

December 2021

DIPLOMATS

WORLD

The Only Diplomatic Magazine in Bangladesh

***Bangabandhu's Shonar Bangla :
A Golden Jubilee Year of Independence***

***Victory Day- 2021
16th Of December
1971: Revisited***

***Bangabandhu :
The Artistic Leader***

***Rohingyas of Myanmar :
What does Civil or
Military government
means to them***





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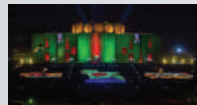
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EDITOR'S NOTE



Diplomats team joins in celebrating the 50th Victory Day of Bangladesh. This year Bangladesh also celebrates the Golden Jubilee of its Independence. The nation has transformed itself into one of the fastest-growing economies in the world. Before the onset of the COVID-19, the economy was growing rapidly over 8% annually. Bangladesh is an ideal place for entrepreneurs to venture into Trade and Commerce.

Diplomats recognize our leading businessmen who made it possible to show the world that Bangladeshis are capable of becoming successful entrepreneurs. During the last four decades, Bangladesh's apparel industry has emerged as one of the lead Brands. Also, the Pharmaceutical companies of Bangladesh are exporting medicines to 119 countries.

Moreover, Bangladesh has achieved a lower middle-income country status in 2015, with a GDP of over \$305 Billion and soon economists expect GDP to grow to \$500 Billion. Bangladesh is currently the world's 41st largest economy and the size of the economy will be doubled. The poverty-reducing performance of Bangladesh is recognized in the World bodies. The country has achieved self-sufficiency in food production. The share of Industry in GDP was 28.79% in 2020 and the share of SMEs in GDP is estimated at 25%.

The private sector provides 90% of jobs in the developing world. In Bangladesh, the private sector accounts for over 70%, supported by a strong financial sector. These sectors need to play an important role in the recovery of the country from the Covid impact enabling the country to grow further, increase exports and create more job opportunities.

This month, Diplomats write-ups cover Victory Day revisited; leadership of Bangabandhu; prospects and achievements of 50 years of Independent Bangladesh; climate change impact on Bangladesh, and many more interesting topics.

Wishing all our readers Merry Christmas and a rewarding New Year

Shahed Akhtar
Fmr. Ambassador & Secretary, GoB
and Editor, Diplomats



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BANGABANDU'S SHONAR BANGLA :

A Golden Jubilee Year Of Independence

- Dr. Mohammed Faruque

On Dec. 16, 1971, Bangladesh was established in what was previously known as East Pakistan. In a nine-month war that concluded that day with Pakistan's capitulation, more than 3 million people died. Up to ten million people were forced to flee their homes. It's amazing how much time has passed in the last 50 years. Bangladesh has experienced a stunning turnaround in the half-century after its founding

life expectancy has increased from 46 to 72 years. The infant mortality rate has dropped from roughly 150 to 26 fatalities per 1,000 births. Bangladesh's gross domestic product is expected to soon surpass that of Denmark and Singapore, according to the International Monetary Fund.

The nation's golden jubilee of independence is the most significant milestone to commemorate. The country and its people have overcome

adversity after adversity on their way to become a South Asian powerhouse. Bangladesh's economic performance is now known as the "Bangladesh Surprise." Bangladesh's promotion to a "developing country" from a "least-developed country" by the United Nations has given the milestone celebration a timely dimension.

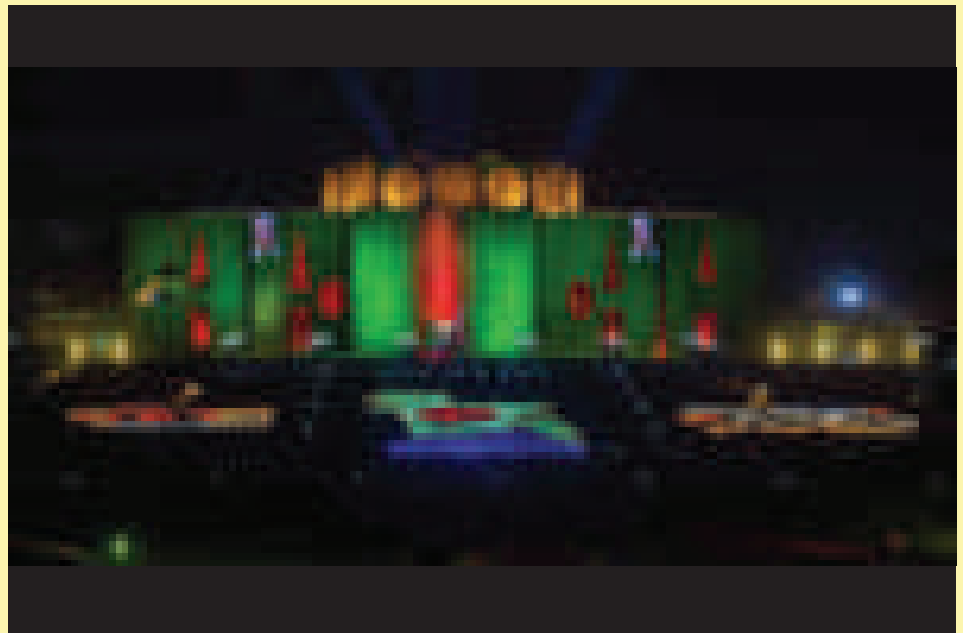
Bangladesh's post-independence journey was long and winding. After independence, the burden of rehabilitation and reconstruction was enormous. The rebuilding project began under the leadership of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, the country's founding father. Assassinations, coups, counter-coups, and military control have all hampered Bangladesh's progress. In 1971, Bangladesh inherited a war-torn economy. With an empty coffer, the country began its voyage. The economy was caught in a vicious cycle of poverty due to two decades of Pakistani colonial exploitation. Bangladesh has made exceptional economic progress over the previous five decades despite inadequate resources.

In the last decade, the GDP growth rate has surpassed all previous records. The per capita income has been continuously increasing. It has one of the strongest poverty-reduction records in the world. For its 170 million people, the country has attained near self-sufficiency in food production. The country is now hosting the world's largest refugee population, with over 1 million Rohingya refugees escaping persecution in Myanmar. It has developed into a model export powerhouse. In

1971, Bangladesh's GDP grew at a pace of 5.48 percent in 2019; it grew at an annual rate of 8.15 percent. Bangladesh's economic growth trajectory and key economic indicators have been steadily increasing since the country's independence in 1971. When Bangladesh gained independence, its per capita income was \$134, and by 2020, it had risen to \$2064.

From more than 80% in the early 1970s, the proportion of the people living in poverty had decreased. Inclusionary growth strategies, wise fiscal management, local and international job creation, and a comprehensive social security program have reduced both moderate and extreme poverty. In 2019, the poverty rate was 20%, with extreme poverty hitting single digits at 10%. By 2030, the country's poverty rate will be cut in half. The proportion of persons living in poverty declined from 31.5 percent in 2010 to 24.3 percent in 2016, according to the 2016 Household Income and Expenditure Survey (HIES) Report. During the same time period, the percentage of people living in extreme poverty declined from 17.6% to 12.9%. Prior to the coronavirus epidemic, the economy was expanding fast, with annual growth rates in the range of 8% for several years. Despite the pandemic's impact, the Asian Development Bank reports that Bangladesh's economy is rapidly rebounding.

Bangladesh is widely regarded as the birthplace of the highly successful and well-known microcredit initiative. Microcredit has helped borrowers diversify their portfolios, expand their



Golden Jubilee of Independence

economic activity, and increase their household incomes. Bangladesh's microcredit framework and model has proven to be so effective that many other countries have adopted similar programs in the hopes of replicating it. Microcredit brought 10 million Bangladeshis out of poverty between 1990 and 2008, according to the BBC. Microcredit schemes in Bangladesh were especially advantageous to women since they allowed them to participate in income-generating activities. For their efforts to 'promote economic and social development from below,' Muhammad Yunus and Grameen Bank were awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 2006. Grameen Bank was founded in 1983 with the goal of providing modest loans to needy people on easy conditions (so-called micro-credit) and Yunus was the bank's founder.

Bangladesh rose to prominence in South Asia as a result of its successful export-led development strategy. Since the 1980s, export revenues have

made a significant contribution to Bangladesh's economy. Bangladesh's exports have increased by roughly 80% in the last decade, thanks to a thriving clothing industry. For the fiscal year 2018-19, overall export earnings were \$40.5 billion. Bangladesh is currently the world's second-largest garment producer. The economy is becoming more diverse. Pharmaceuticals, basic steel, cement, ceramics, and a variety of other businesses have the potential to thrive. In recent decades, the garment sector has become one of the country's success stories. It is the world's second-largest economy, trailing only China, and exports bring in more over \$35 billion per year. The industry employs 4 million people, the majority of whom are women, hence promoting female empowerment.

Bangladesh's foreign exchange reserves surpassed \$43 billion by the end of 2020, setting a new high. To put that in perspective, the sum is enough to cover import bills for nearly ten months. The influx of remittances is critical to the



50 years of Bangladesh

expansion of foreign exchange reserves. The government and the central bank have also made it easier to send money abroad by providing incentives to remittance senders. The overall surplus also aided in maintaining the foreign exchange reserve.

Both public and private investments have been critical in boosting Bangladesh's economic progress. In FY 2018-19, the investment to GDP ratio was 31.6 percent, with 23.4 percent coming from the private sector and only 8.13 percent from the governmental sector. Bangladesh's government modified its policy direction in the 1980s, opening up many industries to private and foreign investment. In recent years, private sector investment has accounted for over 75% of total investment. Bangladesh's government has created investment-friendly policies, ordinances, and regulations in order to boost domestic and foreign investment. It is also concentrating on improving Public-Private-Partnership (PPP) initiatives and constructing 100

big industrial parks known as "Economic Zones." Power, communication infrastructure, and digitization are some of the other functional areas where money has been invested. Bangladesh began accepting foreign direct investment (FDI) in 1971. Bangladesh received \$90,000 in FDI in 1972, and in 2019 a record \$3.61 billion FDI.

Bangladesh followed an import-substituting industrialization plan from 1972 to 1980 in order to protect the country's fledgling businesses. The manufacturing sector's share of GDP has risen from 4% in 1972 to 18% in 2019, while the non-manufacturing sector's share has risen from 2% to 11% in the same time period. Bangladesh's present level of manufacturing success was aided by industrial sector reform in the 1980s and 1990s. Bangladesh's government has taken the initiative to establish 100 Economic Zones in order to speed up the country's industrialization.

