to be ignited into incendiary engagement. "Politics of Annihilation" had begun, and with that politics in Bangladesh ushered an era of "State Terror".

BNP and other opposition parties boycotted the elections. There was a mayhem before and after the elections in January 2014. In the aftermath of the election, the government sustained the clampdown on the opposition. Police carried out raids and ar-

rested opposition leaders. By 21 January 2015, the government had arrested 7,015 activists and leaders of opposition, and placed a bounty of 100,000 taka (\$1,300) on the heads of other protest leaders. By 2015, the Awami League had made up its mind to subjugate politics to ensure its perpetual reign in power. It was a complement strategy to subjugate military after the BDR incident.

Awami League had abused the annulment of NCG system to target the two rival opposition parties, the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) and Jamaat-e-Islami (JEI). By punishing the top leaders of JEI for 1971 war crimes, and being fully convinced of BNP's helpless stance in failing to publicly denounce JEI as the petrified figure of Crimes Against Humanity and anti-liberation force, Awami League was now up for a narrative that divided the country along deadly lines. In order to purify national consciousness, Awami League choose to play with fire. For that it had to politicize all state institutions convinced that state machinery was more powerful than the power of the common men.

The subjugation of state machinery and its use in the elections of 2018 and 2024 successfully by Awami League ossified its political principles into chicanery and crushing of the opposition.

The Pathological Banality of Linguistic Nationalism

Politicians in Bangladesh have used language to rev up orgiastic hostility against the opposition to the point of megalomaniac torture. Enervating the tension of dialectical finesse, it ends up in raw display of insulting the others with spiteful venom of words. Mutual respect for political opponents with different ideology is stripped of its obligation to democratic decorum. Even worse, the verbal flamboyance is appropriated by the party-in-power for its control over the state institutions who would blatantly oppress those who used language contrary to the pre-defined mean-▶▶

ings of the potentates. By doing so, Awami League inflicted a sense of scarring humiliation to the public who were struck by words' intimidating stabbing at their dialectical exchange.

Awami League choose the path to de-nationalize the opponent by applying the vilifying onslaught with the choice of words. For Awami politicians, nothing was more gratifying than to label others with some appellation of textual sarcasm. The idea of nationalism was structured with the pairing of "opposite-words". Some of the key associative antonyms were: pro-liberation /anti-liberation, secular/nonsecular, Islamic/non-Islamic, democratic/anti-democratic, friend/foe (used in the context of external relations), patriot/anarchist, Bangladeshi/Bengali. The characteristic of these pairing is that they also produce concepts in subjective explanation about other's role in politics which mystifies his nationalism. So, these conceptual oppositions are not neutral but antithetical. One of the two terms in the opposing pair is "privileged" which was appropriated by Awami League. It is this privileged position that became the citadel for the ruler to govern, and the text that offered him an authoritative language found its expression in de-constructing the "nationalism discourse" of those who opposed him. This is a major challenge in the politics of Bangladesh to build a *logo* of political culture that is sensible but not pathological.

The most fatal word that Awami politicians glibly chucked at the opponents was *razakar*, a word that was coined to identify the Bengalis who opposed the independence of Bangladesh in 1971. After fifty years, Awami League forgot that the word *razakar* when applied to the children and grandchildren of the "suspect razakars" would be a matter of life and death to their identity as a Bangladeshi. It is this word, when uttered by the Prime Minister in abject derision to the students of the "Quota Reform Movement", the response to her *hauteur* was bravely riposted in a language much stronger and self-inflicting yet possessing a

unique rebellious mood:

I am razakar! You are razakar!

Who has said? Who has said?

Dictator. Dictator.

The days of Awami League were numbered. The ultimatum for Sheikh Hasina's resignation and removal from the seat of power were just a matter of time.

The Final Words

Yesterday, terrorist conjured up the image of rag-tag anti-government protestors, but today the "Rule of Terror" reminds us a top-down program of the Awami League regime of state violence against ordinary people. *Yesterday*, it was considered a radical view to seek moral political freedom, and the limits of political acceptability were imprisoned within the walls of rabid nationalism. If someone championed popular voice but was found shy of the ruler's grace, he was under suspicion of the law-enforcing agencies. In fact, the state officials who worked for the government but did not speak up to denounce the opposition political parties, his patriotic credentials were at risk. The paranoia reached absurd levels. Some military officials were unlawfully accused of treason for merely having relatives who belonged to certain political parties. The "Reign of Terror", like nightmare, devoured its own innocent children. Children born after 1971 on the soil of Bangladesh, to be dubbed as *razakar* for the lapses of their fore fathers, is the highest abuse that a society can be charged with committing a sin.

The students of Bangladesh have fought against injustice. Their struggle on moral, intellectual and physical plane has proved that totalitarian power is absurd, and destroys a state. But in the end, it is the victory of ordinary people that paves the way for a charismatic figure to restore order. In their vision, he is a hero and populist icon. This time, it is Dr Muhammad Younus. ■

Shifting Tides: India Encounters New Realities in the Bay of Bengal Region After Sheikh Hasina's Fall

Commodore Kazi Emdadul Haq (Retd)

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Introduction

Following the fall of Bangladesh's "Iron Lady," Sheikh Hasina, on August 5, 2024, India has started facing new challenges in the Bay of Bengal (BoB) region. Despite grap-

pling with its own internal affairs, such as human rights and issues in the Seven Sister states or Kashmir, many Indian strategists and media outlets have attributed these challenges to the instability of neighbouring countries. Ambitious initiatives such as Modi's "Act East", "Neighbourhood First", "SAGAR", and "Make in India" seem to be losing momentum, because India applies subterfuge and lies in their diplomatic approach towards its neighbours—an issue that India denies.

As a result of India's flawed diplomacy, the public

in many neighbouring countries seems increasingly discontent with India, compelled to align more closely with either the United States or China. Despite this growing wrath, India and its media continue to place the blame on these neighbouring countries for exacerbating India's tensions. Both the Indian government and its media appear to be aligned in blaming Bangladesh, suggesting involvement with external actors in destabilizing Sheikh Hasina's government.

Moreso, the conflicting interests of the United States and China in the BoB region have further complicated the geopolitical landscape, turning it into a complex nexus. This paper will briefly highlight these issues and explore the dynamics at play.

Blaming India's Neighbourhoods, Particularly Bangladesh

Let's analyze how India is placing liability on its neighbouring countries in the context of the fall of Sheikh Hasina.



► It's important to note that both the Indian government and the media are expressing similar sentiments towards Bangladesh and other neighbouring countries. Some media outlets have even suggested that India should intervene in Bangladesh's affairs. It is so sarcastic that the [extent of Indian media's involvement](#) dictates whether Chief Advisor of Interim Government, Dr Yunus should address the upcoming United Nations General Assembly (UNGA), the 79th session in New York, as a member of the caretaker government. India's shock over the potential fall of Hasina's government is visible, as they appear unable to contain their frustration.



The frustration is evident as India's trade relationship with Bangladesh has been substantial, with Bangladesh consistently ranking as one of India's top export destinations. In recent years, India has exported a wide range of goods to Bangladesh, including cotton, machinery, food products, and pharmaceuticals. The robust trade ties have made

Bangladesh a key market for Indian products, contributing significantly to India's foreign exchange earnings.

On August 6, 2024, India's Foreign Minister [expressed condolences](#) for some individuals who were killed or harassed after Hasina fled to India. However, India has shown no concern for over ►

- ▶ 700 people who were killed or murdered by the past regime during the student movement. While India may not acknowledge these unlawful killings, the UN has recognized the issue and sent a team to Bangladesh on 15 August 2024 to [discuss modalities for investigating human rights abuses and violations](#).

It may be noted that there were some violence and revenge killings following Hasina's fall on 5th August 2024 due to the absence of law-and-order forces. However, the situation, particularly regarding the safety and security of minorities, has been largely brought under control within a few days and Dr Yunus assured PM Narendra Modi on August 16, 2024 of the safety and security of minorities. Despite this fact, [PM Modi has raised concerns](#) over safety and security of Hindus in Bangladesh with President Joe Biden over the phone. We don't know the details of his conversation; however, if we look back at history, the same Modi was sanctioned by the United States when he was the Chief Minister of Gujarat during the 2002 Gujarat riots, where more than 1,000 Muslims were killed and he failed to protect the victims. The human rights organization Amnesty International [closed its operation in India](#). What a twist of fate that history often serves as a harsh reminder of the past.

Renowned journalist Mr. Shekhar Gupta has voiced concerns about India being surrounded by troubled neighbours, highlighting problems in every country around India. In one of his [episodes](#), he discussed the challenges faced by all of India's neighbouring countries except Bhutan. He specifically pointed out the situation in Myanmar, where the military junta is known to have ties with China. Despite this fact, in 2020, [India gifted Myanmar](#) with a Kilo-class submarine from the Indian Navy, one of its most tactical weapons. It is believed that New Delhi made this move to counter China's influence in the region and to protect its interests, particularly since Bangladesh had recently acquired two submarines from

China. It's worth mentioning that when Bangladesh asked India for a submarine, India did not offer one. This decision frustrated many in Bangladesh, while India's gesture towards Myanmar failed to gain favour with the junta. Yet India blames its neighbours.

India's most controversial role has been its support for Sheikh Hasina in advancing her authoritarian agenda. The last three consecutive general elections in Bangladesh have been widely criticized for not being free and fair, with allegations of voter suppression and manipulation. These elections were not recognized as legitimate by much of the Western world, with the [United States openly stating that Bangladesh elections](#) are neither free or fair; the UN also voiced concerns. However, India endorsed these elections as being free and fair. In return for this support, Hasina has granted India numerous strategic benefits, leading her to [declare](#) that "India will remember forever what we have done for them."

Yes, she is right. While India may never fully repay Bangladesh for what Hasina did for the country, it is undoubtedly showing its gratitude to Sheikh Hasina by providing her with shelter. Meanwhile, Hasina has been unable to secure a visa to go to any other country.

India has concentrated its efforts on backing Sheikh Hasina's agenda rather than earning the goodwill of the Bangladeshi people. For example, Hasina approved a controversial deal for the Godda power plant with the Adani Group, which has been criticized for favouring Indian interests over Bangladeshi needs. She allowed the construction of a rail route through Bangladesh to facilitate the movement of goods to India's northeastern states, which many argue offers little or no benefit to Bangladesh. Hasina permitted India to erect a fence along the no-man's land at the border, a move accompanied by numerous reports of indiscriminate killings by the Indian Border Security Force (BSF) in these areas. ▶▶

► India's support for Sheikh Hasina has often come at the expense of addressing the demands of the Bangladeshi people, such as the long-standing issue of sharing Teesta River water. India has been delaying an agreement on the equitable sharing of Teesta River water for more than a decade. This continued inaction on such crucial matters has further alienated the Bangladeshi population and highlighted the disconnect between India's diplomatic priorities and the needs and concerns of Bangladesh's citizens.

India has similarly used diplomatic maneuvers with other neighbouring countries. In 2015, India imposed an unofficial blockade on Nepal, severely affecting the country's supply of essential goods and creating widespread hardship. In the Maldives, New Delhi has been accused of interfering in domestic politics, especially during periods of political crisis. Additionally, from 1983 to 1987, India involved itself in Sri Lanka's internal affairs, with the Indian intelligence agency Research and Analysis Wing (RAW) reportedly training Tamil militant groups during the Sri Lankan Civil War.

These are just a few examples of how India has used its 'big brother' attitude to exert influence over its neighbours, leading to the alienation of the general population in these countries. Despite this, India refuses to acknowledge the shortcomings in its diplomatic approach towards Bangladesh and other neighbouring nations.

With the exception of Bhutan, India views all its neighbouring countries as hostile. Whenever issues arise in these countries, Indian media and some strategists frequently attribute them to either the United States or Chinese involvement, at times Pakistan connection. It's as if India sees dragons lurking at every border, absolving itself of any responsibility for regional tensions.

India's Present Challenges in the Region

Modi introduced several political slogans to ap-



Dead body of Felani hanging on the fence in no-man's land killed by BSF. Courtesy: bdnews24.com

peal to his supporters, most notably the "Act East" and "Neighbourhood First" policies. The main objectives of Act East policy are to engage Asia-Pacific in the field of economic development, cultural exchange, and strategic and security cooperation through people-to-people connectivity. The converted Act East policy by Modi in 2014 from an earlier version of the Look East Policy had no virtual progress despite many initiatives taken by India which have built-in drawbacks.

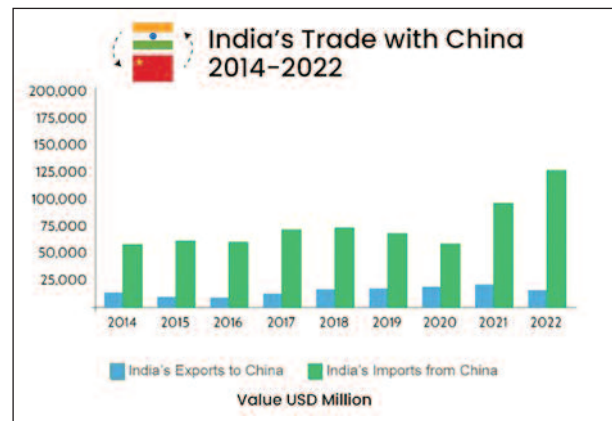
If India views both Bangladesh and Myanmar as unstable countries, this makes land connectivity to the East nearly impossible, leaving only sea routes as a viable option. How India's "Act East" policy will succeed under these circumstances remains unclear. India's overconfident diplomats and strategists have struggled to establish strong ►►

► connections with its immediate eastern neighbours, raising doubts about its ability to connect with the broader East Asian region.