Bangladesh's agriculture industry suffered greatly as a

result of internal displacement during the War of Liberation in 1971, and food production and supply chains were completely disrupted. Bangladesh prioritized agriculture and the rural economy in 1972 to secure food security for its citizens. The country reached food self-sufficiency in 2021. Food grain, fish, poultry and meat production all saw massive increases in the agricultural sector. Total food grain production peaked at 9.9 million metric tons in 1972 and by 2020, it had risen to 45.4 million metric tons. Bangladesh is the world's fourth-largest rice producer and third-largest producer of freshwater fish.

The services sector dominates the Bangladeshi economy. The service sector's proportion in the economy has risen to 56 percent over the year. During the previous 50 years, Bangladesh's economy has seen a considerable decrease in agriculture sector employment and a quick expansion in employment in the industry and service sectors. The service industry grew at a consistent rate of 3.6 percent to 6.7 percent between 1980 and 2010.

The Bangladeshi economy relies heavily on remittances. The amount of annual remittance to Bangladesh increased dramatically as the number of emigrant workers from Bangladesh gradually increased over time. Bangladesh is now one of the top remittance recipients, according to the World Bank, receiving almost \$15.3 billion in 2018. In 2018, it was South Asia's third-largest remittance recipient. Bangladeshi workers working abroad sent almost \$24.7 billion in remittances in fiscal year



Bangladesh's new beginning at 50 years of Independence.

2021, making remittances an important part of the economy.

Pakistani soldiers devastated Bangladesh's infrastructure in 1971 by strategically destroying all of the country's communication, socially useful, and industrial facilities. Only 4.3 million dwellings were damaged in rural regions, according to a World Bank estimate. Bangladesh has steadily invested in infrastructure development over the last fifty years, including housing, communication infrastructure, industrial infrastructure, water supply, solid waste management, and energy. Bangladesh's rapid expansion is due to large public investments in big infrastructure projects such as the Padma Multipurpose Bridge, the Bangabandhu Tunnel and the Rooppur Nuclear Power Plant. Bangladesh has witnessed a strong headway in terms of access to electricity in fifty years. In 1991, the access to electricity was 14% and in 2021 it reached 99%.

Over the previous five decades, Bangladesh has made incredible progress in terms of human development. The country has

been putting in place well-thought-out strategies and channeling resources to improve educational access. The fulfillment of the goal of universal enrolment at the primary level has been a tremendous success. Another notable achievement is the current 18 percent reduction in school dropout rates. Gender parity in elementary and secondary education was reached well ahead of the Millennium Development Goal (MDG) deadlines. The literacy rate in the country has increased from 26.8% in 1974 to 74.7% in 2019.

Bangladesh has been hailed as a role model for other developing countries in terms of achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Bangladesh's achievements in poverty alleviation, food security, primary education, mortality ratio, vaccine coverage and communicable illness control were impressive. Bangladesh was a key contributor to the development of the 2030 Global Development Agenda (SDGs). Bangladesh has embraced the SDGs since their declaration by included the 17 Global Goals in

its National Development Plan. The SDGs have been incorporated into national plans such as the Eighth Five-Year Plan (8FYP), Delta Plan 2100, and Perspective Plan 2041.

Bangladesh's health industry has undergone a quiet revolution in the previous five decades. Bangladesh has successfully halved newborn mortality and reduced maternal mortality by 75% thanks to policy efforts. Furthermore, the overall fertility rate has decreased from around 7 in the 1970s to 2.04 in 2020. In 2011, Bangladesh was praised as an example of 'excellent health at a low cost.' The shift was accelerated by the presence of both state and private healthcare treatments as well as NGO activities. Bangladesh's founding year had a life expectancy of 46.6 years. The life expectancy in 2020 is 72.6 years.

Bangladesh's maternal mortality ratio (MMR) has decreased by 75% over the last five decades. In 1975, the maternal death rate was 600 per 100,000 live births and in 1990, it was 574. Bangladesh's MMR was 173 per 100,000 live births in 2017. Bangladesh has made significant progress in lowering the newborn mortality rate. The infant mortality rate was 167 per 1000 live births in 1973, but by 2020, it had dropped to 21 per thousand live births.

Immunization is a critical indication for every country's health sector, and Bangladesh is a global success story and pioneer in this area. In 1979, Bangladesh launched the Expanded Program on Immunization (EPI), a global immunization campaign. In 1985, only 2% of the population was vaccinated. Since 2003,



Born in War, Bangladesh Marks 50 years of Independence.

Bangladesh has vaccinated 38 million children, as of September 2019. Bangladesh has been polio-free since 2006, and the threat of neonatal tetanus has been eradicated.

Gender parity has improved in Bangladesh across all sectors as a result of women's increased engagement in socioeconomic and political activities. The Gender Gap Index has ranked Bangladesh first in gender equality among South Asian countries for the second year in a row. According to the Global Gender Gap Index 2020, Bangladesh has closed 73 percent of the overall gender gap. The national rate of female work force climbed from 15.8 to 36.3 percent between 1996 and 2017, which is higher than the South Asian average of 35 percent. Bangladesh ranked first among South Asian countries in achieving gender equality for the fourth year in a row. According to the World Economic Forum's 'The Global Gender Gap Report 2018,' the country has lost one notch to 48th place among 149 countries worldwide, but is still ahead of all other Asian countries except the Philippines. Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina was conferred with Global Women's Leadership Award for

her outstanding contribution to promote women rights and empowerment.

Bangladesh has made significant technological advances in a variety of areas, including telecommunications, internet connectivity and speed, digitization, and media. Since 2009, the government's pledge of a Digital Bangladesh has resulted in significant ICT advancements. Bangladesh entered the space age on May 12, 2018, when its first satellite, 'Bangabandhu-1,' was successfully launched. Bangladesh became the 57th country to have its own satellite in orbit as a result of this technological achievement.

The UN's Committee for Development recommended that Bangladesh be removed off the list of least developed countries (LDCs). For the second time since 2018, Bangladesh met all three criteria to move from an LDC to a developing country in February 2021. Bangladesh's graduation would be recommended by the UN by 2026. Since 1975, when the country's economy was still recuperating from the disastrous Liberation War of 1971, Bangladesh has remained on the list of LDC countries.

Bangladesh moved from being a low-income nation to a lower-middle-income country (LMC) in 2015, according to the World Bank's classification system. For the first time since its independence in 1971, the country's per capita income has pushed it out of the LMC category. Bangladesh aspires to be an upper middle-income country by 2021.

Bangladesh became an independent country 50 years ago, and the developmental progress it has made, the GDP levels it has achieved, the economic indicators it has improved, the technological advancements it has made, the poverty it has alleviated, and the progressive transformation it has undergone are all deserving of praise. In fact, few people could have predicted 50 years ago that Bangladesh would be where it is now in 2021 in such a short period of time, if at all. Bangladesh triumphed over all barriers, including floods, cyclones, a dense population, a scarcity of natural resources, a lack of education and skills, extreme poverty, and plenty of other major obstacles that could have crippled any other country forever or for a much longer length of time. Bangladesh managed to not only overcome all the barriers but has now reached a status in the global arena, where it has become a positive example for many other similar or comparable nations hoping to also mimic its success.

Dr. Mohammed Faruque

CEO & Chairman, Orchard Group
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Red carpet rolled out as PM Sheikh Hasina reaches Male on six-day official visit

PM SHEIKH HASINA'S VISIT TO THE MALDIVES

Ushering In A New Horizon Of Friendship

- Syed Md Atiqul Islam Atique

As part of a larger goal of regional integration in the fields of trade, connectivity, migration, and tourism in South Asia, Bangladesh is strengthening connections with her small South Asian neighbouring island nation, the Maldives. Following a six-day visit to the Maldives from 22 December (Wednesday) to 27 December (Monday), Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina paid a visit to the Maldives in response to the invitation of Ibrahim Mohamed Solih, the President of Maldives.

Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina arrived in the Maldives on a state visit on Wednesday afternoon, at President Ibrahim Mohamed Solih's request. Senior officials from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs met her at Velana International Airport on Wednesday afternoon. The Maldives government staged an official welcome ceremony for the visiting Prime Minister at Republic Square earlier on Thursday. President Ibrahim Mohamed Solih greeted her at the Presidential Jetty in Male.



Maldives President Ibrahim Mohammed Solih & First lady Fazna Ahmed host banquet in honour of Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina.

Maldives President's office said in a release that two sides signed a series of agreements including a Memorandum of Understanding on the Recruitment of Qualified Health Professionals; a Renewal of the Memorandum of Understanding in the Areas of Healthcare and Medical Sciences; a Memorandum of Understanding on Cooperation in the Areas of Youth and Sports Development; and an Agreement to Eliminate Double Taxation on Income Taxes and the Prevention of Tax Evasion and Avoidance.

On the occasion, the Maldives' Chief of Defence Force, Major General Abdulla Shamaal, and Bangladesh's Chief of Army Staff, General S. M. Shafiuddin Ahmed, exchanged symbolic keys to military vehicles provided by Bangladesh to the Maldives. Following the signing of the MOUs, President Solih and Bangladeshi Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina issued a joint press statement. Both leaders stated that their countries have a brotherly relationship and that as regional neighbors, share common values, faith, and customs.

Vice President Faisal Naseem paid a courtesy call on the visiting Prime Minister at the Hotel Jen on Thursday afternoon. President Solih and First Lady Fazna Ahmed attended a state banquet in honour of the Prime Minister later that evening, marking the end of the official program of her state visit.

Three years after achieving independence from the British, the Maldives became a republic in 1968. Despite its remoteness as an island nation, the Maldives has experienced rapid socioeconomic developments during the past two decades. Bangladesh and the Maldives have collaborated on a variety of bilateral and international issues since the establishment of diplomatic relations in 1978. Bangladesh has always stood alongside the Maldives in the face of natural disasters and humanitarian crises. Bangladesh provided immediate humanitarian help to the Maldives, particularly in the aftermath of the tsunami and during the Maldives' drinking water crisis. The two countries

emphasized the need of boosting trade and investment ties. During the bilateral talk between the two countries, significant progress has been made in the field of economic, social, and political issues.

Aside from bilateral problems, Bangladesh's Prime Minister and the Prime Ministers of the Maldives discussed cooperative collaboration on several regional and worldwide challenges. Both the Prime Ministers have pledged a common approach to issues like SAARC, the Indian Ocean Rim Association, and combating terrorism, militancy, and extremism for the sake of regional stability, and peace. The Golden Bangladesh of Bangabandhu believes in wealth and socioeconomic growth. "I am extremely happy to see thousands of Bangladeshis working together in the Maldives to contribute to the economic development of both the countries," Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina stated.

Bangladesh has praised the Maldives for its commitment to combating the effects of climate change and keeping the tourism industry alive even during the Corona pandemic. The Maldives, like the rest of the world, has been severely hit by the global pandemic. The Maldivian government, NGOs, and the Bangladesh High Commission are providing humanitarian aid to Bangladeshi expatriates living there. All ex-pats are being provided free corona tests, free coronavirus vaccine, and quarantine medical help from the Maldivian government. Both side agreed to strengthen bilateral partnerships in order to expand commerce, investment, and people-to-people ties.



Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and Maldives President Ibrahim Mohammed Solih speaking at the President's office in Male, Maldives

Bangladesh and the Maldives share the same faith and cultural values along with a common development goal. 'President Ibrahim Solih has revolutionized the Maldivian economy through inter-island connectivity, green tourism, climate-friendly

from all over the world. A 10-member Bangladesh Army medical team has been sent to the Maldives to help the victims of Corona. In addition, the Bangladesh government provided necessary medicines and medical supplies, as



The Maldives Chief of Defense Force Maj. Gen Abdulla Shamaal and Bangladesh's Chief of Army Staff Gen S.M. Shafiuddin Ahmed exchanged symbolic keys to military vehicles provided by Bangladesh to the Maldives

infrastructure, and clean energy, according to Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina.

The Maldives is an Indian Ocean island republic with over 1,200 islands. With its sunny sky, bluish-green waters, white sandy beaches, the Maldives is a popular destination for visitors

well as personal protective equipment (PPE), masks, gloves, disinfecting hand sanitizers, and essential food items, to the Maldives by the sea in April 2020. Many people lost their jobs as construction projects came to a standstill and tourism-related resorts, hotels, and restaurants closed.

Undocumented Bangladeshi expatriates in this case also suffered and endured hardships. Three agreements in the domains of health, education, double taxation, prisoner exchange, and youth and sports have been inked between Bangladesh and the Maldives to boost bilateral relations to new heights. Sheikh Hasina's Vision-2041 for the Bangladeshi government is to meet the people's expectations by accomplishing Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman's ambition of building a golden Bengal. The Prime Minister is dedicated to completing the SDGs in the period allotted. The PM announced her government's ambitions to conduct development projects in Bangladesh and transform the country into a developed nation by 2041. Bangladesh's Prime Minister, Sheikh Hasina, stated that the country is putting in all of its efforts to fully implement the Delta Plan.

In the small island country of Maldives, there are roughly one lakh Bangladeshi ex-pats, accounting for 80 percent of all expatriate workers. Bangladeshi expatriates operate in practically every industry, including construction, tourism, marketing, communication, and the health sector. Many expatriate Bangladeshis have recently been undocumented in the Maldives due to the expiry of visas, Maldivian government undertook a regularization program in 2019 to solve the issue. There are renewed agreements and memorandums of understanding between the Maldives and Bangladesh in a variety of sectors including industries, health, education, human resource export, civil



Bangladesh PM Sheikh Hasina and Maldivian President Ibrahim Mohammed Solih.

aviation, and information technology. Their visa issue and renewal was also negotiated through the renewed agreement.

The current government has focused on extending new areas of bilateral cooperation, to strengthen bilateral relations with the sister country of Maldives. Both countries have shown an interest in expanding human resource development cooperation as well as collaborating to expand trade and commerce. Furthermore, the Maldives' support for Bangladesh's stand on Rohingya Muslims repatriation and a trial of the Myanmar military before the International Court of Justice for 'Crimes against humanity is much to be appreciated.

It is envisaged that greater diplomatic activity between the two countries will benefit the two countries and their peoples by increasing mutual collaboration in different fields, including trade and business. Various agreements were inked in the presence of both leaders after bilateral talks between Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and Maldives President Ibrahim Mohammed Solih. Later in the briefing, the

two leaders stated that they had productive bilateral conversations to promote bilateral trade, investment, and communication. "We have had comprehensive discussions with President Solih on strengthening bilateral trade, investment, and communication," Sheikh Hasina said during the joint briefing. Fisheries development and deep-sea fishing, the Joint Commission on Technical and Economic Cooperation, the elimination of dual taxation, the exchange of convicts, and the completion of a memorandum of understanding were among the topics covered by the two parties. Despite previous possibilities, Bangladesh and the Maldives have yet to completely realize their bilateral trade and investment potential. A very fruitful debate about the general state of bilateral relations between the two countries took place. They also talked about multilateral cooperation, especially counter-terrorism.

During the meeting, the two leaders committed to collaborating on addressing climate change and the early return of Rohingya Muslims to Myanmar. In addition, on behalf of their respective governments,

the Ministers of Health of Bangladesh and the Maldives renewed a Memorandum of Understanding on different aspects of healthcare and medical sciences. During her maiden six-day bilateral visit to the Maldives, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina met with Maldivian President Ibrahim Mohammed Solih. During the visit, Bangladesh gifted the Maldives with 13 military vehicles as a token of friendship between the two South Asian Nations.

"No country in the world can progress if it is isolated from the rest of the world. In the interests of a developed, safe, and affluent society, they must be interdependent and share their experiences. The Covid-19 outbreak has taught everyone that. There is no way for a country to progress on its own. I believe our warm and friendly relations would be further reinforced," stated Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina. Bangladesh is making strides toward prosperity and promise. "I implore you to join us on our 50-year development journey for the mutual benefit of the Maldives' public and private sectors." The year 2021 will be a watershed moment in bilateral relations between Bangladesh and the Maldives. Where high-level visits were made, constructive bilateral meetings between the appropriate authorities were held, and experience in different domains of mutual interest was shared.

Syed Md Atiqul Islam Atique

Entrepreneur & Media Specialist



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BANGABANDHU

The Artistic Leader

- Abul Hasan Chowdhury

Darling of the Millions Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman was a harbinger of new thought and Ambassador of a new faith. The history of his life tells the tale of the Bengali people, their struggle and aspirations. Drawn from a religious and aristocratic lineage Bangabandhu was born in the marshy plains of what was a subdivision at that time, now a district Gopalganj.

From his early days, Bangabandhu invested his indefatigable energy for the upliftment of the downtrodden and the hapless.

His restless spirit found expression in sports and social activities dedicated to the well-being of his people. A

bright and enthusiastic student Bangabandhu went to Calcutta in his early teens to pursue his studies at the Islamia College. While in Calcutta he took up residence in Baker Hostel. At this hostel, I take pride in mentioning one of his co-residents was my father Late Justice Abu Sayeed Chowdhury. Their enduring friendship was a testament to mutual love and respect.

His name continues to conjure vision in dreaming hearts and brings courage to drooping spirits. He belongs to humanity and will continue to inspire and invigorate oppressed people of every shade and color.

Born in the village of Tungipara under the then

Gopalganj Subdivision (now District) of the then Faridpur District on March 17, 1920. In 1933, Bangabandhu married Sheikh Fazilatunnesa (Renu). Together they had two daughters, Sheikh Hasina and Sheikh Rehana, and three sons, Sheikh Kamal, Sheikh Jamal, and Sheikh Russel. Bangabandhu was elected councilor of the All-India Muslim League from Bengal in 1943. He continued to serve admirably in this position till the partition of India in 1947. Begum Mujib contributed immensely to the struggle of Bangabandhu by not only providing courage and strength but also addressing the materiality of existence with utmost magnanimity and calmness during Bangabandhu's long prison terms.



When Sheikh Mujibur Rahman became Bangabandhu

Bangabandhu initiated our nationalist movement by founding the East Pakistan Students League. Just six months after the creation of Pakistan in 1947. He also acted as the architect and principal organizer in founding the Awami Muslim League, the first-ever opposition political party in Pakistan, in the year 1949.

In 1949, Bangabandhu, an extraordinary political visionary and a charismatic leader of people, ignited our liberation movement by amalgamating the language movement with the

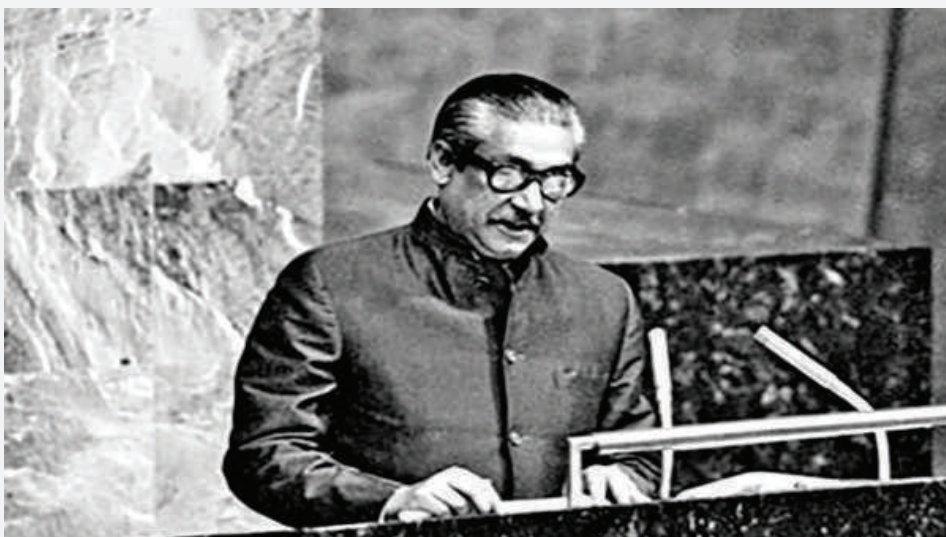
economic demands of the fourth-class employees of the University of Dhaka. While a student of law in that university, he organized and led the movement of the employees. In the wake of this event, he was taken to prison and the authorities expelled him from the University. He was the first-ever student of the University of Dhaka who had been expelled for good due to political activism.

Thus, Bangabandhu began his political movement against colonial rule, immediately after

the creation of Pakistan. By the year 1966, he was able to establish himself as the principal leader of the people. In 1966, he declared the historical Six Points program, the Magna Carta of the Banalis, which he preached in the then East Pakistan. Millions of people listened to his words and began dreaming of breaking the chain of slavery of the Pakistani rulers. Having been convicted in the Agartala Conspiracy case, while waiting to be hanged in Dhaka Cantonment, he called his people to rise against the Pakistani rule-based on 6- and 11-point demands. People from all walks of life - thousands upon thousands came out in bands and chanted slogans for Bangabandhu and the independence of Bangladesh. This was during the fiery days of 1969 when the people created a new history. One of people's mutinies is seldom seen in a nation's history.

The Agartala Conspiracy case was withdrawn and Bangabandhu was released from jail. Having been empowered with legal and supreme authority by his people through the general election in 1970, Bangabandhu drew the plan and program of freedom of Bangladesh.