It is an established fact that Myanmar is aligned with China. In the Maldives, President Mohamed Muizzu came to power with a campaign slogan of “India out.” In Nepal, China is gaining more influence than India. Now, according to India, Bangladesh is also moving away from its traditional alliance with India. India’s contradictory actions—labelling Bangladeshis as “termites” while promoting a “Neighbourhood First” policy—do not seem to align. Given this reality, it is unclear how India plans to implement its “Neighbourhood First” and “Act East” policies effectively.

India’s “Make in India” policy, launched in 2014, aimed to transform India into a global manufacturing hub by encouraging both domestic and international companies to produce goods in India. It sought to reduce dependency on imports, particularly from China, by promoting local manufacturing and self-reliance. In fact, trade between India and China has increased over the years. Imports from China have continued to grow, especially in sectors like electronics, pharmaceuticals, and machinery, highlighting the ongoing dependence on Chinese goods. This indicates that while the “Make in India” policy aimed to reduce reliance on China, in practice, economic ties have strengthened, reflecting the complexities and interdependencies in the global supply chain.

The interim government of Bangladesh has pledged to conduct an independent judicial inquiry into all illegal activities, including the 2009 killing of 57 army officers in the BDR Headquarters, Dhaka and cases of torture at the “Ayna Ghar” (glass room) in DGFI headquarters. These investigations may cause discomfort for India, as many of the victims have openly accused India of being involved or of supporting the previous regime in executing these illegal activities in Bangladesh.



Courtesy: Export Gemius

The above arguments postulate that if India finds it challenging to maintain logistical connections with its Seven Sister states, it might consider establishing some form of connectivity through Bangladesh. This is supported by some Indian media suggesting intervention in Bangladesh to create a zone for minority protection. India’s lack of criticism towards Russia for its invasion of Ukraine, a comparatively poorer country, implies that a militarily powerful India could justify taking similar actions against its neighbours to achieve its strategic goals. The critical question remains: are the Bangladeshis prepared to defend their motherland in such a scenario?

Interests of Superpowers in the Bay of Bengal Region

The Indo-Pacific Strategy (IPS) has brought two superpowers, the United States and China, along with the regional power India, into a strategic convergence in the Bay of Bengal region. Alternatively, one could argue that India’s ‘big brother’ attitude towards its neighbouring countries has pushed these countries to align themselves either with China or the United States. Unfortunately, India does not acknowledge that this shift is a result of its own self-centered diplomatic policies.

China has long sought access to the BoB as an alternative to the Malacca Strait to gain access into the Indian Ocean which is vital for China’s sea ►►



Courtesy: ThePrint

► route connectivity. It has made significant progress in establishing a connection to the BoB through the China-Myanmar Economic Corridor (CMEC). Additionally, China has secured a lease on Sri Lanka's Hambantota port, further strengthening its strategic foothold in the region.

China initially sought to secure the construction of a deep-sea port in Bangladesh, but the project was ultimately awarded to Japan, leaving China dissatisfied. Additionally, while China was the first to propose the Teesta River project, [Sheikh Hasina suggested](#) that the project should be undertaken by India which also frustrated China. In the latter part of Hasina's tenure, it became apparent that China was being given less priority than India, and that India held more influence over Hasina's government than China did.

During Hasina's regime, U.S.-Bangladesh relations were not particularly friendly. Sheikh Hasina herself made a bold claim, stating that the United States was behind her removal from power, a claim that the U.S. has denied. However,

U.S. interests in the region are largely guided by the objectives of the IPS. Given its strategic focus on countering China in the South China Sea, the U.S. is likely to continue relying on India to counter China's influence in the Bay of Bengal region.

Although India tried to connect its hinterland states through the Kaladan Multi-Modal Transit Transport Project it hung in limbo for more than a decade; India's infrastructure projects like the India-Myanmar-Thailand Trilateral Highway have no significant progress. On the contrary [Beijing to Bangkok train route is just few links away](#). In the last decade, China has had significant engagements with East Asian countries.

India continues to focus more on rhetoric than actual implementation regarding regional connectivity projects. As a result, the broader BoB region, including Bangladesh, Myanmar, and Thailand, is likely to align more with China than India in terms of connectivity. Additionally, with its control over the Hambantota Port in Sri ►►

► Lanka, China is poised to exert even greater influence over this region, extending its strategic reach to the Malacca Strait. How can India get fruitful results from the Act East policy where archrival China remain in the region to counter India in all respects? China seems to have subtly fulfilled the aims of Modi's Security and Growth for All in the Region (SAGAR) policy, albeit to its own advantage.

Indian Perceived Foreign Policy

India's foreign policies have often been criticized for their inconsistencies since its independence. Although India maintained a stance of nonalignment, critics point out that it frequently sided with the Soviet Union during the Cold War. After the Soviet Union collapsed, India continued to foster strong ties with Russia. Together with the United States, India invested over [US\\$ 3 billion in Afghanistan](#), aiming to build goodwill with the Afghan people and counter Pakistan's influence in the region. However, the abrupt withdrawal of U.S. forces from Afghanistan in 2021 left many of India's projects either abandoned or in a state of uncertainty.

India aimed to develop Iran's Chabahar Port to secure a strategic foothold in the region, but this effort faced obstacles due to China's significant investments in the same port. Additionally, attempts by [India's Adani Group](#) to invest in Myanmar Port construction and efforts by the Indian government to counter Chinese influence there have not been successful.

After Russia's invasion of Ukraine, India continued to buy Russian oil at discounted rates, refining it and selling it to European Union countries. This approach has helped India keep its inflation under control, even as inflation has risen in many other parts of the world. However, India's actions have faced significant criticism from the United States and other Western nations. The [White House has suggested that India](#) could end up on

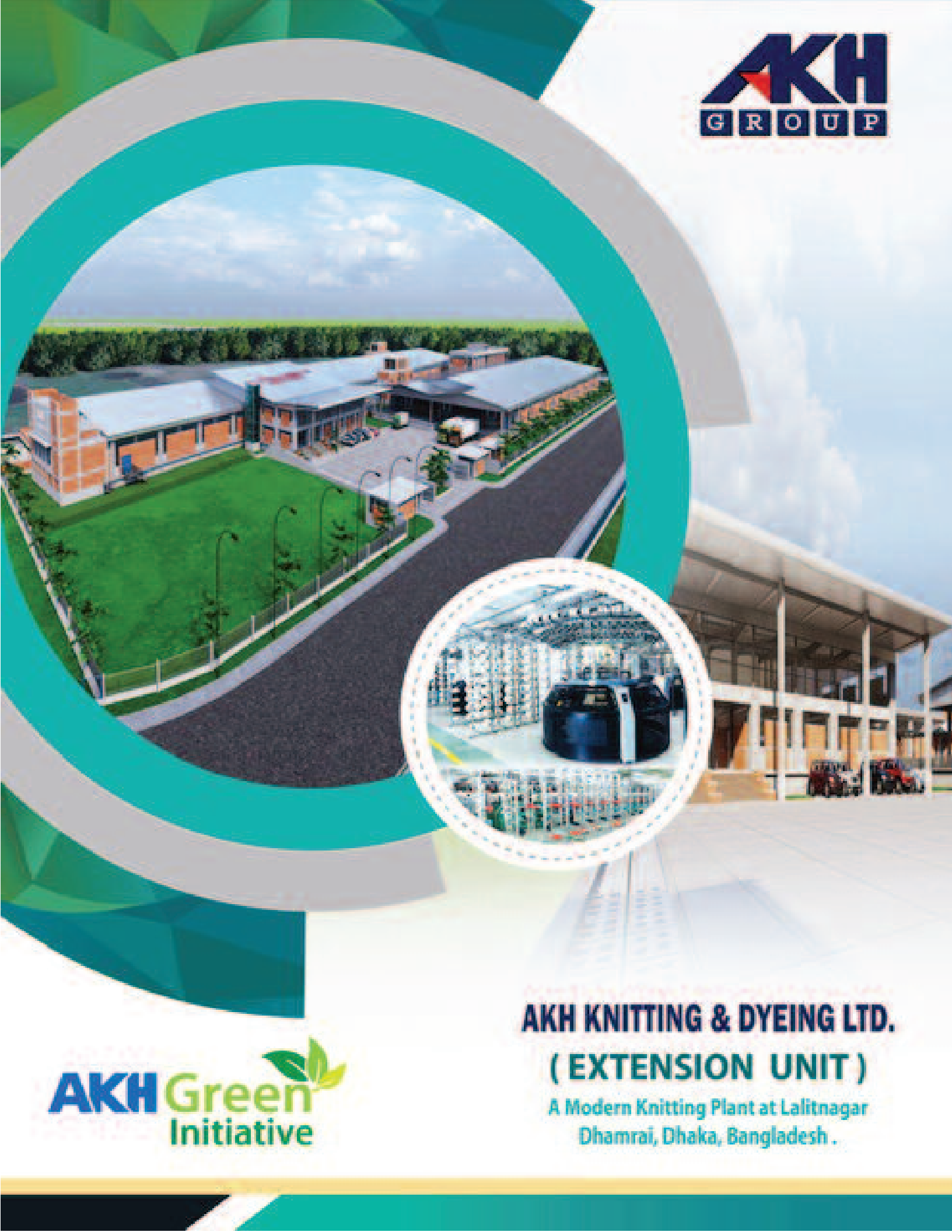
the "wrong side of history" because of its decision. The long-term consequences of India's choice to purchase cheap Russian oil are still emerging, and it remains uncertain how this will impact India's position in the future.

Concluding Remarks

India's flawed diplomatic policies towards its neighbouring countries, especially in recent decades, have often failed to resonate with the general public, leading to a rise in anti-Indian sentiment. Many political parties in neighboring countries are likely to capitalize on growing anti-Indian sentiment, leading to the formation of governments that are increasingly unfriendly towards India. India would do well to recognize this sooner rather than later to avoid the worst.

The future of India-Bangladesh relations is likely to remain tense and could deteriorate further if independent inquiries reveal that agreements between the two countries have disproportionately favoured India at the expense of Bangladesh's interests. China is likely to gain greater investment opportunities in Bangladesh, enhancing its access to the Indian Ocean. In the Bay of Bengal region connecting to the Indian Ocean, the United States may find itself with no choice but to rely on India to counter China's expanding influence, at least in the foreseeable future.

Last but not least, the aspirations of the people in the Bay of Bengal region remain unmet, as they continue to be used as pawns by corrupt politicians. Since independence, India has employed the deceitful tactics with its neighbours instead of genuinely trying to win the hearts and minds of the general populace. Unless India adopts a more people-centric diplomatic approach, Modi's strategic objectives may remain unfulfilled, and the allegiance of the people in the region, whether we like it or not, may increasingly tilt towards China. ■



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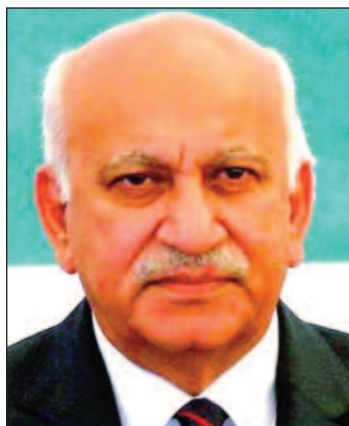
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The Unmaking of Rishi Sunak

The story of an accidental prime minister who ran out of ideas

MJ Akbar

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



Rishi Sunak, accidental prime minister of Britain, will, barring a miracle, have lost his job by the time you read this because he is richer than the King of England; pays just 23 per cent tax instead of the 45 per cent bracket for millionaires through a fiddle; has no clue about the deep emotional history of Britain and the heroism of its masses during World War II and the existential struggle against Nazi Germany; is careless about the crime wave epidemic in London affecting ordinary people; and clueless about the remarkable fact that the only commodity whose price has not risen in the past 14 years of Tory rule is cocaine. Cocaine cost £50 a gram in 2010; it is £50 a gram in 2024. The price of everything else from food to fads has inflated to circus proportions.

The personal residence of the Sunaks is a manor in the countryside with a private lake and heated swimming pool for which the local electricity network had to be upgraded, a privilege reserved for

those who rule the land in the name of democracy. From the perspective of the commoner, the Sunaks slum it out in 10 Downing Street only because of the job.

The voter would not normally mind this so much, for the class system was refined if not invented in Britain. The British are not communists. If they can tolerate the wealth of a monarch, they can coexist with the bank account of a prime minister. But they have a deep and abiding belief in egalitarianism and the rule of law. They do not like to be cheated. They will not tolerate a millionaire's tax diddle. Violent insurgency has always been a trifle impolite in their scheme of things; they prefer the infinitely more civilised option of booting out the incumbent through the ballot box.

Robert Palmer, executive director of an organisation called Tax Justice, reflected general opinion when he said he was "shocked" to learn that Sunak had paid only half-a-million as tax on an annual income of £2.33 million, when he should have paid roughly double that. Till 2022, Sunak retained his status of 'permanent US resident' not because he wanted to live in America but because he did not want to pay British tax. He re-▶▶



Rishi Sunak campaigns in Ripley, England, June 27, 2024 (Photo: Getty Images)

► linquished the dodge only under pressure. In other news, he “forgot” to raise capital gains tax when in charge of Britain’s finances. His wife Akshata Murty, daughter of a famous Indian billionaire, remained a non-domicile even after her husband became cabinet minister and prime minister. When a ruffled media broke the story, she “promised” to pay the full British tax “in the future”. Unsurprisingly, that future never arrived.

London journalists are as hard-boiled as a swan’s egg left in an oven, and as unsentimental as a sergeant major with a casualty list. The media cartoons, bitter as a wasp bite, laughed with the usual twist of cruelty when Sunak, asked if he had faced any deprivation as a child, replied that he had been denied Sky TV. Reporters on the election beat have been stunned by the rage against an elitist prime minister who does not quite understand

that entitlement can get you hired by a cosy cabal of peers but cannot keep you in this job.

According to last week’s Sunday Times, Sunak appeared to “physically recoil” when a staff member at a pottery factory in the Cotswolds shouted that “he should tax millionaires more”. No prizes for guessing the identity of the millionaire in question. This august newspaper, which likes to keep its editorial voice calm, wrote that Sunak has looked embattled and “cursed”, a harsh but accurate judgment. In the more studious realm of books, Michael Peel, back home after 13 years as foreign correspondent, or through the Tory years, has described contemporary Britain as trapped in “dysmorphic disorder” and “mythomania”, according to a review published in the past weekend. These are arduous terms for self-inflicted chaos. Tom Peck, writing in Tuesday’s Times, de-►

► scribes how three women positioned “directly behind the prime minister” for the benefit of the cameras at a public event “provided a valuable public service”. One of them reacted to Sunak’s warning against a Labour supermajority by clenching her teeth; the second managed to “pull off an eye-roll that very clearly said, ‘Erm, it won’t actually mean anything will it, prime minister, because that term, supermajority, doesn’t actually mean anything does it, not in this country anyway’.” As for the third lady, did her “eyes flash with sudden menace?”

The pain points of the electorate are being captured on routine stops along the campaign trail. Conservative candidates have been betting against themselves, which means on losing their seats, which may be odd, but the odds are good when the bets are placed. Might as well gain something from the wreck. This culture of despair is augmented by senior Tories. They no longer ask voters to bring them back to power but to curtail a humongous Labour majority. On the last day of speeches, Sunak was pleading for a hung parliament, not a majority. A veteran Conservative columnist, Matthew Parris, declared impending defeat with typical British sangfroid on Tuesday in the Times: “This Thursday I shall do something I haven’t done on election night in half a century. I shall switch off my TV, radio and phone and go to bed.”

As for the stable price of cocaine or the vulnerable mobile phone swiped from a table in a pub under your proverbial nose, London’s much-vaunted police have told victims that they do not consider anything stolen a crime if the object is worth less than £200. In real life, make the value of their official concern much higher. Try telling the police that your laptop has been stolen. They will advise you in sonorous tones to be more careful. Steal from the rich and get their attention; steal from the poor and get a pat on the back.

The biggest British industry today, and possibly

the largest employer, is operated by drug mafias within eye-contact of the police. As Shadow Home Secretary Yvette Cooper put it, people feel that the police do not exist in London. She promises to change this, pronto. You can be sure the coming Labour government will also raise taxes on millionaires, but by then Mr and Mrs Ex-Prime Minister might be back in California scouting for lucrative membership of company boards.

Sunak stripped himself of any remaining dignity on the day he turned his back on commemorative ceremonies on the beaches of Normandy where the allies of World War II had gathered to remember the 80th anniversary of D-Day, the perilous first act, in which thousands lost their lives, of the liberation of Britain and Europe from Nazism. His decision to abandon this emotional high point of 20th-century history because of some silly television interview was an extraordinary combination of ignorance, indifference and bewildering naiveté. It left him naked in the eyes of the people he had presumed to lead. He looked like what he was: an interloper. His sharpest detractors quickly voiced what most of Britain thought. He did not belong to the culture of Britain.

Keir Starmer campaigns in London, June 29, 2024

In British eyes he ceased to be British. It was never about colour. It was about a profound vacuum in the soul of an upstart. In a trice the man whom John Bull Conservatives had accepted, perhaps in some silent penitence for periods in their past, proved to be a pretender. Sunak, still confident that he is superman when he was a mere byproduct of luck, will retire into the lucrative oblivion of the speech circuit and the company board; the lasting damage has been done to the most successful electoral machine in British democracy. His mentors have much to answer for.

Each election is a mirror. The mirror has not broken; the image has cracked. Governance is in cri-►►

►sis in all democracies: aspirations are relentless in their upward mobility, productivity is shifting towards mechanical menials, the work ethic has regressed, and governments have become status quoist since no one has a new idea. One cannot quantify it, much less provide rigorous evidence, but the legitimate and necessary spread of social and economic aspirations might also be inducing the notion that the requirements of life should either be free or provided at negligible cost. That is not the way a capitalist economy works. If the 21st century wants a post-capitalist age then it has to produce a Karl Smith, an heir to Karl Marx and Adam Smith, pretty quickly to stop dysmorphic disorder or, worse, mythomania.

Governments have a commonsense option in the short run: give power back to the small institution. This is democratic. More usefully, it helps spread the blame when things go wrong; accountability does not begin and end with one man or woman. In the prevalent systems, power travels to the head, defying the gravity which keeps anyone grounded and stable.

It is a sign of the age that the resurrection of the Labour

Party is being led by the middle class, not the worker. The English working class is in transition. It wants to rise out of the accent that has defined it for too long. It has benefited from a transformational education. It wants an alliance with lawyers and teachers and professionals after centuries of dependence on nobles. The astute Tory leader Boris Johnson wrought a brief alliance with Conserva-



Keir Starmer campaigns in London, June 29, 2024. Photo: Net

tives in the cause of anti-Europe nationalism, but that did not bring the economic surge which was promised. Boris, who likes a laugh at the pub after the funeral, went on holiday during the campaign, returned just in time to make a speech after a “personal message” from the protégé who stabbed him to become prime minister. Sunak had to swallow a gallon of pride. Johnson cheered the faithful with rousing wit and sharp invective against Labour but for some inexplicable reason never mentioned the prime minister’s name in his speech. One English newspaper noted that he had turned up to dance on Sunak’s grave, perhaps on the way to his own resurrection.

The bad news for Conservatives is that the demographic coalition which will put Labour in office is likely to be stable, in which case the next change of government could come only in 2040, possibly led by a party like the Liberal Democrats which has swallowed the moderate Tory rump. In the 2024 summer triumph, all that Labour leader Keir Starmer has had to do is be banal, avoid the curse of a self-goal, and accuse Sunak of being out of touch, which has the merit of being true. Rishi Sunak is out of line, out of reach, out of depth, out of ideas, and by the end of this week will be out of time. ■

DOES INDIA NEED TO REVISIT ITS POLICY TOWARDS NEIGHBOURS IN GENERAL AND BANGLADESH IN PARTICULAR?

Lt Gen (Retd) Mohammad Mahfuzur Rahman, PhD

Former Principal Staff Officer, Armed Forces Division, Prime Minister's Office. mahfuzba2172@gmail.com



As the world order is shifting from unipolar to multipolar one, India is surfacing as one of the leading powers. It is claiming a permanent membership in the UN Security Council. However, leadership of such stature comes with great responsibility. Legitimacy, conduct, righteousness, and soft and hard power, all will substantiate acceptability as a responsible leading power that commands moral authority to represent a vast majority's voice and aspiration of the people of this part of the world in the Security Council.

Although, it seems that India has difficulties with

neighbors; big and small, friend and foe. China and Pakistan had fought wars with India but many countries in the world fought wars but are absolutely in normal friendly relations overtimes. Smaller neighbors like Sri Lanka on the doorstep of India leaning to China. India's BJP Government politics is largely based on Hinduthva but then how the only Hindu Country in the world, Nepal has distant away.

Bangladesh received unprecedented support from India during its independence but public opinion in Bangladesh has largely gone against India. What about the Maldives? A small archipelago with five lacs people where anti-Indian sentiment brought Mr Muizzu in power. Possibly only Bhutan maintains some kind of good relations that to in Doklam issue it feels China is a stakeholder despite India's reservation. Bhutanese foreign minister visit in October 2023 to China is ►►



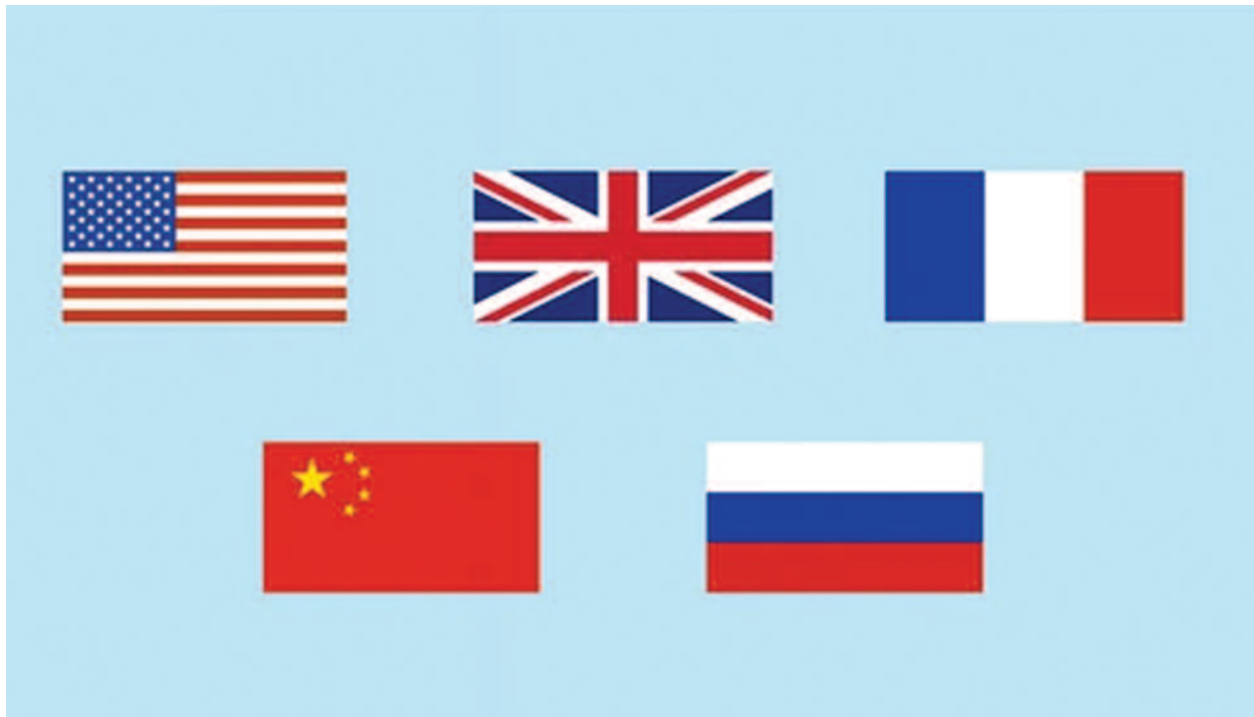
Photo: Net

▶ another indication like Bhutan a small country with a seven lacs population following suit like other neighbors of India. Now let's see the relationship of another regional and leading power, China with all these countries i.e. Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Nepal, Maldives, Bhutan, and Bangladesh. China is either a strategic and or development partner with these countries and rarely meddles in their internal affairs. Even countries earlier closer to India tilted towards China despite India's discomfort. Is it India's policy, doctrine, structural realism, or strategic culture causing India's, behavior in the regional geopolitical landscape that neighbors are uncomfortable with? Let's examine certain policies and the doctrinal outlook of India. Chanakya Kautilya's policy plays a significant role in India's foreign policy. Kautilya's Arthashastra as a foreign/security policy option revolves around four 'upayas' (approaches); Sama (alliances), Dana (gifts), Bheda (divide and rule), Danda (use of force). Are these affecting India's behavior toward its neighbors? Or do they have no relevance at the policy level? Let us analyze two doctrines to study their pertinence at the behavioral level.

Indira Doctrine (Indira Gandhi was prime Minister from January 1980 to October 1984): The salient points are; India has a role as a regional power for geographical influence and interest in South Asia. India's security interest requires a role in the South Asian security spectrum. We have seen its ramification with Indian military intervention in Sri Lanka in 1987 and in Maldives in 1988 against a coup attempt.

Gujral Doctrine (he was Foreign Minister and Prime Minister from June 1996 to March 1998): India should not ask for reciprocity with smaller neighbors. No use of South Asian countries' territory against another country. No interference in internal affairs. Respect each other integrity and sovereignty and settlement of issues through peaceful bilateral negotiation. Following this Bangladesh signed a peace accord in CHT with Santi Bahini (Parbattya Chattagram Jono Songhoti Somity) in 1997.

Indira Doctrine is more towards structural realism; India possibly drifted away from liberalism i.e. Gujral Doctrine. Is this causing India to lose friends in the neighborhoods? Under these cir- ▶



Permanent Members United Nations Security Council. Photo: Net

► circumstances will neighbours be comfortable to bid for India's seat in the UN Security Council? How the world body is going to view India's legitimacy as a contender for such a responsible position when neighbors are uncomfortable?