On February 18, 1971, Bangabandhu had a secret meeting with the principal leaders of the Bangladesh Liberation Force (BLF). He said to them: "Probably we will not have much time in hand. The movement for the last move is knocking at the door. Organize your cadres and convey my message of armed struggle to every student league worker. In my absence, if it so happens,



Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman addressing the 29th session of the UNGA on 25 September 1974



Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman.

you accompanied by Tajuddin Ahmed will go to Indira Gandhi for arms and training for our freedom fighters."

In his greatest address on March 7, 1971, he explained the logic of our liberation movement during 24 years against the colonial rule of Pakistan. In that address, for the first time in the open, Bangabandhu called upon the people for a War of Liberation to liberate the country from the colonial rule of Pakistan.

After March 7, 1971, Bangabandhu took over the responsibility of administration and since then he became the real administrative authority of Bangladesh. On March 15, Yahya Khan, President, and Chief Martial Law Administrator came to Dhaka for a meeting with

Bangabandhu. Before he arrived at Dhaka, Bangabandhu appointed Col. Osmani as the de facto Commander in Chief of the Bangladesh Army that would fight for independence. Bangabandhu received Yahya Khan addressing him as the guest of Bangladesh.

At a press conference on the same day, responding to a question by Van Gaugin of London Times, he said: **"Pakistan is finished. There is no way of conciliation."**

At the meeting held on March 24, 1971, Bangabandhu demanded the constitutional independence of Bangladesh and with this demand, the discussion between Mujib and Yahya came to an end. On the same day, he had a series of meetings with his

party high command, ex-army officers, including the C in C, and the leaders of BLF to decide on the declaration of independence. By that time a

At the meeting held on March 24, 1971, Bangabandhu demanded the constitutional independence of Bangladesh and with this demand, the discussion between Mujib and Yahya came to an end. On the same day, he had a series of meetings with his party high command, ex-army officers, including the C in C, and the leaders of BLF to decide on the declaration of independence. By that time a brigade of thirty thousand men from among the ex-forces, including students and others, listed their names for the war. The BLF by then had organized fifteen thousand cadres, who were waiting to receive the command to go to war. As pre-preparedness, he recorded his declaration of independence and handed over a letter to the BLF high command for Indira Gandhi, the Prime Minister of India.

Upon getting the news of the army crackdown on the night of March 25, Bangabandhu instructed his close associates to lead the armed struggle from hiding. At that very crucial moment of that night, Bangabandhu took the most important decision in his life. He declared the independence of Bangladesh. He dictated his message of independence to a faithful person at the central telegraph office to circulate it across the country.

Right after the proclamation, he was arrested and taken to a Pakistani prison. On April 10, 1971, the first government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh



10 January 1972, Bangabandhu returned to his beloved motherland Bangladesh.

was formed, and Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman was elected as President by the constituent assembly. After nine months of bloody war, Bangladesh was liberated with the surrender of the Pakistan occupation army on December 16, 1971. During August & September of 1971, the Pakistan Junta held a secret trial of Bangabandhu and sentenced him to death. The freedom-loving people of the world were enraged and demanded the security of the President of Bangladesh.

Forced by international pressure and the imperatives of its domestic predicament, Pakistan was obliged to release Sheikh Mujib from its jail soon after the liberation of Bangladesh and, on 10 January 1972, the great leader returned to his beloved land and his admiring nation.

But as he saw the plight of the country, his heart bled and he knew that there would be no moment of rest for him. Almost the entire nation, including about ten million people returning from their refuge in India, had to be rehabilitated,

the shattered economy needed to be put back on track, the infrastructure had to be rebuilt, millions had to be saved from starvation and law and order had to be restored. Simultaneously, a new constitution had to be framed, a new parliament had to be elected and democratic institutions had to be put in place. Any ordinary mortal would break down under the pressure of such formidable tasks that needed to be addressed on a top priority basis. Although simple at heart, Sheikh Mujib was a man of cool nerves and great strength of mind. Under his charismatic leadership, the country soon began moving on the road to progress and the people found their long-cherished hopes and aspirations being gradually realized.

In 1974 Bangladesh received world recognition by becoming the 136th member of the United Nations on September 17. On September 25, at the 29th General Assembly of the United Nations, Sheikh Mujibur Rahman addressed the world in Bangla, the first-ever Bangla speech delivered at the UN.

But at this critical juncture, his life was cut short by a group of anti-liberation reactionary forces who, in a pre-dawn move on 15 August 1975, not only assassinated him but 23 of his family members and close associates.

“The appearance of Sheikh Mujib was the biggest event in the national history of Bangladesh. His burial did not take place through his death. More pragmatic, efficient, capable, and dynamic political personalities than Sheikh Mujib might have emerged or may emerge, but it will be very difficult to find someone who has contributed more to the independence movement of Bangladesh and the shaping of its national identity.” He had endeavored to uphold the interests of the Bengalis throughout his life and had never compromised until his objectives were attained. He used to say: “My strength is that, I love human beings. My weakness is that I love them too much.” The position of Bangabandhu vis-à-vis other doers in the civil society of Bangladesh will become clear if the events of 1971 and 1971-75 are analyzed. It is impossible to write the history of pre-and post-independence Bangladesh without mentioning him. For the people of Bangladesh, every living moment is a Bangabandhu moment.

Abul Hasan Chowdhury

Fmr. State Minister
Ministry of Foreign Affairs,
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VICTORY DAY- 2021

16th Of December 1971: Revisited

- Mohammad Shafiqul Islam

As the nation celebrates the birth centenary of the Father of the Nation, Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, and the 50 years of Independence of Bangladesh, 'Victory Day' this year, carries landmark significance in the nation's history. Back in 1971, the War of Liberation lasted for nine months, from 26 March till 16 December.

The war was the culmination of the continuous deterioration of relations between East and West Pakistan on the issues related to land reforms, state

language, inter-wing economic and administrative disparities, provincial autonomy, the defense of East Pakistan, and many other consequential questions that had been straining the relations between the two wings of Pakistan ever since her independence from Britain in 1947.

In the general elections of 1970, Bangabandhu's Awami League bagged 167 seats out of 169, making Bangabandhu the sole spokesman of the people of East Pakistan and leader of the majority in the Pakistan National

Assembly. But the Pakistan civil and military nexus as opposed to the unconditional transfer of power to the majority leader Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and his party. Bangabandhu was also stubbornly defiant to the pressure put on him by the West Pakistani nexus for unfair power sharing.

Sheikh Mujib's historic address on 7 March 1971 called upon the Bengali Nation to mobilize all their resources to resist Pakistani repression. His call was followed by the civil disobedience



7th March, 1971 Bangabandhu's Historic Speech at SAHRAWARDI UDDAN

movement. All talks failed, the genocide, code-named 'Operation Search Light' began with the Pakistan army's crackdown on the people of East Pakistan on the midnight of 25 March 1971. On the same night Bangabandhu, Sheikh Mujibur Rahman was taken prisoner by the Pakistan army. Simultaneously the Bengali soldiers serving in the then Pakistan armed forces and Para militia forces declared their solidarity with the people's liberation war.

The students and the nationalist, political activists put up spontaneous resistance. There were mass uprisings throughout Bangladesh following the declaration of independence on 26 March 1971. These uprisings were participated by government officials, political activists, students, workers, peasants, professionals, and members of the public. After initial resistance, many freedom fighters crossed over into Indian Territory to have a safe sanctuary, due mainly to the enemy's overwhelming superiority of trained soldiers and modern weapons. The

scattered and temporarily retreating rudimentary liberation forces were soon brought under a unified command.

On 4 April, the senior officers of the liberation army assembled at the headquarters of 2nd East Bengal at the tea gardens of Teliapara, where Colonel MAG Osmany, Lieutenant Colonel Abdur Rob, Lieutenant Colonel Salahuddin Mohammad Reja, Major Kazi Nuruzzaman, Major Khaled Mosharraf, Major Nurul Islam, Major Shafat Jamil, Major Mainul Hossain Chowdhury, and others were present. In this meeting, four senior commanders were entrusted with the responsibility of operational areas. Sylhet-Brahmanbaria area was placed under the command of Major Shafiullah. Comilla-Noakhali area was given to Major Khaled Mosharraf while Chittagong-Chittagong Hill Tracts was given to Major Ziaur Rahman. Kushtia-Jessore area was placed under command of Major Abu Osman Chowdhury. In the meeting, the organizational concept of the freedom fighter forces and the

command structure were chalked out. Colonel MAG Osmany was to command the liberation forces, later named as MuktiBahini.

An exile government called the 'People's Republic of Bangladesh Government' alias 'Mujibnagar Government' was formed on 10 April with Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman as President of the Republic, Syed Nazrul Islam as Vice President and Tajuddin Ahmed as Prime Minister.

The headquarters of the Bangladesh Forces was established on 12 April 1971 at Calcutta. Lieutenant Colonel M A Rab was appointed as Chief of Staff and Group Captain A K Khandaker as Deputy Chief of Staff. Bangladesh was divided into eleven sectors and different sub-sectors for operational purposes during the Sector Commander's conference held from 10 to 17 July 1971.

On 27 March, Prime Minister of India, Mrs. Indira Gandhi, extended full support of her government to the freedom struggle of the Bangalis. Indian Border Security Force (BSF) opened the Bangladesh-India border to allow the tortured and panic-stricken Bangalis to seek safe shelter in India. The governments of West Bengal, Bihar, Assam, Meghalaya, and Tripura established refugee camps along the border. These camps were readily used for the recruitment of the freedom fighters. The students, peasants, workers, and political activists enthusiastically joined the MuktiBahini. They were given training on tactics and the use of arms and explosives. On completion of training, they were posted to different



Children of a free Nation Celebrating
sectors to fight the enemy.

Besides MuktiBahini, many other Bahinis were organized inside Bangladesh at different places to fight Pakistan Army. MujibBahini was organized in India with the active assistance of Major General Oban of the Indian army who was an expert in guerilla warfare. MujibBahini was trained at Dehradun. Student League leaders Sheikh Fazlul Haq Mani, Tofael Ahmed, Abdur Razzak, and Sirajul Alam Khan were organizers of this Bahini.

MuktiBahini consisted of the regular and the irregular forces. The regulars included East Bengal Regiment and EPR troops. The irregular forces, which after initial training joined different sectors, consisted of the students, peasants, workers, and political activists.

Irregular forces were inducted inside Bangladesh territory to adopt guerilla warfare against the enemy. The regular forces were engaged in fighting conventionally. The first



Jubilant 'Mukti Bahini' celebrating Victory

conventional brigade was named as 'Z' Force. This brigade consisted of 1, 3, and 8 East Bengal. The second regular brigade 'S' Force was created in October and consisted of 2 and 11 East Bengal. The 'K' Force was created with 4, 9, and 10 East Bengal.