Bangladesh Factor:

India needs to understand that Bangladesh is not like another neighbor. There are a few realities; India shares the largest border with Bangladesh (in fact 5th longest border between countries in the world), at places porous and at places political borders divided families, communities yet people have strong ties. In geographical reality, it's not Bangladesh inside India but a part of India is also inside Bangladesh (Tripura). It is interwoven. In learning reality, when a child in India goes to school and for the first time draws the map India, he/she automatically draws the map of Bangladesh. When the child inquires to the teacher about the place he/she unconsciously knows Bangladesh, by then he/she may not have known the names of all the states of India. That

is the kind of learning reality. If one closely takes a look at the map it would reveal that Bangladesh is located under the armpit of India. If for some reason Bangladesh is unstable or made unstable it would be like a boil under the armpit of India. That would be a very unhappy/painful experience. At the same time if India sinks (politically, economically, socio-culturally) Bangladesh is likely to sink too because of geographical gravitational pull. However, if Bangladesh sinks India may not sink. More so for geostrategic, economic, and security reasons ignoring Bangladesh or choosing to side with a part instead of a whole could be unwise. The recent revolution in Bangladesh and its outcome could be a lesson learned for India to review its relational philosophy with Bangladesh. In the end, it's very pertinent to understand that a democratic, stable, non-interfered, and prosperous Bangladesh is in the best interest of India. Maybe India needs to do soul-searching and may need to revisit its neighborhood policies, doctrines, and strategic culture for better and sustainable relationships with neighbors. ■

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The Middle Eastern Crisis

ASM Shamsul Arefin

has served the armies of Pakistan and then Bangladesh, which he joined as a freedom fighter during the 1971 Liberation. He is now chairman of Bangladesh Foundation for Regional Studies working on the Asia-Pacific Region. Arefin is author of the multi-volume magnum opus on Bangladesh Election and has written a number of books on the Bangladesh Liberation War.



Presently the Middle Eastern crisis has become a subject of concern in our day to day life. The merciless killing of unarmed civilian and children and the inhuman suffering of the Palestine Muslim

community cannot be justified with any arguments. Till to date near about 41,000 innocent people including woman and children has been killed by the Israeli defence forces and unaccounted has been wounded. Thousands of Muslim population has been displaced and migrated to the nearby countries. Regularly the killing is continuing by the Israeli defence forces and people are moving out of their houses for individual safety leaving everything behind. Food, water and shelter crisis is beyond imagination. World power is observing the genocide and someone also trying to justify the Israeli actions. Palestinian

Hamis action is also been criticized and condemned by some concern.

The Middle Eastern region is known as the Arab States of West Asia and North Africa. It is a combination of different nations with mainly desert cultures. Arabic language is widely spoken. Farsi and Hebrew are also spoken by some nationals. Most of the countries practices Islam as a religion. The Middle East was the part of the Roman, Mongolian and the Ottoman Empire for centuries. After the World War I Middle Eastern countries became the part of British protectorate. During and after the World War II, the Middle East has been a strategic factor for the western world. Presently the complex geo-political situation has combined with securing of energy resources and domination on the trading route to Asia Pacific.

The growing instability in the Middle Eastern region having a higher degree of complexity and the conflicts are affecting the countries as a whole. The exploitation of the ethnic identities, the ex-▶▶



Israeli attacks on Gaza have killed more than 41,000 Palestinians since October 2023. Photo: AFP

►pansion of Jewish community and the influence of US domination in the region has created more rivalry and mistrust among the nations. The conflicts between Syria, Iraq, Iran, Egypt, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia and Libya have complicated the relations between the Gulf oil monarchies.

Historically the family of Moges came and settled in Palestine before Millennium BC. Abraham descendent was divided in 12 communities. In the different period the Jewish people migrated to Roman Europe from Israel, Anatolia, Babylon and Alexandria for economic hardship during 4th to the 1st centuries BCE. An estimated of 7 million Jews population became a significant part of the Roman Empire's in the first century CE. The Jews lived in Rome for over 2,000 years and mostly accepted into the Roman Empire.

With the rising Christianity in Europe, the Zionist culture largely contradicted with the Christian society and culture. Multiple restrictions grew on the Jewish community in the European countries. To contain the rivalry the Jewish communities were largely sent to the various Roman provinces

in the Middle East, Europe and North Africa.

The Jewish community became an immigrant nation with the Zionistic ideology. In the 19th century Jewish nationalist movement 'Zionism' started in Europe and the Jewish community started demanding for a safe home land for the communities. In the 19th century almost 99.7% of the Jews population was living outside the Arab region. During this period the Muslim population living in Palestine was 403,795 (85.5%), Christian population was 43,659 (9.2%), Local born Jewish population was 15,000 (3.2%) and Foreign born Jewish population was 10,000 (2.1%).

The Jewish migration started in the Palestine during 1839 on Tanzimat reforms in the Ottoman Empire. The Ottoman rulers started modernization of their administrative system and were also trying to consolidate the socio-political foundation of the Empire. The non-Muslims populations also included Turkish, Greek, American, Jewish, Kurd and Arabs. The reform was known as "Ottomanism". During the Ottoman Empire ►

► near about 70,000 Jews migrated to Palestine from Russia within 1903. Due to anti Jewish sentiment in France, 40,000 Jews migrated to other European countries during 1904 to 1914.

The Jews community started moving to Palestine from all over the world. The rising of Jewish community became significant within a short period time.

dependence” if the Arabs revolts against the Ottoman Empire. After the fall of Ottoman Empire the British did not honor the commitment towards the Arabs. It came as an act of betrayal towards the Arab community. After the World War I, “The League of Nations” allowed a mandate to Britain for the “Mandatory Palestine” from 1920 to 1948. The Mandatory Palestine was a geopolit-

Year	Total	Muslims		Jews		Christians	
		Total	Percent	Total	Percent	Total	Percent
1922	752,048	589,177	78.34	83,790	11.14	71,464	9.50
1931	1,033,314	759,700	73.52	174,606	16.90	88,907	8.60
1931	1,036,339	761,922	73.52	175,138	16.90	89,134	8.60
1932	1,073,827	778,803	72.52	192,137	17.90	92,520	8.61
1933	1,140,941	798,506	69.99	234,967	20.59	96,791	8.48
1934	1,210,554	814,379	67.27	282,975	23.38	102,407	8.46
1935	1,308,112	836,688	63.96	355,157	27.15	105,236	8.04
1936	1,366,692	862,730	63.13	384,078	28.10	108,506	7.94
1937	1,401,794	883,446	63.02	395,836	28.24	110,869	7.91
1938	1,435,285	900,250	62.72	411,222	28.65	111,974	7.80
1939	1,501,698	927,133	61.74	445,457	29.66	116,958	7.79
1940	1,544,530	947,846	61.37	463,535	30.01	120,587	7.81
1941	1,585,500	973,104	61.38	474,102	29.90	125,413	7.91
1942	1,620,005	995,292	61.44	484,408	29.90	127,184	7.85
1943	1,676,571	1,028,715	61.36	502,912	29.99	131,281	7.83
1944	1,739,624	1,061,277	61.01	528,702	30.39	135,547	7.79

During the World War I there were Jewish volunteer battalions in the British Army. To get the support of the Jewish Diaspora, the British Government declared a policy for a national home land for the Jewish people in Palestine if the Ottoman Empire is defeated. This British announcement is known as the “Balfour Declaration of 1917”. At the same period the British Government also agreed to “Honor the Arab In-

ical entity in the “Region of Palestine” under specific terms of the League of Nations. The mandate was design to improve social, political and economical development for self governess of the Palestine region.

The Jewish population started migrating to the land of Palestine during this British Mandatory period. Within 1933 to 1935 more than 164,000 ►►

► Jewish migrated to Palestine from different European countries. In the year of 1936 the Jewish population became almost doubled and reached around 370,000. The Jewish population rose more than 27% from 17% of the total population. During the period of 1948 the Jewish population became 600,000 and in the year of 1960 it reached up to 1,800,000. Such massive migration was from Russian Jews to Palestine. The British design of settlement was opposed by the Palestinian Arabs and Christian community and tried to prevent the Jewish migration. The Arab committee of Jerusalem declared 16th May 1936 as "Palestine Day".

The Jewish community started purchasing land with the support of British administration to establish a "Jewish National Home" in the territory of Palestine. The Palestinian Arabs opposed this Jewish move and was trying to contain them. The Arab Revolution started in the Mandatory Palestine against the British administration. The Palestinian Arabs demanded "Arab independence" and to end the Jewish migration. The situation significantly deteriorated during 1939 between the Palestinian Arabs and the Jews. The British Government issued a 'Parliamentary White Paper' during 1939 limiting the Jewish population to be one third of the total populations in Palestine. No further Jewish immigration will be allowed unless the Arabs economic capacity is permitted. The changing policy was towards the prohibition of transfer of the Arab lands to Jews and the establishment of a National Government responsible to a representative council. The Zionist underground groups started working against British rule within the Mandatory Palestine from 1944.

United Nations General Assembly adopted a resolution on 29th November 1947, to resolve the Israeli-Palestinian conflict with the "two-state solution". The adopted resolution was to imple-

ment a plan for partition in the British Mandate Palestine into one Arab state and one Jewish state. The Holy City of Jerusalem will be governed by a common administrative system.

After the adoption of the United Nations Partition Plan, on 29 November 1947, civil war broke out against the partition plan in Palestine. A series of offensives was started by the Zionist forces during April 1948. They occupied cities in the Mandatory Palestine and planning for a Jewish state. On 14 May 1948 the Jewish leaders declared the Independence of a "State of Israel" during the termination of the British Mandate.

The Muslim forces from Egypt, Transjordan, Syria and Iraq entered Palestine and attacked the Israeli forces. They took control of Arab lands and the Jewish settlements. This was the beginning of the Arab-Israeli War during 1948. 10 months fighting continued in Sinai Peninsula and southern Lebanon. The UN again proposed for a Jewish state in the Israel controlled area. 60% area of the Palestine land was proposed for the Arab state. Israel captured the West Jerusalem. Transjordan troops took control of East Jerusalem known as the West Bank. The Gaza Strip was occupied by Egypt. Around 700,000 Arab Palestinians became refugee to the surrounding states from the Israeli occupied territory. Huge number of Jews moved to Israel from all over the world including 260,000 Jews from surrounding Arab states. The Palestine land was divided within Israel and Arab states. During the "Six-Day Arab Israel War" in the year of 1966, near about 360,000 more Palestinian Arab became refugees to the surrounding states. The Palestinian territory which was the part of Jordan and Egypt was occupied by the Jewish and became the part of Israeli settlers.

During 2023, the total Jewish population was estimated in the world was around 15.7 million. Out of that the Jewish population in Israel was 7.18 million. In the United States 7.3 million, in ►►

► France 440,000, in Canada 398,000, in United Kingdom 312,000, in Argentina 171,000, in Russia 132,000, in Germany 125,000, in Australia 117,200, in Brazil 90,000, in South Africa 50,000, in Ukraine 40,000, in Hungary 45,000, in Mexico 40,000, in Netherland 30,000, in Belgium 30,000 and in Italy 28,000. As per the Israeli constitution all the Jewish people are eligible for Israeli citizenship.

According to the 2018 statement approximate 51% Jewish population is living in the United States. 30% of the world Jewish population is living in the state of Israel. Almost 81% of the total Jews populations are living in these two countries. During the year of 2020 the Muslims population in Israel was around 250,000. It was approximately 35.2% of the total Israeli population. In the year of 2022 the Israel population became 8.9 million. Out of this the Muslim population was 1.7 million and became 18.1% only. The Jewish population became 73.8 %.

Jerusalem is the core issues of conflict between Palestine and Israeli states. During 1980, the Israeli government declared Jerusalem as the capital of Israel. The international community condemned this Israeli move and did not recognize Jerusalem as the capital of Israel. The United Nations Security Council declared the Israeli decision is a "violation of international law", and must be rescinded forthwith". On this issue United Nations passed one Resolution on 20 August 1980.

The Palestinian-Israeli conflict is a socio-political issue of the Palestine people for self-determination. The people's desire are also supported by the military and Para-military forces. The key factors of this long conflict are (1) forcefully Israeli occupation of the West Bank and Gaza Strip (2) peaceful status of Jerusalem (3) unauthorized Israeli settlements within the Palestine land (4) return of the Palestinian displaced people to the homeland (5) maintenance of the border security (6) rights on the water.

During June 1976 United Nations Security Council took a resolution to support two-state solution on Palestine-Israel conflicting issues. The resolution was an alternative to one-state solution based on pre-1967 proposal. The United States vetoed the issues. The Israeli leaders also refused the Arab Peace Initiative during 2002. During 2013–14 periods Palestinian–Israeli peace negotiations did not find any result. United Nations Security Council again took a resolution against the illegal Israeli settlements in the West Bank and East Jerusalem during 2016 and again vetoed by the United States government. In the year of 2017 the United States President Donald Trump took initiative to recognize "Jerusalem as the capital of Israel". The support of United States towards Israel created more conflicting situation instead of peaceful negotiations.

The first president of Israel David Ben-Gurion declared the State of Israel on 14th May 1948. He said "We hereby declare the establishment of a Jewish state in the land of Israel". Just after this declaration, United States was the first country to extend recognition to Israel as a nation on 14th May 1948. From this period United States is providing political and military support to the state of Israel.

The United States used 53 time veto power to protect Israel against the resolutions of United Nations Security Council for Palestine. The government of United States is the only permanent member in the United Nations Security Council who has recognized the Golan Heights as the sovereign territory of Israeli and also recognized Jerusalem as the capital of Israel. With the design and support of the United States, Israel has become a major non-NATO ally.

Israel is the largest recipient of the United States foreign aids till today. From 1972, the United States has extended loan guarantees to assist the new Jewish immigrants and the economic recovery. United States had provided 150 billion dollar ►►

► assistance to Israel during 2022. During the year of 1999 the United States government signed a commitment to provide at least 2.7 billion dollar military aids annually for ten years. In the year of 2009 the amount did raised to 3 billion dollar; and in 2019 it has further raised to 3.8 billion dollars. United States is the largest trading partner of Israel. The two-way trade was nearly 50 billion dollar by 2023.

After the foundation in 1948, the “State of Israel” was facing many challenges from internal and external forces for survival. At the same time this new country created instability in the Arab region and became a threat for existence to all. The “State of Israel” was founded under a British Mandate of 1917. It was a unitary decision of the British Government and was imposed on the Arabs countries to facilitate the British rule during World War I and World War II. The Jewish population was allowed to migrate from all over the world to get settled in the land of Palestine. One hand it created conflict within Arab nations on the other side it facilitated the British Empire to take control over the Arab land and the Suez Canal. After the World War II the British Government started facing problems with the Jewish community and almost lost control over the State of Palestine. The government of United States came up to support a new Jewish state within the Arab territory considering a long term strategically plans.

There are many reasons for United States to support Israel from the beginning. United States is having the largest Jewish population of 7.6 million outside Israel. It is almost 2.4% of the United States total population. The Jewish community is having major influence over United States economy, technology, media, internal and external politics and national electoral process. As on today, Israel is having the best intelligence gathering network in the world. United States is having the strongest information sharing partner-

ship with Israel. United States is also having joint-development collaboration on the sophisticated technologies including cyber-espionage capabilities with Israel. Israel is a country with sustainable nuclear power capability.

Geopolitically the physical location of Israel is very important to United States for securing Gulf oil and trading route to Asia Pacific. United States could articulate super power dominance on the Middle Eastern countries through Israel. The State of Israel is surrounded by Lebanon, Syria, Jordan, Egypt and Mediterranean Sea. Israel is reasonably secured by its geographical landscape. It has open desert from three directions. In the south the Negev desert. The Sinai Peninsula is providing a natural obstacle against the Egyptians. Eliot-Aqaba deserts in the southeast. Any attack from the south east force need to cross a third country, the Saudi Arabian territory. The eastern side is also secured by desert. Israel is having a space of 20 to 30 miles from the Jordan River. Litani River in the north is providing a natural barrier. Israel is capable to protect any attack from the coastal plain. Israel is very concerned regarding the West Bank to gain water security of the Jordan River.

Considering the war capabilities the “State of Israel” does not have sufficient depth to facilitate the defense deployment and maneuvering. Israeli Air Force is one of the powerful and capable Air Power in the world, but how it manages its fighting capabilities need analysis. With a total space of 8,020 sq mile area, how Israeli defense forces fought so many wars and still fighting with the regional countries is a subject of study.

The United States of America and the State of Israel is having coordinated security and economic ties among them. United States is having more than 2500 firms established in Israel which has employed around 72,000 Israeli personals. United States has more than 300 research and development centers in Israel. Defense and cyber- ►►

► security industries are having major impact on the relations between two countries. United States and Israel has created a Joint Economic Development Groups to stabilize economic sectors. United States and Israel is having respectful partnership for deep military and economic ties. Saudi Arabia and Israel peace agreement has enhanced security cooperation.

To have major control over the Middle Eastern Countries the United States has positioned his troops in different Arab countries under defense agreements. Near about 40,000 U.S. military personnel are stationed within the Arab region. Looking at the figure around 900 soldiers is in Syria, 2,500 in Iraq, 2,900 in Jordan, around 8,000 in Qatar, Over 9,000 in Bahrain, around 2,700 in Saudi Arabia, 3,500 are in United Arab Emirates, 13,500 in Kuwait and 1,000 troops in Turkey. United States is maintaining one military base in Israel under classified code-named "Site 512". It is a radar surveillance system can detect and track ballistic missile threats against the United States.

The United States is having many Air Bases within Middle Eastern Countries to support the US forces in the region. The major bases are; Al Udeid Air Base is in Qatar supports the regional headquarters of US Central Command, Ali al-Salem Air Base in Kuwait, Abdullah Al Mubarak Air Base in Kuwait, Ahmad al-Jaber Air Base in Kuwait, Air Base in Oman, Al Dhafra Air Base in Abu Dhabi, Muwaffaq Salti Air Base in Jordan and Prince Sultan Air Base in Saudi Arabia. The US destroyer and fighter jets are guarding of the Strait of Hormuz and the Gulf of Oman. Qatar is very crucial for US military strategy in the Arab region. United States is having its Naval Base here. This Naval Forces is the part of United States Central Command and the Fifth Fleet. This Naval Base is the only permanent shore Naval Base in the Middle East to facilitate the Gulf War and also accommodates the US aircraft

carriers and amphibious ships.

The Palestine-Israel conflict has become a concern in the recent world history. This hostility started during October 2023, resulting significant casualties on both sides. The inhuman sufferings and displacement of the Palestinian Arab populations are one of the biggest in the recent time. The Hamas forces launched a coordinated attack targeting military bases including infiltrating inside the Israeli cities. Palestine Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu declared war on Hamas.

Hamas an organization of Palestine is running the administration of Gaza Strip from 2007. Hamas stands for the "Islamic Resistance Movement". The Gaza Strip, with an area of 365sq km accommodating more than two million Palestine populations. Gaza Strip is located on the Eastern cost of Mediterranean Sea having the border with Egypt on the South West and Israel on the East and North. The total land and the people of Gaza Strip are almost blocked by the State of Israel.

The Hamas movement started during 1987 in Gaza against the Israeli occupation of the Palestinian territories. Hamas is having an ideological approach for establishing an Islamic State of Palestine and taking control over the Islamic holiest place al-Aqsa Mosque. The Holy al-Aqsa Mosque is located in the Israeli occupied territory of East Jerusalem. The Hamas organization is having a mission to clear the Jewish settlement in the West Bank. The organization is having a fighting capability with around 40,000 dedicated armed cadres. They are trained on modern technology and multiple war techniques. Presently Hamas is equipped with modern small arms, Drone and including Anti Tank equipments.

Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) was established during 1964 in Cairo and presently its headquarters in West Bank in the State of Palestine. Palestinian bordering state Lebanon was facing a major civil war during 1975. The country ►►

► was about to collapse. At that period the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) raised an army in southern Lebanon to destroy the state of Israel around 1978-79. Considering the threat, the Israeli army invaded southern Lebanon and almost destroyed PLO army in the year of 1982. Under the leadership of Yasser Arafat PLO reorganized in the West Bank of Palestine land. As on today PLO is a combination of many organizations under one umbrella. PLO is having a military force of 83,000 which was created under Oslo Peace Accords 1993. The Peoples Liberation Organization (PLO) is the official negotiating organization between Palestine and Israel and recognised by the UN. The PLO is having the observer status in the UN since 1974.

The State of Palestine is having many fighting groups to fight against Israel and to liberate the homeland. To fight back the Israeli occupation in the southern Lebanon, the Lebanese Shia Muslim organized a force known as “Hezbollah” (the Party of God). It was founded during 1982. This Islamist fighting group is having a strong military wing. Hezbollah forces are having a fighting capability of conventional and unconventional war with strength of around 100,000 trained fighters. Hezbollah is having its own training camps. During 2015-16, Hezbollah received 75 T-55 and T-72 tanks and other armored vehicles to fight. Hezbollah forces are also having artillery guns and BMP-1 infantry fighting vehicles. Hezbollah fighters are trained in “Drone” and capable of using it effectively with 50 trained drone pilots.

The State of Israel is recognized one of the technologically advanced nations in the world. Israeli defence capabilities have been strengthened much beyond of its geographical size and population. Israeli forces are strongly equipped with air force, naval fleet, and advanced long range nuclear weaponry system. The Israeli military is always highlighting its strategic strengths and significance in the region.

The Palestinians are having long-standing geographical conflicts with Israel. The land of Palestine has been forcefully occupied by the Israeli community with the help of Western powers during 1917-18. The son`s of the soil, “Arab Muslims” were forcefully uprooted from their motherland and have become refugee or hostages. A long struggle is continuing to get back the rights of the motherland. Palestinian resistance groups have been formed with limited fighting capabilities. The struggles for self-determination are recognised by the world power with exceptions. Palestinian resistance groups form during different periods with limitations. Some of these groups are supported by the bordering countries with shelter, food and limited training facilities, which has no match to the Israeli forces. Still the ongoing Palestine- Israel conflicts are continuing without solutions.

On the 7th October 2023, the Hamas forces attacked on Israeli troops and subsequently war broke out in Gaza strip. The situation created a new crisis in the Middle Eastern politics. The situation aggravated due to Israeli heavy Air attack on the civilian area of Palestine and killed thousands of innocent people including children and woman. Presently the Palestine issue has created a complex security situation and has threatened to the entire Middle Eastern region.

After the outbreak of the Hamas-Israel war, the United States of America took a decisive stand for Israel. United States has become an active partner of Israel in the Palestine-Israel war. United States war mechanism also been activated for an all out support for safety and security of the State of Israel. United States troops which are deployed or located in the Middle Eastern region are kept on high alert to support the State of Israel if ordered for. On 12th December 23, Joe Biden the President of the United States mentioned "Israel's security can rest on the United States". On 18th January 24, the State Depart-►

ment of the United States mentioned "Our support for Israel remains ironclad." The national security agency of United States, CIA established a new taskforce to provide intelligence to Israel regarding Hamas leaders and their activities.

Presently the world is witnessing a physical involvement of United States Military Forces in a war for the third countries after a break. This involvement of United States is on a very single issue (Hamas). What are the intentions behind this major mobilization of United States Defence Forces yet to be justified? On the other side how much this involvement will be appreciated by the world community only time can assess.

On 7th October 23, within a hour of Hamas-Israel war, United States started sending warships and war planes to the Middle Eastern region and also announce the full scale support to Israel. USS Gerald R. Ford with United States "Naval Carrier Strike Group" deployed in the region. United States also announced to provide guided missile launchers and F-35 fighter jets to Israel. On 10th October 23, the second Aircraft carrier of United States with three more Naval ships left for Gulf. A large number of fighting and supporting aircrafts were sent to United States military bases in the Middle Eastern region. United States provided \$2 billion additional support to Israel. On 14th October 23, United States ordered around 2,000 troops to be prepared for possible deployment to Israel.

On 17th October 23, five shipments of American weapons and equipment arrived in Israel. On 18th October 23, United States vetoed to the resolution of United Nations Security Council on Palestine-Israel war. On 21st October 23, Pentagon announced to deploy two missile defense systems to Middle East. During November 23, United States House of Representatives, allocated \$14.5 billion military aid for Israel. In December 23, US arms shipments to Israel were included 15,000 bombs and 57,000 155mm artillery shells

and were carried by military cargo planes. United States also sent 5,000 unguided Mk82 bombs, 5,400 Mk84 bombs, 1,000 GBU-39 bombs, and 3,000 JDAMs. On 8th December 23, US vetoed another United Nations Security Council resolution for humanitarian ceasefire. On 9th December 23, Pentagon sends 14,000 tank shells worth \$106.5 million for Israel. On 29th December 23, the United States approved 147.5 million dollars artillery shells to Israel. During early February 24, the United States Senate passed \$14 billion aid for Israel. On 30th March 24, White House authorized \$2.5 billion weapons to Israel. During mid April 24, Biden signed a \$95bn security package which included around \$17bn in military aid for Israel.

Looking towards the US support to the State of Israel one can easily understands the relations between USA with Israel. The United States support to Israel is an effort to dominate on the entire Middle Eastern region. Israel is performing a balancing between the United States and Russia and the United States and China. Recently a case has been filed in the International Criminal Court (ICC) against the Israeli killing of the innocent civilian and children. After examining the relevant witnesses the court issued arrest warrants for senior Israeli officials accusing of war crimes in Gaza. The government of United States also stood by the government of Israel in the International Criminal Court (ICC). US President Joe Biden said "the United States will always stand by Israel". The United States lawmakers also passed legislation for sanctioning on the International Criminal Court (ICC) over the judgment.

On the other side, recently the US Commission on "Civil Rights" called the government to address the Palestine issues. The Commission also mentioned regarding 56 years Israeli illegal possession on the Palestinian lands and also 16 years blockade on Gaza. How much this civic movement and the humanitarian call of the Palestine ➡

► people are going to influence the US government only time can say. Presently the questions are coming “Whether the Palestine–Israel conflict is going to its end with justified solutions, or the conflict will continue till the weaker part is abolished.

The Palestinian Arabs are fighting for long to survive in their mother land. They have been uprooted from their ancestor’s places through illegal process. 100 years before the Israeli community have been pushed to the land of Palestine with the British Mandate under “Belfour Declaration 1917” to support the British Monarchy during World War I and World War II. With the fall of Ottoman Empire the Israeli community continued migrating to Palestine from the different European countries. Under the patronization of the British Empire the Jews started settling in the land of Palestine including acquiring properties. At the end of Mandatory period the Jews declared the independence of the “State of Israel”.

The conflict started between Palestinian Arabs and the Jews community and continuing till today. It is now difficult to predict how this war is going to end and establish peace within the Arab region. Millions of Arab Palestine became homeless and took shelter to the surrounding Muslim states. When the British left Palestine, the United States of America did came up to support the Jews community in the land of Palestine. During 1948 the Israeli ambassador to USA mentioned, the US-Israeli relations were in a “Crisis of Historic Proportions” because of a dispute over Jerusalem settlement plans. It is noted, maximum Jews community people are living in US. It is more than the Jews population of Israel and having significance influence over US economy, society and electoral process. During 2017 the US Trump administration recognized the Jerusalem as the capital of Israel. It "destroyed the peace process" and the United States was no longer a mediator in the peace process as they have be-

come a party to the dispute. Now US have become the protector of the State of Israel.

The Middle Eastern countries are undergoing with multiple crisis. The conflicts are not only the reflection of rivalry between Palestine and Israel; it also having a very dynamic nature. The conflicts included conventional wars, civil wars, insurgencies, terrorist assaults and involving multiple actors including Non-state actors, foreign Powers, regional countries, international organizations. The conflicts also facilitated the influence on local economic, changes of political regimes and the competition among the global and regional players. The recent Hamas attack and the Israeli response to the Arab Palestine has changed the regional dynamics in the Middle East. The International and regional players are reconsidering their interests in the region. But no actor is coming up with possible solutions.