Bangladesh Air Force was established at Dimapur of Nagaland on 28 September 1971. Eight officers and 67 airmen initially formed the Bangladesh Air Force strength, which had only one Dakota DC-3, one DHC-Otter airplane, and one Alluette-III helicopter in its inventory.

Similarly, Bangladesh Navy was established on 9 November 1971, with the naval troops who deserted from Pakistan Navy. The first naval fleet 'Bangabandhu Naubahar' was established comprising six small ships. The command structure of the Bangladesh Forces was fully organized with the regular brigades and guerilla forces along with Bangladesh Navy and Bangladesh Air Force.

The MuktiBahini had fought many successful battles in putting up initial resistance. But within a short time, they were temporarily contained by the Pakistan army and were compelled to withdraw to the safe sanctuary inside the Indian Territory. The MuktiBahini was, however, re-equipped, reorganized, and retrained to resume fighting with fresh zeal by April 1971.

Having realized that, it would be difficult to defeat the Pakistan army through conventional means, it was decided to create large guerilla forces spread all over the country. All Sector



Victory Day celebration at the National Memorial, Savar

commanders were accordingly ordered to recruit, train and induct guerilla fighters inside the territory of Bangladesh.

The joint command was established between the MuktiBahini and the supporting forces, consisting of the Indian army's, 57 Mountain Division. Lieutenant General Jagjit Singh Aurora, Commander, Eastern Command of Indian Army, became the commander of the joint forces.

'MuktiBahini' and Supporting Forces carried out their first joint operation with the direct support of the Indian air force on 21 November 1971 in the battle of 'Garibpur', and successfully captured the village of 'Boyra', in Jessore. Boyra became the first liberated territory of Bangladesh during the War of Liberation. Full-scale Indo-Pak war broke out on 3rd December 1971. 'MuktiBahini' and the supporting forces of the Indian army thrust into Bangladesh a lightning speed and on the same night, as a part of a joint operation, the Bangladesh air force carried out its first-ever bombing raid, successfully targeting Chittagong Oil Refinery. Very soon, the defeat and surrender of the

Pakistan army became imminent. International efforts for a cease-fire failed due to Soviet veto in the United Nations Security Council.

The Indian troops and the freedom fighters of Sector 11 reached Tongi on 14th of December, and Savar on the morning of 16 December. The MuktiBahini and the Indian forces entered Dhaka city at 10:10 a. m on the same day.

The instrument of surrender was signed by Lieutenant General Jagjit Singh Aurora and Lieutenant General Niazi at the Ramna Racecourse (Suhrawardy Udyan) at one minute past 5 p.m on 16 December 1971. Group captain AK Khandaker, deputy chief of staff, Bangladesh forces, represented the 'MuktiBahini' during the signing ceremony.

After the triumphant military victory in the War of Liberation, return of the Father of the Nation, Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman on 10 January 1972 subsequent withdrawal of Supporting forces along with 93,000 Pakistani POWs from the soil of sovereign Bangladesh culminated into a total freedom for the nation.

Bangladesh started its journey with a reputation of so-called, 'Bottomless basket' Fifty years on, today's Bangladesh stands tall in the community of nations as the Role model. She is one of the fastest-growing economies in the world with per capita income superseding even neighboring India and Pakistan. Bangladesh joined the ranks of Space faring nations through the launch of Bangabandhu-1 Satellite into space and joined the group of countries producing nuclear energy through the setting up of Rooppur Nuclear power plant at Kushtia District. Bangladeshis the largest troop contributing nation for UN peacekeeping missions which amply demonstrate her commitments to the promotion of world peace.

21st February, 'Bangla Mother Language Day' is now internationally observed as the 'International Mother Language Day'. Despite being a vastly Muslim majority country, Bangladesh is a glaring example of communal harmony and peaceful co-existence amongst various religious communities. She is playing a leading role in promoting global awareness on the effect of Climate change, poverty alleviation, women empowerment, food self-sufficiency, and many other humanitarian issues.

Only in 50 years of its independence, Bangladesh is on a fast track of becoming the 'ShonarBangla', a long-cherished dream of Bangabandhu. A realized dream serves as a rich tribute to the Father of the Nation at his Birth Centenary.

Air Commodore M Shafiqul Islam

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A Rohingya Refugee reacts while holding his dead son after crossing the Naf river from Myanmar into Bangladesh in Whaikhyang, October 9, 2017

ROHINGYAS OF MYANMAR

What Does Civil Or Military Government Means To Them

- Commodore Md. Abdur Razzak

Rohingyas, the sad embittered race of mankind are the most persecuted stateless human race in the world. Post independent Burma/Myanmar evicted them from their ancestral abode in cycles of violence in 1978, 1992, 2012 and 2017.

In 1978, military junta Ne Win's 'Operation King Dragon' drove 200,000 Rohingyas into Bangladesh. In 1992, General Saw Maung's military government evicted and pushed 250,000 Rohingyas into Bangladesh. In 2012 about 70,000 Rohingyas took refuge escaping communal riot instigated by local politics.

The largest exodus of Rohingyas was in 2017. Senior General Min Aung Hlaing's 'Area Clearance Operation' rendered more than 700,000 Rohingyas homeless and they ran for their lives to find shelter in Bangladesh.



Rohingya Refugee

Myanmar military's atrocities in 2017 had all elements of genocidal crimes. The objective of the 'Clearance Operation' was to clear Rakhine of Rohingyas. Rohingya homes were burnt, bulldozed and levelled making living places traceless; government confiscated their lands; women were raped; men, women and children were killed and so forth. Besides pushing Rohingyas into Bangladesh, 125,000 were driven into concentration camp in Sittwe

and has been languishing there since 2012.

Rohingyas have been subject to mental and physical tortures of different sorts for decades. They were citizens of Burma under the Citizenship Act 1948. Military dictator General Ne Win enacted new Citizenship Law in 1982 and stripped Rohingyas off citizenship. The new citizenship law was enacted targeting Rohingya minority population because no other ethnicity lost

citizenship under the new law. After revoking citizenship, successive military regimes issued policies and institutionalized persecution against Rohingyas. Hate speech, hate narratives, incitement etc from both the central and local governments successfully embedded hatred in the Buddhist majority population against Rohingyas.

Fortify Rights in 2014 published a report entitled 'Policies of Persecution'. The report mentioned that The [government] documents obtained by Fortify Rights detail restrictions on movement, marriage, childbirth, home repairs and construction of houses of worship, and other aspects of everyday life [mandatory guest registration for neighborhood surveillance, taking permission to travel outside one's own ward and village].

Confidential enforcement guidelines empower security forces to use abusive methods to implement these 'population control measures' [like permission for marriage, taking pregnancy test before marriage, forcing a mother to breast feed her baby in presence of security personnel during family verification]. The evidence presented in this report indicates the involvement of Rakhine State and central government authorities in the formulation and implementation of these policies [of persecution].

The two elections in 2011 and 2015 after fifty years of military rule could not improve the misery of Rohingyas. Brief period of civilian rule (1948-1962) also did not take any initiative to shape the future



Rohingya Refugee



Rohingya Refugees waiting to board boats to Bangladesh on the bank of the Naf River in Myanmar.



Rohingya Refugee

better. Rohingyas had positive views about Aung San Suu Kyi's National League for Democracy (NLD) but did not expect that NLD winning any election would bring fortune for them but

wished a little reduction in the severity of oppression. Unfortunately continuation of maltreatment during the NLD government brushed away their hopes. The tyranny culminated

in committing genocidal crimes by the Myanmar Military in 2017. Neither the Union Solidarity and Development Party (USDP) government (2011-2015) nor the NLD government (2015-2020) did anything to improve their sufferings. Flag Bearers of Human Rights from across the globe persistently offered leap services without any effective action to stop persecution.

The world was taken aback at Suu Kyi's decision to defend military's genocidal crimes in the International Court of Justice (ICJ). Her colleagues in NLD could argue that she did so under 'military compulsion'. According to Dr Sasa, military would have toppled Suu Kyi's government had she not gone to Hague. So handicap is the popularly elected civilian government in Myanmar.



Rohingya Refugee

Anyway, Suu Kyi could not save her government even defending the military's genocidal crimes. She told the court that 'several thousand ARSA fighters attacking more than 30 police posts and villages, and an army base in northern Rakhine was to seize Maungdaw township' and responsible for the situation. The story of 'several thousand ARSA fighters' was not convincing. Estimate 5,000 strength Arakan Army have kept Myanmar military on the toe for years. If 'several thousand ARSA fighters' were involved in the attack then its force strength should have been far more and it should have been a well-organized insurgent group to make situation persistently worse for the military. What she could not tell the court in fear of guns smoking at home that the 'ARSA drama' was an enactment of the Myanmar Army to create an excuse for ethnic cleansing.

Dr. Sasa, a senior leader in the NLD and Myanmar Parliament's Upper House (CRPH) representative to the UN issued a statement on March 26, 2021 after the USA and UK imposed sanction against military owned conglomerates Myanmar Economic Holdings (MEHL) and Myanmar Economic Corporation (MEC). He said that 'These sanctions target the source of wealth and income of military Generals who have killed innocent people and committed ethnic cleansing against the Kachin, Karen, Kayah, Shan, Mon, Rakhine, Chin and Rohingya. These same Generals are guilty of war crimes and crimes against humanity. He also emphatically told the Aljazeera's Upfront on 26 March 2021 that the military has committed genocide against Rohingyas. This is the first time in the history of Myanmar that a senior political leader used the

word 'Rohingya' addressed them as minority and confessed military's genocidal crimes against them.

Myanmar Governments whether it was a military or civilian government did not recognize Rohingyas as ethnic minority rather used derogatory words to indicate this minority population and inflicted unabated misery upon them. Military's notorious brutality upon the people of Myanmar since February 1, 2021 should be a call awakening the conscious of people and political leadership, let the humanity hope it has begun with Dr. Sasa. However, time will say, what did his comment signify for the Rohingyas?

Commodore Md. Abdur Razzak (Retd)

Security Analyst

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Seminar on Rohingya Crisis & Repatriation: What is to be done

INTERNATIONAL SEMINAR ON ROHINGYA CRISIS & REPATRIATION: WHAT IS TO BE DONE

- **Mohammad Shafiqul Islam**

Nearly a million Rohingya refugees remain in Bangladesh four years after being forcefully expelled by Myanmar's military yet no concrete solution is in sight. The notion of a safe, voluntary return to Rakhine State has been unsustainable after Myanmar's February coup d'état. Meanwhile, conditions in Cox's Bazar, where the Rohingya are housed in 34 camps, have gotten worse with each passing year. The Rohingya refugees have been put on edge by extreme weather, many fires, and an increase in crime. According to relief organizations, programming has been hampered by a reduction in humanitarian space, which includes access limitations and cumbersome bureaucratic hurdles.