The conflict is not in an ending process. Israel is now more aggressive on Hamas for its destruction. Other side Hamas is also adamant to continue their fight. One of the political leaders of Hamas said, “We know very well the consequences of our operation on October 7. No nation is liberated without sacrifices. We are called a nation of martyrs, and we are proud to sacrifice martyrs”. Hamas is having a very strong and dedicated grass root level organizations.

With the present scenario it is unlikely that the external actors are ready to address the root causes of the conflict. Israel is continuing its settlement expansion destroying the Palestine vil-lages and killing in thousands. There is no political will within Israel to address issues. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has “re-fused to discuss any vision for a political deal to end the fighting in Gaza”. He also mentioned during March 2015, “Palestinian state would not be established during his administration”. This indicates the Palestinian-Israeli conflict will continue to fester and produce cycles of violence. ■

The Reading of a Memoir

Mahmud Hussain

is retired Air Vice Marshal and former High Commissioner to Brunei.



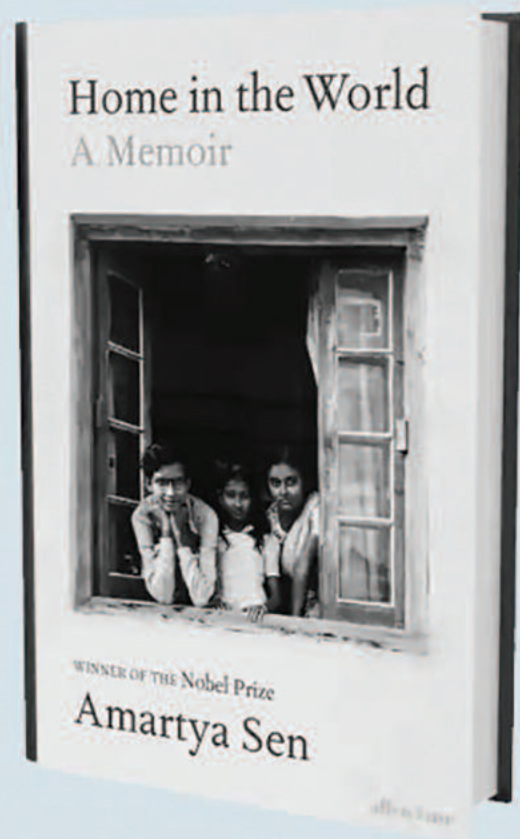
Memoirs make for an intellectually absorbing reading. They belong to a different genre of literary creativity distinct from the tenor of “autobiography”. Their mood centers on particular themes, and their philosophical

approach to writing reflects upon the critical interpretation of phenomena rather than merely narrating facts about them. This demands a meditative engagement with the time and history about which the writer is speaking consistent with the intellectual dilemma besetting his mental activity. In that sense, memoir has an *epistemic* value.

Nobel Laureate Amartya Sen’s *Home in the World* – A Memoir has recently come out, and anyone reading it will perceptibly be drawn to the fact that the theme of the book focuses not merely on his growth as an individual person but rather as a scholar committed to an inquisitive search for truth through the vast field of economic science.

One wonders whether the *memoir* can be posited as the substance of his earlier writings by which he promoted his economic theories. However, his trials with economic questions have also urged him to develop a strong passion for the study of philosophy as an *epistemic* correlate to both human and non-human aspect of economic challenges. He has given economic science a powerful “human perspective”, and any attempt to do otherwise is at the peril of the meaning of *man* as the substance of knowledge.

So, if we take his vast domain of academic inquiry, it is reflected in the attributes of economic science interpenetrating into the system of philosophy. After reading the *Memoir*, probably, one will look upon him more as an economist who approaches the “dismal science” quoting Thomas Carlyle, with a sharp scintillating eye marked upon the calling of *science of Philosophy*. One can simply read his previous books to come to that conclusion. *Poverty and Famine, Development as Freedom, The Argumentative Indian, Identity and Violence, The Idea of Justice and On Economic Inequality* are some of his extraordinary oeuvres that address human problems from the ontology of philosophy rather than experimental rigour of ▶▶



► economic model. A person not familiar to the science of Economics will understand him better through his philosophical writings rather than his works on game theory, rational choice theory, probability theory and other mathematical foundation of economics. In that sense, he can be classed with Adam Smith who also approached Economics from point of view of moral philosophy. Adam Smith's *The Theory of Moral Sentiments and Essays on Philosophical Questions* were the successor response to his epoch-making *An Inquiry into the Causes of the Wealth of Nation* to face the darker side of economic transaction in terms of human greed, selfishness and reckless profit-seeking motive. Adam Smith comes often in the *Memoir*, and what regales me most is that the publication of Adam's book in 1776 also tells about the excellent trade that Bengal conducted through its rivers at that time thus making it the world's one of the most economically prosperous and opulent region.

Amartya Sen as an economist will remain incomplete to a reader if he fails to comprehend his relentless and passionate love for man as an individual. The idea of man being at the core of economic development and freedom is what he searched for in his study of economics. If Economics as a science has to perform a self-fulfilling *episteme*, it cannot remain idle to the inquiry of causality that affects one part of the world in senseless deprivation of material entitlements, while the other part enjoys the surfeit of consumption. Thus, chasing the moorings of poverty and eradicating them has become Amartya's life-long scholastic passion. His work on poverty is still the foremost amongst the economics giants. It was the 'Great Bengal famine' in 1943, when he was barely 10 years old, the tragedy of 2 to 3 million people dying of starvation left an indelible imprint on his conscience. Poverty also had an impact on his choice of academic subject for career. His early flirtation was with Physics and ►

► Mathematics, and wanted to study the same in intermediate level at Presidency College. Partly influenced by his friend, Sukhamoy Chakrabarty and partly by his concern about social inequality spurred by his predilection into local and global politics that he choose to study economics along with mathematics. It also reminds me of the father of neo-classical economics, Alfred Marshall. During his school vacations, when Marshall walked through the slums of London and witnessed abject poverty, he made up his mind to study economics as his life-long academic and moral pursuit because he thought the causes of poverty are the causes of the degradation of a large part of mankind.

The *Memoir* is an excellent repertoire for a lay reader to initiate interest in the reading of the historicity of economics. The book has an infectious touch of pleasantness because of its style in presenting tough economic issues in simple language. In the 1940-1950s, economics was passing through a reformative stage consequent upon its relation to political science and sociology. It was the heyday of John Keynes, Nicholas Kaldor, A.C.Pigou, Maurice Dobb, Piero Srafa and many others. But the economist who, in my opinion, seemed to trouble him enormously was Kenneth Arrow. Amartya's interest was in the value of individual choice aggregating in the process of decision-making. Arrow's Impossibility Theorem had unnerved him a lot. Arrow had used the example of voting system as being an exercise in imperfect social activity. If one agrees to Arrow's theorem and extrapolates it to the techniques in other areas of social functions, one is likely to fall into intuitive despair. But Amartya took the challenge having seen in it the prospects and promise of welfare economics. He read Arrows' *Social Choice and Individual Values* with a critical scrutiny to arrive at the conclusion that individual decision in making a choice is a rational process, and must be examined holistically. He, in a manner,

revived the importance of Impossibility Theorem in the Cambridge circle of economists by exploring Arrow's proposed axioms and their combinations to careful and original depth. His Ph.D. dissertation titled "Choice of Capital-Intensity in Development Planning" was a precursor to his future commitment to development economics. Later on, he assisted Mahbub ul Huq, Pakistani Finance Minister in the production of *UN Development Report* by which countries are assessed in terms of quality of life. He made sense of the world by traversing the long path of economics shaped by the western ideas of capitalism and free market economy, and supplant it in quest for the destination of poor man's emancipatory role that governments ought to ensure in addressing the primitive human demand for employment, equitable wage, and affordable purchasing power.

Amartya knows well that an economist's *Memoir* will be incomplete without the mention of Karl Marx. In fact, there was a time when any great work in economics was either professedly Marxist or anti-Marxist. Marx was responsible for transforming the concepts of political economy, and virtually brought the Westphalian concept of nation-state system to naught, and replaced it with the principal of preservation of individual sovereignty as belonging to particular classes. Economics was struggling hard with its own limit of freedom as an *episteme*. Marx's fatuous call in the 1848 Communist Manifesto - "Workers of the world unite!" was a freak fancy, yet he conquered the imagination of the great minds of the 20th century. The debacle of the Communist world cannot be attributed to Marx but to states' authoritarian practices which failed to fathom Marx's theory of class struggle in conjunction with contextual illumination of labour theory of surplus value, concept of objective illusion, nature of exploitation, and ideal-material dialectic. So, Amartya who read Marx deeply finds many of his ideas convincingly relevant today. ►►



► As an economist, Amartya takes you through all the famous personalities in the field but I was little bewildered not to have seen the reference of few others — Joseph Schumpeter, Frederick Hayek, Karl Polanyi, Mansur Olcun, Von Neumann — who have treaded the Economic tower of Babel at the same time. May be his lack of intimacy with them is compounded with the limitation of space for the *Memoir*!

There is a chapter called “Bengal and Bangladesh” where his emotions run deep in identifying himself with the philosophy of a united and secular Bangladesh as an elevating and glorifying idea. The existence of Bangladesh is a matter of pride for all Bengalis as a home built within the bigger home of the world. He was born in Dhaka, grew up in Calcutta, and now lives comfortably in London. A man who finds solace and happiness through his work can make any place on earth his abode. The title of his Memoir called *Home in the World* aptly reconciles with his kind of magnificent humanism.

One should read the *Memoir* with an engrossing passion, and its reading in depth will give him im-

mense pleasure. Those who have known him as a great economist will explore that he is much more than a scholar-extraordinary not merely content with search for truth in economic theories and mathematical analysis. His vast erudition in other fields of knowledge — literature, politics, international relations, physical sciences, medicine, linguistics, history, sociology, philosophy — makes him an incredible polymath. He belongs to the genre of great minds of all times like John Keynes, Bertrand Russell (it is interesting that being a mathematician, Russell received the Nobel Prize in literature and will be known more for his political writings than his hard-boiled *Principia Mathematica*), Kenneth Arrow and a few others. Amartya knew Ludwig Wittgenstein who trained as an aeronautical engineer but is famous for his revolutionary work in linguistics. It will be a fitting tribute to Amartya’s *Memoir* by inverting Wittgenstein’s aphorism:

Whereof one can speak, he must write.

For a great teacher, where speech ends, writing begins. *Home in the World* _ A *Memoir* is a gift of excellent writing. ■



BNS Shadhinota and USS Oakland steam together during Bangladesh's International Fleet Review 2022.
Photo Credit: Bangladesh ISPR

Exclusive: US Ambassador Discusses Bangladesh's Growing Role as a Key Regional Partner

Rabb Majumder

is the Editor and Publisher of The Security World.

In this edition, we are pleased to republish an insightful interview with U.S. Ambassador Peter Haas, originally featured in Security World magazine during his tenure in Bangladesh. In this conversation, Ambassador Haas shares his perspectives on U.S.-Bangladesh relations, regional security challenges, and the importance of diplomatic engagement. His reflections provide valuable context and understanding of the dynamics at play during his time in the region.



deep commitment to fostering international relations and advancing global cooperation.

As Ambassador, Haas has prioritized fostering collaboration across various sectors, including trade,

Peter D. Haas is an elegant and seasoned diplomat has served as the United States Ambassador to Bangladesh. Haas pursued a distinguished career in public service, marked by his

defense, and development. He has been working tirelessly to enhance economic ties, facilitate investments, and promote trade opportunities between the two nations. Additionally, Haas has focused on supporting Bangladesh's efforts in combating terrorism, addressing climate change, and promoting human rights.

With a deep appreciation for the rich cultural heritage of Bangladesh, Haas has also been working towards promoting cultural exchanges and people-to-people connections. He has actively engaged with local communities, civil society organizations, and academic institutions, fostering mutual understanding and cultural appreciation.

Throughout his career, Haas has been recognized ►



- ▶ for his exceptional leadership and diplomatic acumen. His dedication, integrity, and commitment to strengthening bilateral ties between the United States and Bangladesh have earned him respect both at home and abroad.

Ambassador Peter D. Haas continues to serve as a bridge between the United States and Bangladesh, fostering collaboration, and working towards a shared vision of peace, prosperity, and mutual progress.

The excerpts of the interview as follows:

1. How would you characterize the relationship between Bangladesh and the United States as it stands right now?

Bangladesh is an important regional partner on climate, development, economic, humanitarian, and security priorities. Our two governments regularly discuss steps to promote security; protect human rights, the rule of law, and freedom of expression; and ways to continue to work closely together to advance a shared vision of a free and open, prosperous, inclusive, peaceful, and resilient Indo-Pacific region.

2. What do you consider to be the main driving forces behind the development of Bangladesh-U.S. relations in recent years?

The United States seeks a strong, multi-faceted relationship built on mutual respect for the rule of law, democracy, and human rights; inclusive economic growth and development; people-to-people ties; enhanced capacity to tackle the climate and pandemic crises; and a greater contribution to regional security.



US Ambassador to Bangladesh Peter D. Haas.

The United States has five key areas of collaboration for its relationship with Bangladesh:

Number One: A more peaceful and stable Bangladesh, better able to provide for its own security, counter threats to U.S. interests, and serve as a growing security contributor in the Indo-Pacific and globally.

Number Two: Bangladesh is committed to democracy, transparency, pluralism, tolerance, good governance, and respect for human rights.

Number Three: Bangladesh is a socially and environmentally resilient country.

Number Four: Sustainable and broadly shared pros-▶▶

▶ perity, and improved labor standards expand and diversify Bangladesh's economy and open it to greater regional and global trade and connectivity.