Seminar on Rohingya Crisis & Repatriation: What is to be done

As the response approaches its fifth year, it is critical that stakeholders keep the end aim in mind. Humanitarian groups, too, strive to "work themselves out of a job," in which the need for emergency aid is transformed into self-sufficiency. While a voluntary and safe return to Myanmar remains a desire, it is unlikely to happen anytime soon. It is now up to all stakeholders working to assist the Rohingya and host communities to consider how this protracted displacement catastrophe will unfold over the coming few years. The route forward will be influenced by two factors: identifying flaws in the existing response and working on interim, remedial procedures to guarantee that both refugees and the host community are properly supported.

The Rohingya influx has put a strain on the district's Bangladeshi minority, particularly in the upazilas of Teknaf and Ukhia, where the Rohingya now account for more than a third of the total

population. The majority of the population is made up of women and children. Cox's Bazar is a city in Bangladesh's south-east, located in the Chittagong division and bordering Myanmar. As cross-border migration between Myanmar and Bangladesh grows, environmental imbalance threatens the flora and fauna of Bangladesh's Cox's Bazar district. Cox's Bazar has grown into the world's largest refugee camp, with cyclones, flooding, and landslides all posing threats.

A Seminar on the topic of 'Rohingya crisis and Repatriation: What is to be done' was organized by the 'DIPLOMATS world' Publications, in Hotel Radisson Blu, Dhaka, on Monday, the 20th December, 2021.

H.E. Dr. A. K. Abdul Momen, Honorable Minister Ministry of Foreign Affairs Government of People's Republic of Bangladesh was the Chief Guest. The seminar was attended by the foreign Diplomats, Stake holders, Intellectuals and heads

of International organizations.

Abul Hasan Chowdhury, Former State Minister, Ministry of Foreign Affairs & Executive Advisor, and Nazinur Rahim, the Executive, Editor along with the entire team of DIPLOMATS world, hosted the meet.

Dr. Imtiaz Ahmed, Department of International Relations, University of Dhaka and Prof. Dr. Delwar Hussain, Department of International Relations, University of Dhaka, were the two Keynote speakers.

Prof Imtiaz Ahmed, suggested during his speech for a wider and vigorous engagement of the major regional players like China, India and Japan, for an immediate and total repatriation of the Rohingya refugees to Myanmar.

"These countries have excellent relationship with both Bangladesh and Myanmar and are heavily involved in aiding development activities of both the countries, and as such can play a key role in resolving the crisis," he said at the seminar.



Panel Speaker



Special Guest

He observed that the western countries had not imposed sanctions on Myanmar for so long, as they tried to promote democracy under Aung San Suu Kyi, but now the country is under a military regime and more than a thousand civilians were killed by the military since February 2021.

“Stringent economic sanction is the only way to put pressure on Myanmar” he remarked.

Prof Delwar Hossain said, “Myanmar has been perpetrating atrocities against dozens of ethnic minority groups for many decades. Myanmar military along with extremist Buddhist

nationals have been carrying out ethnic cleansing of Rohingyas but the global community has not been taking serious note of it”.

He suggested that the UNGA include the issue of stiff sanctions in its resolution on Myanmar.

He also said the global civil society has been observant on the situation of Rohingyas in Bangladesh, but not the persecution in Myanmar and it is high time the international community shifts its focus on Myanmar atrocities.

Bangladesh wants the

international community to put pressure on Myanmar by imposing economic sanctions and arms embargo so that this South East Asian country stops all atrocities and takes back Rohingyas from Bangladesh at the earliest.

Foreign Minister A K Abdul Momen also floated the idea of forming a coalition of friends who would be willing to address the issue of Rohingya refugee that has created a significant regional tension.

“Many of our development partners have been pouring weapons into Myanmar. This is very sad. There are countries provided arms worth \$2.4 billion,” he exclaimed.

Besides China and Russia, India, South Korea, North Korea, Israel, Ukraine and the Philippines are supplying weapons to Myanmar, even after the military coup in February 2021.

“There should be immediate international sanctions on arms sales to Myanmar.

“Unless Myanmar is under effective pressure, they are not going to yield. At the moment, that pressure is missing,” Momen said.

He also said many of the western countries that are opposed to genocide and proponent of human rights are still increasing their trade with Myanmar. In the last four years, their business with Myanmar has increased manifold.

Bangladesh has sheltered Rohingyas since the 1970s when they fled persecution by Myanmar authorities.



Seminar Audience

In the past, effective pressures including economic sanctions prompted Myanmar to take back Rohingyas, but this time, despite the agreements, there has not been any repatriation since the largest influx of 750,000 Rohingyas in 2017,.

“Apart from putting pressure, the friendly countries and UN agencies need to work to create conducive conditions for their dignified return in Rakhine state”, he said.

After the keynote speech, the following members participated in the panel discussion; Ashraful Hadi, Lawyer, Prof. Abdul Mannan, Vice Chairman, ICLDS, Commodore Md. Abdur Razzak (Retd), Security Analyst, Major Emdadul Haque (Retd.) Ex Diplomats, Masood Rahman Proshoon, Writer-Filmmaker, Sheepa Hafiza Social worker, Brig Gen Dr. Shakhawat Hossain (Retd), Security Analyst, Asif Munir, Migration Expert, Prof.Dr. Mohammad Shahidullah, Health Worker.

General opinion came out of the panelists is that, Bangladesh has single handedly championed the cause of the Rohingyas by giving them shelter and security in its own soil on humanitarian grounds after they have escaped

persecutions in Myanmar. UN refugee agency is providing necessary support to the refugees camped in Bangladesh but they are not doing anything to create a favorable condition in Rakhine state itself so that the Rohingyas could be safely back to their homes with dignity. The International community is not doing enough to pressurize Myanmar Government to take back the Rohingas to their own homeland land, rather, some agencies are suggesting that Bangladesh should consider providing them the right to education and other basic social services. Some agencies are in the opinion that, Bangladesh should consider providing Bangladeshi citizenship to the Rohingya refugees.

Brig Gen (retd) M Sakhawat Hussain – a security expert and former election commissioner said, “Generally western countries impose sanctions in such a situation. If the US imposes such sanctions on arms supplies, it will surely be a blow to Myanmar, as many of the countries will not be able to do financial transactions with her”, he said.

Also, having a coalition of friends is a good idea because a number of countries, including

Bangladesh, Pakistan, Malaysia, Thailand, Saudi Arabia, Canada and the Netherlands face problems due to the influx of Rohingya refugees. They can surely form a coalition and work globally to address the crisis. If Bangladesh wants repatriation of the Rohingyas, it needs to explore different avenues including establishing contacts with the National Unity Government (elected government leaders) and the Arakan Army that is trying to establish autonomy in Rakhine state. Through these agencies, Bangladesh would be able to pressurize Myanmar military juntas to take back the Rohingas,” he added.

UNDP Resident Representative Sudepto Mukherjee gave an elaborate run down of the activities of UNDP viz a viz the Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh and among others, Bhorer Kagoj Editor Shyamal Dutta also deliberated at the panel discussion.

Seminar started with welcome speech by Dr. Mohammed Faruque, Advisor Diplomats Publication. After the concluding remarks from Abul Hasan Chowdhury, Fmr. State Minister, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Executive Advisor, Diplomats Publication. Finally vote of thanks from Nazinur Rahim, Executive Editor, Diplomats Publication brought the seminar into a close.

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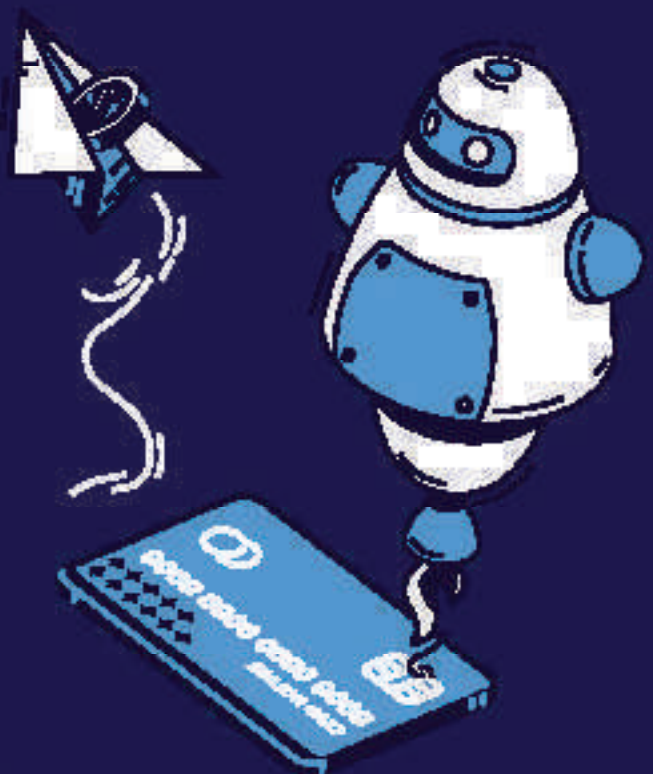


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CLIMATE CHANGE

An Existential Threat For Bangladesh

- Lutfun Nahar Taposhi

Bangladesh is categorized as a country most susceptible to climate change due to its inherent geographic location, flat and low-lying topography, high density of population, high dependency on climate-sensitive sectors like agriculture and fisheries, along with insufficient institutional support. Many of the expected negative impacts due to the rise in global temperature are sea-level rise, increased monsoon precipitations, increased cyclone intensity, which will exacerbate the already existing stresses like reduced water and food security, damage to essential infrastructure. These consequences might be disastrous for Bangladesh's economy, ecology, national development, and people.



Climate change induced salinity affecting soil across Coastal Bangladesh.

According to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) by the end of the century, the Earth's temperature is expected to rise by 2 to 4.5 degrees Celsius, and the sea level is anticipated to increase 0.18 to 0.59 meters by that time. According to the US Environmental Protection Agency, if polar ice melts at the same rate as world average temperatures, sea levels might rise by 0.49 to 0.79 meters by 2100. According to the IPCC, a 45-centimeter rise in sea level will inundate about 10.9 percent of Bangladesh's landmass, displacing about 5.5 million people of coastal districts. Water stress-induced by climate change is expected to affect between 500 and 750 million people throughout the world by 2020. The sea level will have risen 2%, 4% by 2050, and 17.5 percent by 2100. The agricultural output will be substantially reduced, food security will be jeopardized, and poverty will be exacerbated. By 2020, GHG emissions must be decreased by 40 to 45 percent, and by 2050, they must be lowered by 90 to 95 percent from the present level.

South Asia will face increased droughts and floods and a loss in food production unless

immediate action is taken to curb carbon emissions into the atmosphere. In Bangladesh, 40 percent of fertile land is expected to be lost in the southern area as a result of a 65-centimeter rise in sea level by the 2080s. Bangladesh's flood regions might expand by as much as 29% if the temperature rises by 2.5°C. Bangladesh might lose up to 15% of its land area under seawater if sea levels rise just one meter, and over 30 million people residing in coastal districts could become refugees as a result of climate change consequences.

Tropical cyclones, river erosion, floods, landslides, and drought, which currently wreak havoc, will become more intense and frequent. Bangladesh's shoreline will be progressively inundated by rising sea levels, and river erosion will devastate land and buildings. These and a slew of other negative consequences of climate change will have a significant impact on the country's economy and growth. The forced migration of people throughout Bangladesh as a result of losing their homes, lands, property, and livelihoods would be a few of the most severe consequences. The rising sea level alone is expected to

displace 18 million Bangladeshis in the next 40 years. The great majority of these individuals will be moved internally rather than across international boundaries, posing significant issues for the administration in their rehabilitation. In Bangladesh, the number of "climate change refugees" is anticipated to skyrocket in the next decades. One-fifth of the nation, which is located on the delta formed by some of Asia's largest rivers, is anticipated to be flooded if sea level rises by just 3.2 feet. The poorest people are the most vulnerable to the changing circumstances.

Bangladeshis have already begun to migrate away from the Bay of Bengal's river deltas' low-lying areas. 1.5 million out of five million of Dhaka's slum dwellers have migrated from villages along the shores of the Bay of Bengal. Climate change will have an impact on a variety of sectors in Bangladesh, including water resources, agriculture and food security, ecosystems and biodiversity, human health, and coastal zones. Climate change will exacerbate many environmental and developmental issues. Increased rainfall, particularly with the summer monsoon, will make Bangladesh more flood-prone.

Climate change is expected to have a disastrous impact on agriculture, which accounts for roughly 20% of Bangladesh's GDP and employs 65 percent of the workforce. Crop harvests are expected to drop by up to 30%, putting millions of people in danger of starvation. During the rainy season, global warming raises the risk of floods, erosion, and mudslides, and it may result in the melting down of numerous glaciers that feed

many rivers in South Asia. The MDGs, which include reducing poverty, combating infectious diseases, and guaranteeing environmental sustainability, may be jeopardized.

Food, water, property, settlement, livelihoods, and other aspects of Bangladesh's economy are all threatened by climate change. Degradation of the environment and land resources affects food and health security, among other things. Increased cyclones, storm surges, floods, and riverbank erosion harm and damage properties, such as land, houses, animals, and other livelihood assets. The damage and loss caused by many calamities are multiplied many folds. Riverbank and coastal erosion are rising at an alarming rate as a result of climate change.

Fishing prospects are limited due to the stormy seas. Before, during, and after catastrophes,

health risks, hunger, and lack of access to services restrict working days and opportunities. Women and underprivileged groups suffer the most during catastrophes since they do not receive timely warnings and women are also responsible for their children, the old, and the crippled. The majority of migrants end up in urban slums, mainly in Dhaka, where their steady migration contributes to increased crime and instability. Saline drinking water affects over 20 million people in Bangladesh's coastal districts, while salinity intrusion into the countryside has reached 100 kilometres, degrading agricultural productions.

Climate Change's effect on surface and groundwater supplies would be significant and worrying in a densely populated nation like Bangladesh. Changes in hydrology will have a substantial influence on the economy of the

country, as most people rely on surface water for farming, fishing, industrial production, navigation, and other related activities. Because the rivers are so filthy, Bangladesh relies solely on groundwater for drinking. Bangladesh's cities are sinking as sea levels rise, increasing the risk of floods.

Coastal floods, tidal surges, river-bank erosion, salinity, tropical cyclones, and other factors affect the majority of people who live along the shores. Agriculture, industry, infrastructure (schools, hospitals, roads, bridges, and culverts, among other things), marine resources, forests, biodiversity, human health, and other utility services of the livelihood are affected. Since the average elevation of the entire country is less than 10 meters above sea level, and over 10% of the population lives below 1-meter elevation, the whole coastline area is extremely



The impact of global warming in Bangladesh.



Climate Change & its Impact on Bangladesh

vulnerable to high tides and storm surges.

In some of the world's most vulnerable habitats, such as the Sundarbans and tropical forests, biodiversity would be harmed. Bangladesh contains a diverse range of habitats, including mangrove forests in the far south. The "Sundarbans," a UNESCO World Heritage Site, is the world's biggest mangrove forest, covering 10,000 square kilometres (mainly in Bangladesh) along the Bay of Bengal. There are over 425 species that inhabit there, including the world-famous Royal Bengal Tiger. Climate change will have a detrimental effect on Bangladesh's forest ecosystem, with the Sundarbans expected to suffer the most. Bangladesh is not responsible for producing any significant Green House Gas (GHG) emissions, which are the primary cause of global warming. GHG is emitted by large industrialized nations. With the money provided by the donor agencies to reduce Greenhouse Gas emissions, the government will not be able to make significant progress in lowering emissions and

combating global warming. The 'National Action Plan on Adaptation' (NAPA) from 2005 and the 'Bangladesh Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan' (BCCSAP) from 2009 are examples of such plans. The government is concentrating on boosting agriculture production, productivity, water management techniques, developing infrastructure for surface water irrigation, developing fisheries, and supporting poultry and dairy growth to become a "Middle Income Country" by 2021.

Several governments have agreed to support adaptation and mitigation efforts in underdeveloped countries like Bangladesh. This money will help poor countries improve their ability to decrease emissions and adapt to the effects of climate change. This money will be split between mitigation and infrastructure adaptation in forestry, research, technology, and capacity building, among other areas. By 2020, the Copenhagen Accord (COP 15) promises \$100 million in public and private funding. To construct an inclusive and

comprehensive mitigation program, Bangladesh should prioritize capacity building and disaster management, institutional and infrastructural improvement, research and development, and low-carbon technology. Governments should adopt national climate change adaptation strategies and set aside a certain amount of money in their budgets to monitor the effects of climate change. It is important to stimulate meaningful dialogue on problems of technology and production transfer.

Many of the worst climate consequences might still be averted if global warming is kept below 2°C, and immediate action is needed to create resilience to threats to agriculture, water resources, and coastal infrastructure through economic growth. Bangladesh should be on its way to developing a low-carbon path as its population grows and industrialization accelerates, provided it receives significant financial and technical assistance from the international community. Bangladesh would need to plan for a long-term adaption strategy, which would include identifying all current vulnerabilities and future possibilities, modifying priorities and trade policies in the agriculture sector, and promoting training and education to the public in all domains.

Lutfun Nahar Taposhi

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A MULTI-BILLION DOLLAR IT ROADMAP FOR DIGITAL BANGLADESH

- Aminur Rahman

Bangladesh is one of the fastest-growing economies in the world. Since "Advanced Bangladesh" is a necessary piece of the public authority's Vision 2021, the nation is focused on accomplishing generous advancement in the ICT sector to make "Digital Bangladesh" a reality.

Recognizing the financial benefits of the extension of the ICT sector, the public authority has taken several development-oriented programs. The government established various IT advancements and computerized businesses through the employment of the vast Human Resource of the nation. That is how the ICT sector has made tremendous progress under the present government.

Setting the right priorities with a well-coordinated approach,



the public authority is transforming agro-based Bangladesh into “Digital Bangladesh”.

The government is on the roadmap to work on the development of advanced gadgets in the country to support trade income from the current \$1 billion to \$5 billion by 2025. Simultaneously, the domestic market growth for ICT items along with IT-empowered administrations is set to reach a \$5 billion income target within the stipulated time.

Local production and assembly of items like cell phones, PCs, and workstations will play a significant part in tapping into the imminent \$10 billion IT market at home and abroad within the next four years. The new roadmap is focused on limiting the working of the foreign advanced gadget fabricating industries in Bangladesh to brand locally made items into domestic and international markets.

Appropriate execution of this roadmap will ensure job opportunities for around one

lakh individuals in the advanced gadget fabricating industries. The nation can then produce workstations and cell phones worth about \$2 billion for export to other countries.

The new roadmap, drafted by the ICT Division, has as of late been dispatched to other stake holders for their views and comments.

The ICT Division expects that the execution of the "Made in Bangladesh" concept will make Bangladesh a significant center point of ICT and IoT (Internet of Things) gadget fabrication. It is generally believed that the move will uphold the plan of widespread access to IT.

The new roadmap suggests focusing on the utilization of privately delivered ICT items in government procurements. To this end, an effort will be made to bring such issues to light among government authorities associated with public purchases. It likewise recommends setting up centers in Singapore, the UAE, England, or some other country to work with the commodity of locally manufactured ICT items.

In this new roadmap, emphasis is being laid on different issues including the formation of an innovative labor force, enhancement of product quality, quality assurance, appraisal of worldwide interest, advancement of neighborhood items in unfamiliar business sectors, ensuring copy right protection, and expanding research.

Other than the ICT Division, different services, divisions, and other government elements – including the Ministry of Commerce, the Ministry of External Affairs, the Ministry of Planning, the Ministry of Posts and Telecommunications, the Ministry of Industries, the Ministry of Education, the Bangladesh Computer Council, the Bangladesh High-Tech Park Authority, the Bangladesh Economic Zones Authority (BEZA), the Bangladesh Investment Development Authority (BIDA), the Bangladesh Export Processing Zones Authority (BEPZA), the Export Promotion Bureau, the Bangladesh Standards and Testing Institution (BSTI), the Bangladesh Industrial Technical Assistance Center (BITAC), the National Skill Development Authority, and the University Grants Commission – will work together to execute the roadmap. Different private foundations and associations of business people will likewise play a significant part in leading the roadmap to a success.

As per the International Data Corporation (IDC), Bangladesh imported 3.4 crore telephones worth \$1.18 billion in the 2017 fiscal year and in 2018, the PC market was estimated to be at \$300 million.



The Bangladesh High-Tech Park Authority – set up to use the chance of investigating the capability of the market with a progression of motivations – pronounced exclusion of annual assessment for park designers, financial backers, exception of import obligation, administrative obligation, and beneficial obligation for creating ATM stands and CCTV cameras, exception of obligations on imported capital hardware and development materials by the financial backers.



The new roadmap is pointed towards speeding up the "Made in Bangladesh" drive-by using these offices.