Number Five: Bangladesh meets international standards for humanitarian protection of the Rohingya refugees and continues to host them until a safe, voluntary, and dignified return to Burma is possible.

3. How significant is Bangladesh to the United States as a partner in the Indo-Pacific region?

Bangladesh is an important partner to the United States. It is the eighth most populous country in the world, with one of the world's fastest growing economies. It is part of the Indo-Pacific region and a partner of the United States as we pursue our mutual goals of security, sustainable prosperity, freedom, and democracy for our peoples.

4. What are some of the main defense and security-related areas where Bangladesh and the United States can collaborate?

For over 50 years, the United States and Bangladesh have enjoyed diplomatic relations and partnered on a wide range of defense and security issues, including: border security, maritime security, counterterrorism, peacekeeping, disaster relief, defense trade, and defense institution building.

One of the main areas of collaboration is protecting Bangladesh and the United States from terrorist threats. Bangladeshi and U.S. law enforcement and other agencies work closely together, sharing information and coordinating the protection of our citizens and those of any other countries that face a terrorist threat. For example, our Legal Attaché Office works closely with the Bangladesh law enforcement agencies coordinat-

ing investigative efforts and building capacity. The Legal Attaché Office recently facilitated a course on Terrorism Financing issues for Bangladeshi government officials.

5. What role does Bangladesh play in the U.S. Indo-Pacific strategy?

We are committed to working together to ensure that the Indo-Pacific region remains free, open, peaceful, and secure, and the U.S. military regularly works with the Bangladeshi military to strengthen Bangladesh defense readiness and reinforce the partnership between our military forces. Bangladesh recently released its own Indo-Pacific Outlook, and we were encouraged that Bangladesh's vision largely overlaps with our own. We're eager to hear and see more from Bangladesh as it develops concrete policies and actions related to the outlook.

I'd like to give a concrete example of the important role Bangladesh plays in Indo-Pacific affairs. Recently, in June of this year, the Bangladesh Navy sailed the BNS Somudra Joy to Yangon to provide humanitarian aid to victims of Cyclone Mocha. Bangladesh provided similar assistance to the Maldives during some of the most difficult periods of the COVID-19 pandemic. This is truly emblematic of what Lieutenant General Waker, the Principal Staff Officer of the Armed Forces Division, called the Spirit of the Indo-Pacific and exemplifies the kind of engagement prioritized in the Government of Bangladesh's new Indo-Pacific Outlook.

6. How do you envision Bangladesh and the United States' defense cooperation developing over the coming years?

Before going into the coming years, I would like ▶▶



The crew of Bangladesh Navy's Somudra Avijan Delivers Food and Medical Supplies to Maldives in 2020. Photo Credit: The Honorable Abdulla Shahid, President of Maldives via Twitter

► to cover a bit of the history of defense cooperation. Bangladesh and the United States have worked together in several defense areas up to the present day. I think the early 1990s marked the first major step forward. You may recall that Bangladesh contributed forces to the UN coalition in Kuwait that defended that country's right to sovereignty during Operation Desert Shield and Desert Storm. As U.S. Forces departed the Persian Gulf in April 1991, a terrible cyclone hit Bangladesh. In response, the United States, in partnership with the Bangladesh Armed Forces and multinational partners, launched Operation Sea Angel. Led by a Joint Task Force under United States Marine Corps Lieutenant General Stackpole, the Operation focused on providing humanitarian assistance across Bangladesh, in-

cluding to its most remote areas.

I mention these examples as they were periods where our forces worked closely together in real-world situations. This people-to-people connection opened the doors for more cooperation in the future.

In 1994, Bangladesh and the United States signed a "505" agreement which allowed the U.S. to begin providing security assistance on a grant basis to Bangladesh's Armed Forces. This opened the door for funding under the Global Peacekeeping Operations Initiative and under Foreign Military Financing, and for Bangladesh to receive U.S. equipment that our military services were retiring. In the time since 1994, Bangladesh has received ►►



Oregon Army National Guardsmen of 3-116 Cavalry unit, Charlie Company along with a Bangladesh Army counterparts carry a local role player on a litter during cordon and search operations training as part of Exercise Tiger Lightning 2023 at the Bangladesh Institute of Peace Support Operation Training (BIPSOT).

Photo Credit: U.S. Army National Guard photo by Sgt. Hannah Hawkins

▶ over 100 million dollars' worth of grant aid. The Armed Forces of Bangladesh have capitalized on these programs to develop some of its most important capabilities and transform the Bangladesh military into a global leader in peacekeeping, and a regional leader in disaster response.

The relationship continued to expand. We saw more and more Bangladeshi officers attending military schools in the United States, and they performed extremely well. The 505 agreement also allowed the U.S. to supply platforms to Bangladesh like C-130 aircraft, patrol boats for the Bangladesh Navy and Coast Guard, and the two

frigates, the Somudra Joy and Somudra Avijan.

We highly respect our Armed Forces colleagues in Bangladesh and have been delighted to attend your military's keystone events. Last year we were pleased to attend International Fleet Review. The U.S. had the Commander of the Pacific Fleet, Admiral Paparo, and a Littoral Combat ship, the USS Oakland and its crew participate in that important event. We expect to continue to be active participants in these types of events. The U.S. participated in large peacekeeping exercises such as Shanti Doot in 2018, Shanti Ogroshena in 2021, and we will participate in the next iteration of Shanti Doot, the multinational exercise in 2025. ▶▶

- ▶ For the coming years, we already have plans in place to provide additional capabilities in the form of unmanned aerial systems and patrol boats that will help Bangladesh's Armed Forces to monitor the maritime domain, secure Bangladesh's borders, and conduct peacekeeping missions.

In the future, I see the defense relationship developing in line with Bangladesh's modernization and readiness plans. We are aware of the objectives of Forces Goal 2030 and want to be good partners to Bangladesh as it develops its Armed Forces' capacity to defend the country and its sovereignty.

7. How can the United States help Bangladesh in its efforts to upgrade its defense capabilities and modernize its military?

The United States can help Bangladesh in its efforts to upgrade its defense capabilities by providing a holistic approach to modernization. My colleagues do not consider defense cooperation in terms of just weapons and equipment. Rather, they view it in terms building capabilities. They always consider the training, sustainment, organization, doctrine, and leadership that is required to complement defense articles. It has been very positive to see that the Bangladesh Armed Forces are now taking a similar approach to make sure the capabilities they build are the best they can be.

I think a few things that have truly set the U.S. military apart are *leadership, joint operations, cutting-edge technology, and the meaningful participation of women in the armed forces*; and these are areas where our countries can collaborate.

We plan to continue to support opportunities for

Bangladesh's best officers to develop their leadership. Earlier this summer, I was proud to hand over certificates of acceptance for three young military leaders who are now attending the U.S. Naval Academy in Annapolis, Maryland and the U.S. Military Academy in West Point, New York. At the higher level, we have Senior Bangladeshi Officers attending important schools such as Army War College and Naval War college. Admiral Md Nazmul Hassan, a graduate of the U.S. Naval War College, was just selected to become Bangladesh's next Chief of Naval Staff.

Joint Operations have evolved in the U.S. military in the time since World War II. We have learned many hard lessons and adapted our forces to operate best as a team. This is an area where we can share what we have learned with the Bangladesh armed forces. It's great to see that Bangladesh is conducting professional education in a joint environment; I got to see this firsthand last year when I spoke at the Defense Services Command and Staff College. We can help advance joint operations even further with your forces through education and advising and stand ready as partner to do so.

Harnessing cutting-edge technology is another area that has allowed our forces to excel in challenging environments. Our defense systems are world class, this is mainly due to the technology that is inherent in everything from helmets to fighter planes. The U.S. is willing to make some of our best systems available to Bangladesh to enable you to meet your modernization goals. That said, we owe it to our country and service members to ensure those technologies are protected from potential adversaries. I will talk about this ▶▶



Addressing the 2022 Defence Services Command and Staff College

Photo Credit: US Embassy in Bangladesh

► more later, but this is why the GSOMIA (General Security of Military Information Agreement) is important for the U.S. to help Bangladesh upgrade its defense capabilities.

I also think it is important to discuss the role of the participation of women in the armed forces. Bangladesh has been a regional leader in advancing this concept. It was great to see Bangladesh hold the Chairmanship of the Chiefs of Defense Women, Peace, & Security Network. As partners we can continue to share the message that the meaningful participation of women makes your forces better, both more prepared and more capable to solve the major challenges we face. Bangladesh should continue to recruit, train, and promote women with the intent of placing them in positions of leadership.

8. What are some of the main issues affecting the defense cooperation between the United States and Bangladesh, and how can they be resolved?

I appreciate that you asked about resolving issues as I believe that is the right approach and characterizes the relationship. This has been discussed many times before, but the GSOMIA is one of the issues standing in the way of deeper cooperation on the modernization. I mentioned it previously when I discussed technology.

We believe the establishment of a GSOMIA would greatly benefit both our countries. These agreements seem complex, but they are quite simple. The GSOMIA would set ground rules for exchanging and protecting each other's sensitive military information. It is important to understand that GSOMIA would not compel ►►

► Bangladesh or the United States to share any sensitive military information. Rather, if both countries find it beneficial to share military information, they will have a pre-established agreement on how to protect that information. Military information can include certain defense technologies that enable the operation of state-of-the-art defense articles. The current lack of a GSOMIA between our countries prevents Bangladesh from procuring the United States' more advanced defense systems including some aircraft and associated weapons.

9. What role may defense cooperation play in the overall development of Bangladesh's relationship with the United States over the next few years?

We view the defense relationship as an integral part of our relationship. We know that Defense Diplomacy is one of the pillars of Bangladesh's defense policy and we will take every opportunity to support this. Additionally, when we talk about people-to-people relationships, I believe the military-to-military ties can be amongst the strongest.

As an example, the State Partnership Program between the Bangladesh Armed Forces and the State of Oregon National Guard have resulted in numerous long term personal relationships. These relationships have been allowed to mature as those involved advance in rank. During the 2022 South Asia Regional Disaster Response Exercise and Exchange (DREE) hosted by Bangladesh Armed Forces Division, Brigadier General Mark Crosby from the U.S. Air Force, as a member of the State Partnership Program traveled to Bangladesh for his 15th official trip. Beginning in 2008, when he was a Lieutenant Colonel, he has traveled to Bangladesh nearly

every year. Meeting with friends and counterparts who have also progressed in rank, and grown in responsibility just as he has, provided for a holistic view of how we can work to solve our problems together. Upon news of General Crosby's retirement, members of the Bangladesh Armed Forces delivered gifts to the U.S. Embassy for shipment to him, as a thank you for his continued relationship with the people of Bangladesh.

10. What message would you like to deliver to the Bangladeshi people regarding the significance of the relationship between Bangladesh and the United States, particularly in regard to defense issues?

Bangladesh is an important partner of the United States. We have a dynamic, multidimensional bilateral relationship of which the defense relationship is foundational in keeping the Indo-Pacific region free, open, and secure.

We celebrated 50 years of bilateral relations in 2022 and look forward to deep engagement with Bangladesh over the next 50 years and beyond.

Our cooperation on the economy, development, security, climate change shows the range of our strong and multi-faceted partnership and future potential. We are eager to move our relationship with Bangladesh forward as fast as Bangladesh would like.

I would also tell people to be proud of their peacekeepers, armed forces and first responders, while at the same time, hold them accountable. They play an important role in global security and the defense of Bangladesh, and your futures are intertwined. ■



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BRIEF NEWS

Life Returns to Raided West Bank City as Israeli Army Withdraws



The Israeli army withdrew from the city of Jenin and its refugee camp on Friday after a 10-day operation that left 36 dead across the occupied West Bank, witnesses said.

After days of destructive incursions by soldiers backed by armored vehicles and bulldozers, residents who had earlier fled began returning to their homes in the camp, a bastion of Palestinian armed groups fighting against Israel, AFP journalists said.

On August 28, the army launched a military operation in several cities and towns of the northern West Bank, including Jenin.

It said in a statement on Friday that Israeli forces “have been conducting counterterrorism activity in the area of Jenin” without confirming a withdrawal.

“Israeli security forces are continuing to act in order to achieve the objectives of the counterterrorism operation,” the statement said.

Over the course of the operation in Jenin, Israeli forces killed 14 militants, arrested 30 suspects, dismantled “approximately 30 explosives planted under roads,” and conducted four aerial strikes, the statement said.

One Israeli soldier was killed in Jenin, where most of the Palestinian fatalities have occurred.

Hamas, whose October 7 attack on southern Israel triggered the ongoing war in Gaza, and Palestinian Islamic Jihad have said at least 14 of the dead were militants.

Aziz Taleb, a 48-year-old father of seven, returned to his family home of 20 years to find soldiers had raided it.

“Thank God (the children) left the day before. They went to stay with our neighbours here,” he said as he surveyed the damage, glass crunching under his feet.

‘We Didn’t Want to Leave’

Imra Itisadeh, a 60-year-old Jenin resident, returned to her house in the camp on Friday to find one of its walls partly collapsed and rubble on her car.

“At first, we didn’t want to leave. Later, (the army) pressured us, and we had to leave our homes. I left with my husband” on foot, she said, adding that she suffers from high blood pressure and heart trouble.

Two of Itisadeh’s children remained in the house with their families and soon ran low on nappies, milk, and water.

“It’s very difficult, and we are suffering greatly in the camp,” Itisadeh told AFP.

Many homes in the Jenin camp were damaged or destroyed by army bulldozers and pavement was stripped from the roads.

Residents used bulldozers of their own to begin clearing the rubble on

Friday after Israeli armored vehicles left, AFP journalists reported.

The early trickle of returning residents soon turned into a flood, and soon children were playing in the streets.

Hundreds of camp residents attended funerals of those killed during the operation, carrying bodies in processions punctuated by chants and gunfire.

Israel has occupied the West Bank since 1967, and its forces regularly make incursions into Palestinian communities, but the latest raids, as well as hawkish comments by Israeli officials, signaled an escalation, residents said.

Itamar Ben-Gvir, Israel’s far-right national security minister, said in a post on X on Friday that he had asked Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu to make the defeat of Hamas “and other terrorist organisations” in the West Bank one of the aims of the war in Gaza.

Since the war began on October 7, Israeli troops or settlers have killed at least 661 Palestinians in the West Bank, according to the Palestinian health ministry.

Australian Army Trials Vegvisir Situational Awareness Solution on Unmanned M113 APC

The Australian Army has tested retrofitting a mixed reality-based situational awareness solution on uncrewed and optionally-crewed vehicles converted from manned platforms such as M113 army personnel carriers. ▶▶



► The Vegvisir Remote situational awareness solution is designed for both manned and unmanned vehicles, enabling users to navigate complex scenarios on the battlefield.

During the trials, the solution supported “multiple operators managing a fleet of vehicles from a single vehicle,” while its user interface allowed “bitrate limitation for each camera, network quality assessment, and custom driving aid lines,” the Estonian-Croatian defense tech startup explained.

Converted Unmanned Platforms

The trials helped the army to explore whether mixed reality improves the efficiency of the converted platforms.

“Instead of sending the obsolete equipment to the junkyard, its lifespan can be extended,” Vegvisir’s CEO Ingvar Parnamae said.

“With hundreds of thousands of armored platforms produced and phased out globally, there exists a substantial market opportunity to repurpose these assets for uncrewed or optionally crewed capabilities.”

Vegvisir Situational Awareness Solution

The thermal sensor-equipped system comprises vehicle-mounted cameras, an immersive headset, and supplementary data overlay capability, providing operators with a “comprehensive ultra-low latency 360-degree view of the surrounding environment.”

It is available in two versions: Vegvisir Core for manned vehicles and

Vegvisir Remote for unmanned or optionally manned ground platforms.

“Our technology’s ability to integrate with existing platforms like the M113 APC is proof of the versatility and reliability of our solution,” Parnamae added.

“We are excited to see our systems support the Australian Army’s mission. Their readiness to invest in modernizing their military technology shows that the Australian market is, and will continue to be, a very attractive landscape for defense startups like Vegvisir.”

Kongsberg to Upgrade Norway’s Bell 412 Multi-Role Helicopters

The Norwegian Armed Forces has contracted defense giant Kongsberg to upgrade its fleet of 18 Bell 412 multi-role helicopters.

The initiative aims to ensure that the rotary-wing aircraft can continue to support the country’s special forces until a more modern fleet is fully operational.

Under the agreement, the Bell choppers will be upgraded in two phases. The first stage focuses on their civilian communications and navigation solutions, while phase two will involve modernizing the aircraft’s military communications system.

“The government’s long-term plan includes enhancing helicopter capacity,” Royal Norwegian Air Force chief Major General Øivind Gunnerud said. “Upgrading the Bell 412 guarantees immediate readiness, ensuring the armed forces maintain strong operational capabilities during the transition to new helicopters.”

The first batch of upgraded Bell 412s is expected to be delivered to the Norwegian military by 2025.

Maintaining Relevance

The Bell 412 helicopter is equipped with a reliable turboshaft engine that allows a maximum cruise speed of 245 kilometers (152 miles) per hour and an extended operational range of 980 kilometers (608 kilometers).

It can accommodate up to 13 passengers.

The chopper can support various missions, including airborne surveillance, counter-terrorism, emergency medical service, and search and rescue.

Norway first received the Bell 412 in the 1980s. A third of that fleet was later upgraded to the “high performance” version.

Despite previous enhancements, Gunnerud said the helicopters need to undergo further modernization “to stay relevant” on the modern battlefield.

“We are proud to be given the task of upgrading the Norwegian Armed Forces’ helicopters to help increase operational availability. The agreement shows how the industry can assist with expertise and capacity and be a good strategic partner for the Air Force, where there is a need,” Kongsberg official Andre Jægtvik added. ►►



► Egypt to Join C-130J Super Hercules Global Operators With New Purchase



Egypt is set to join the list of C-130 Super Hercules operators with the purchase of its first two aircraft.

Lockheed Martin announced Thursday that it had secured a deal with Cairo for the C-130J-30 variant at the Egypt International Airshow 2024.

According to the company, the acquisition will enhance the Egyptian Air Force's tactical airlift capabilities, allowing it to better support missions across North Africa.

"Welcoming Egypt to the C-130J Super Hercules global fleet is an honor that truly represents the long-standing partnership between our two nations and with Lockheed Martin," Lockheed VP Rod McLean said.

With this purchase, Egypt will become the 23rd foreign operator of the C-130J and the 7th in the Middle East/North Africa region.

Proven Capabilities

Lockheed's C-130 is a powerful military transport aircraft equipped with four turboprop engines.

Its J-30 variant offers an impressive payload capacity of 44,000 pounds (19,958 kilograms), enough to carry up to 124 fully-equipped soldiers.

It boasts a maximum speed of 410 miles (659 kilometers) per hour and an operational range of 1,700 nauti-

cal miles (3,148 kilometers).

According to Lockheed, the "unmatched" capabilities of its Super Hercules fleet have made it an in-demand tactical airlifter with over 2,500 deliveries worldwide.

It has also reportedly surpassed more than three million flight hours across 63 nations.

"Always evolving, continually innovating, and ready for what's next, the Super Hercules leads the charge by setting standards and shaping the future of tactical airlift missions," the company stated.

Australia Starts Construction of Boeing 737 Sustainment Hangar in Adelaide

Australia's Department of Defence has begun the construction of a four-bay hangar in Adelaide for the armed forces' Boeing 737 aircraft maintenance project.

Adjacent to the Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF) Base Edinburgh, the hub will measure 240 meters (787.4 feet) long and 60 meters (196.8 feet) wide.

The center will have a 25-meter (82-foot) clearance needed to support overhauls of the country's 737 special purpose aircraft, operational since the 2000s.

It is also expected to provide modifications for other similar systems, including the E-7A Wedgetail early warning and control aircraft and the P8-A maritime patrol aircraft.

Upon completion, the hangar will be used to expand the military's sovereign capabilities to address its airborne fleet's requirements instead of



relying on offshore services.

Work for the 200 million Australian dollar (\$134.6 million) infrastructure project will run for two years, with about 450 construction jobs to be supported throughout the phase.

Another 50 roles for ground servicing, avionics, structural, and mechanical engineering will be opened up once the hangar is operational.

"The State Government has a proud history of directly investing in infrastructure to grow our defence industry and this project will see our state become the home of aircraft maintenance for this part of the RAAF fleet," South Australian Defence and Space Industries Minister Stephen Mullighan remarked.

"Because of our investment, for the first time, the Defence Force will be able to modify and maintain its fleet of Boeing military aircraft on Australian soil."

"The state has a strong track record delivering Defence projects and this will further enhance South Australia's reputation as a leader in this space."

Supporting Local Community Heritage

Canberra will partner with South Australia's urban development agency Renewal SA to construct the 737 hangar.

This 2.1-hectare hub will be built inside a 16-hectare project area possessed by Queensland-based construction management services ►►

► firm BESIX Watpac in accordance with the Aboriginal Heritage Act and in consultation with Adelaide’s Kaurana Traditional Owners.

“Renewal SA is committed to demonstrating best practice cultural heritage and engagement with Traditional Owners, respecting the history of Country and undertaking development on lands that have been lived on for thousands of years,” Renewal SA CEO Chris Menz stated.

“Our focus will include increasing economic participation of First Nations people through training and employment, in addition to cultural heritage practices through construction.”

‘Impartial Force’ Must Be Deployed to War-Torn Sudan: UN Experts

Flagrant rights violations by Sudan’s warring parties require the deployment of an “independent and impartial force” to protect millions of civilians driven from their homes, UN experts said Friday.

An independent fact-finding mission said it had uncovered “harrowing” violations by both sides, “which may amount to war crimes and crimes against humanity.”

The conflict erupted in April last year pitting the national army led by General Abdel Fattah al-Burhan against the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces of his former deputy, Mo-



hamed Hamdan Daglo.

It has triggered one of the world’s worst humanitarian crises.

Tens of thousands of people have been killed, and the experts said eight million civilians have been displaced while a further two million people have fled to neighboring countries.

More than 25 million people — more than half its population — meanwhile face acute hunger, with full-blown famine declared in a camp for displaced people in Sudan’s volatile Darfur region.

Mohamed Chande Othman, chair of the fact-finding mission called for “urgent and immediate action to protect civilians.”

“It is imperative that an independent and impartial force with a mandate to safeguard civilians be deployed without delay,” Othman said.

He said there were different options including a UN mandated one or a regional force backed by the African Union.

‘Complicit’

The team reiterated calls for a ceasefire and recommended expanding an existing arms embargo in Darfur to all of Sudan, warning that countries supplying weapons and ammunition to the warring parties could be considered “complicit.”

They “run the risk of being held accountable for violations of human rights and international humanitarian law,” mission member Joy Ngozi Ezeilo told reporters.

The independent experts, who do not speak on behalf of the UN, said they found evidence of “indiscriminate” air strikes and shelling against civilian targets, including schools,

hospitals, and water and electricity supplies.

“The warring parties also targeted civilians... through rape and other forms of sexual violence, arbitrary arrest and detention, as well as torture and ill-treatment,” the mission said.

“These violations may amount to war crimes.”

The team found evidence that the RSF and allied militias had committed additional war crimes, including sexual slavery, pillaging, and recruiting child soldiers.

It said there were grounds to believe that some of these amounted to crimes against humanity.

“Criminal responsibility for all violations is key,” mission member Mona Rishmawi told reporters.

‘Wake-Up Call’

The team called on Sudanese authorities to cooperate fully with the International Criminal Court (ICC) and to surrender all those already indicted, including former President Omar Al Bashir.

But given Khartoum’s lack of cooperation, the report called for the establishment of a separate international judicial mechanism working in tandem with the ICC.

“Our findings should serve as a wake-up call to the international community to take decisive action,” Rishmawi said.

The fact-finding mission was created last year by the UN Human Rights Council.

Sudan’s government has declined to comment officially on the mission’s findings, which were based on interviews with dozens of survivors, witnesses, and other sources now in

► Chad, Kenya, and Uganda.

The rights council will next month decide to consider extending the mission's initial one-year mandate.

Ezeilo stressed the need for far more focus on the tragedy unfolding in Sudan.

"It is really heartbreaking and definitely the world needs to do much more," she said. "This must be on the front burner of international discussions."

ATACMS Ineffective Against Aircraft Stationed Deep in Russia: US

The US has debunked claims that allowing Kyiv greater freedom to use its donated ATACMS for strikes deep in Russia would significantly reduce the number of hostile aircraft targeting Ukraine.

White House National Security Advisor John Kirby said that the AT-ACMS, or Army Tactical Missile System, is ineffective against Russian warplanes used for long-range strikes in Ukraine.

He explained that the aircraft are stationed deep within enemy territory, beyond the range of the long-range weapon, which has a maximum reach of 300 kilometers (186 miles).

"We've done the math on this — 90% of them lie outside 300 kilometers from the Ukrainian border, deep inside Russia," Kirby said.



"So, the argument that somehow, if you just give [Ukrainians] an AT-ACMS and tell them 'It's okay' [to strike deep] that they're going to be able to go in and hit the majority of the Russian aircraft ... is not true; it's a misconception."

No Change in Policy

While some of Kyiv's allies have lifted restrictions on their donated weapons, the US remains firm in its decision that its transferred armaments can only be used for Ukraine's defense.

In May, President Joe Biden temporarily eased the policy, but only for strikes on Russian-controlled Ukrainian territories.

Kirby said that while the US is committed to helping Ukraine win the war, it will continue its policy to prevent further escalation of the conflict.

"Nothing's changed about our view that Ukraine should be able to use the tools it has available to defend itself, and that's why air defense continues to be a prominent issue in these security packages that we're giving," he noted.

Despite Washington's stance, Ukraine President Volodymyr Zelensky said he will continue to press the US to allow Kyiv's forces to target military assets deep within Russian territory.

Viasat to Supply Blue Force Tracker Networking Services for US Army

The Defense Information Systems Agency has awarded Viasat a \$153-million contract to deliver network services for the US Army Project Manager Mission Command's Blue Force Tracker (BFT) solution.

BFT incorporates digital navigation systems informing allied forces and commanders on location data of "friendlies" on the battlefield.

The company will leverage engineering, operation, and technical expertise to support the capability's connectivity and readiness.

Additional tasks include maintenance and configuration of related hardware and software suites. Upgrades, development, and modifications will also be facilitated to support future BFT network modernization objectives.

Viasat's contract includes a base period with an additional four-year option.

"Viasat is honored to continue its history of providing support for the global L-Band BFT network and systems, and the continued modernization of how critical situational awareness is made available across the tactical edge at scale," Viasat Government Mission Connections and Cybersecurity VP David Schmolke stated.

"Our team will deliver the engineering and networking services, and technology innovation required to continue evolving the BFT network operations and capability."

"We have a deep understanding of the BFT mission and the information warfighters need to make real-time decisions that support operations and save lives."

Satellite Communication System for Army

Viasat first engaged with the US Army's BFT effort in 2010, in which it received a \$477-million award to supply "next-generation" satellite equipment with high speed and low latency features. ■



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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



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