ICT Division believes that the accessibility of the labor force at a serious compensation structure, and expanding homegrown market interest, and a good approach structure are a portion of the variables that make Bangladesh an appealing business sector for computerized

gadget fabrication. The examples of overcoming adversity of assembling organizations, like Walton, Samsung, Oppo, and Data Soft make the division certain with regards to additional improvement of the homegrown advanced gadget producing industry in the coming days.

The division, notwithstanding, has likewise distinguished a few limitations during the time spent on the roadmap execution, one they are the disproportionately high cost in project implementation in Bangladesh.

The other significant limitations that the division has identified are an absence of skilled labor, helpless industry's biological system, quality assurance, and global confirmation for privately fabricated items. An absence of guidelines to focus on similar items in government purchases, absence of careful monitoring of privately made items, and a shortfall of introducing monetary upgrades for the computerized gadget makers.

Regarding Some key strategic factors, the new roadmap has been detailed zeroing in on four vital issues – limit working at the nearby level, society and private

areas, ensuring quality products, innovative output, and strategy support.

The roadmap incorporates a bunch of momentary activities intended to be executed by 2023. It likewise consolidates some mid-term and long-term ones to be executed by 2028 and 2031, separately.

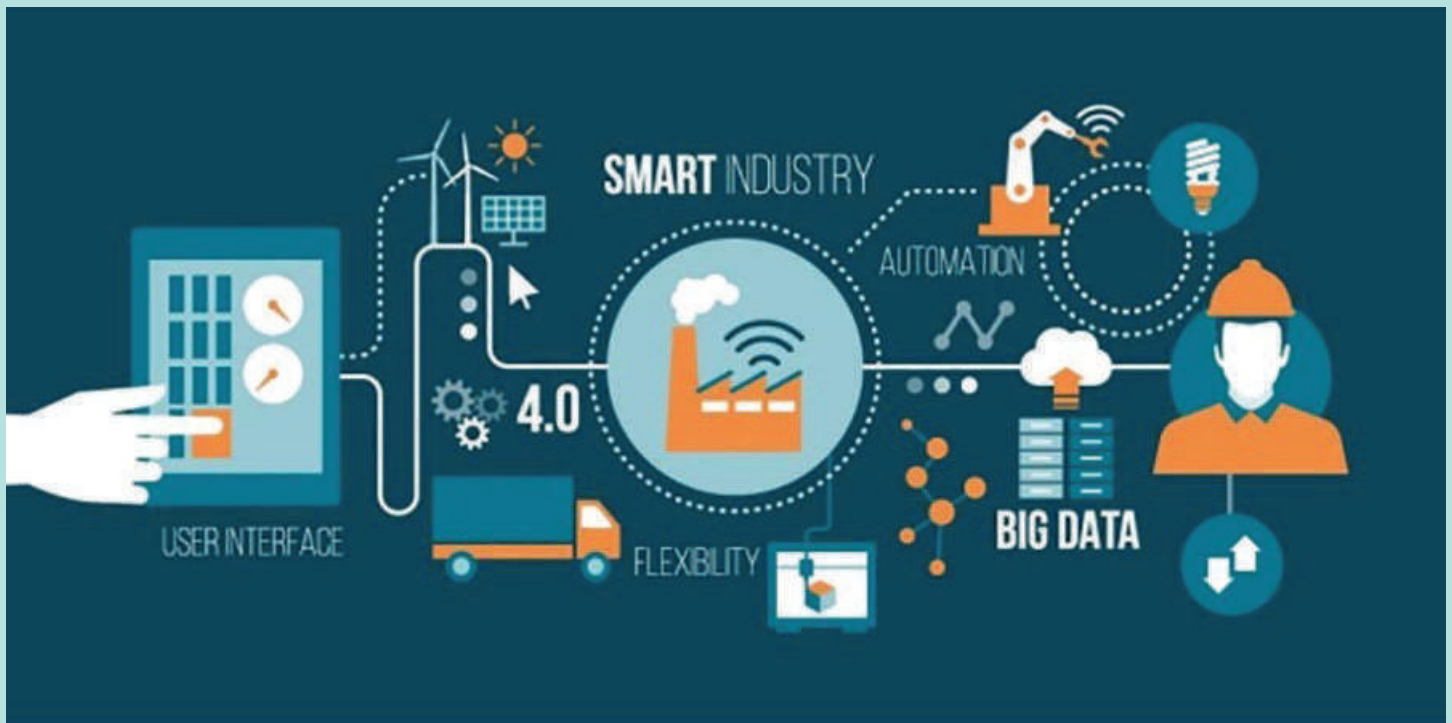
For the time being, the specialists will gauge the interest for innovative items in the wake of investigating the neighborhood along with worldwide business sectors and detail systems for limited fabrication and showcasing.

During this period, testing labs will be set up at the drive of colleges to guarantee the category of IT items. The Ministry of Commerce will take up the task to export products through bilateral and multilateral accords. Product display centers will be set up in Singapore, Dubai, England, and many other countries to trade products overseas.

With the assistance of the ICT Division, colleges will train five lakh, talented specialists, for the ICT sector in the country in the first phase. The National Skill Development Authority will foster worldwide standards in preparing modules and prospectus.

In the following two years, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs will gaze at the perceptions of different nations towards Bangladesh and make effort to remove the negative demeanor if any.

The ICT Division will foster a public entry with subtleties of ICT items fabricated



domestically. Aside from that, measures will be taken to expand attentiveness among authorities, associated with government acquirement of homegrown items.

The National Board of Revenue (NBR) will attempt to minimize different duties on the advanced gadget fabricating industries and its retrogressive linkages to an agreeable level.

The Ministry of Finance will find ways to give credits based on soft conditions to the manufacturer of ICT items, while the Ministry of Commerce will care for the issues pertinent to them.

Experts like AKM Fahim Mashroor, former president of the Bangladesh Association of Software and Information Services (BASIS), advised 'The Business Standard' that, 'The drive to diminish imports by expanding the development of ICT items and expanding trades is exemplary'. He, notwithstanding, recommended

focusing on 'esteem expansion', saying, "Without an arrangement to embark on esteem expansion, such measures won't yield desired results," referring that, a large portion of the entrepreneurs in the IT fabricating field presently import almost 100% of the components from abroad and just assemble those in their local facilities.

"Since the assembled items are not as completed products, the public authority is being denied of revenue income. Then again, the plants are being controlled by utilizing just an ostensible number of individuals."

BASIS President Syed Almas Kabir said, "The software development and solution sector in the country reached a stable position. We have to strengthen the hardware industry in line with the software industry."

Mentioning that some dozen companies have started producing mobile phones in the

country and very few producers are manufacturing laptops, he said, "It is a fact that local factories would assemble digital devices at the initial stage and it would take time to increase the value addition at a standard level after a significant level of skills and knowledge transfer."

He stressed having a clear vision and roadmap to increase value-addition and employment generation.

Praising the move to create the roadmap, Almas Kabir said, "The roadmap is exceptionally fundamental as the degree of interest in super-advanced parks is extremely low. Coordination is limited only among a few services and divisions concerning the advanced gadget industry. The roadmap would help venture and guarantee expanded collaboration.

Aminur Rahman

Director, Dosh General Insurance
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Policy Brief

Opportunities or Threats?

Ensuring Safe Migration for Bangladeshi Female Migrant Workers in Gulf Countries

Hamim Islam

Summary

Whilst migration can bring opportunities for economic growth and development it also brings significant vulnerabilities to female migrants in terms of costs to leave, violence and risk of trafficking in receiving countries. This policy brief raises significant concerns over the safety of Bangladeshi female migrant workers as they encounter myriads of abuses in Bangladesh and the Kafala system of sponsorship in the Gulf. Recommendations include calls to reform both migrant legislation in Bangladesh and the Kafala

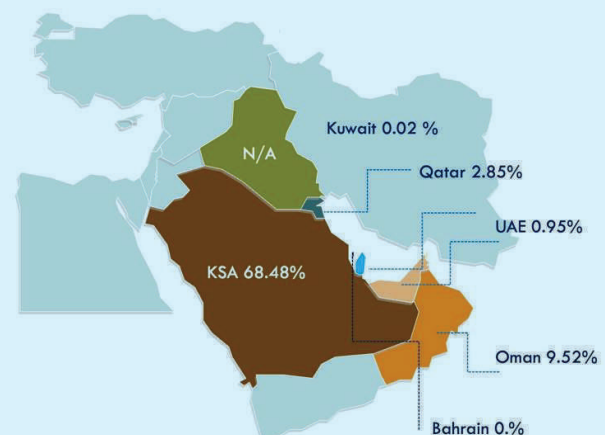
in their lifetimes⁵. Only 36% of women participate in the labor force in Bangladesh and most are confined to the domestic and family spheres⁶.

Many Bangladeshi female migrant workers move to the Gulf (see info-graphic no.1) and yet do not find any improvement in their welfare as their status is stripped further as they enter systems of trafficking and abuse. During Covid-19, Bangladeshi female migrants face more difficulties in accessing social protection due to movement restrictions. A study by UN Network on Migration showed 73% of female migrants from Bangladesh faced violence during lockdowns⁷.

Context

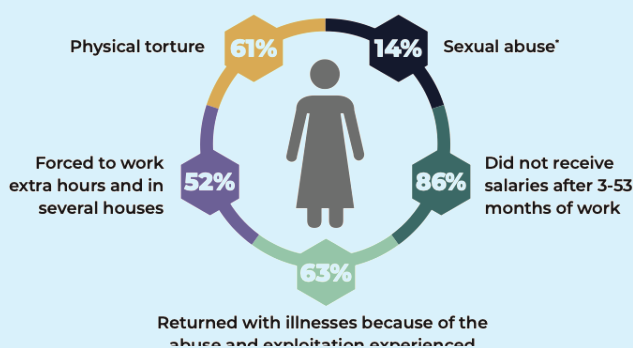
Bangladesh has become one of the major migrant-labor sending countries from the South-Asian region with an increase of one percent of female migrants in 2002 to 15% of all migrants in 2015. This is largely due to partial relaxations on the migration policies in 2005 to adapt Bangladesh's Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper².

Lived experiences of female migrants in Bangladesh reveal a desire 'to escape' from the patriarchal system and restrictions of gendered societal norms^{3,4}. Almost 60% of girls are married before their 18th birthday and two out of three married women have experienced partner violence



Info-graphic 1: % of Gulf Country Employment of Bangladeshi Female Workers in 2021⁸

Info-graphic 2: figures based on the experience of 110 returned women migrants from Gulf Countries⁹:



Info-graphic 3: according to the Expatriate Welfare Desk of Shah Jalal Airport in Bangladesh, from 2016 to 2019¹²:



Key Issues

Bangladesh

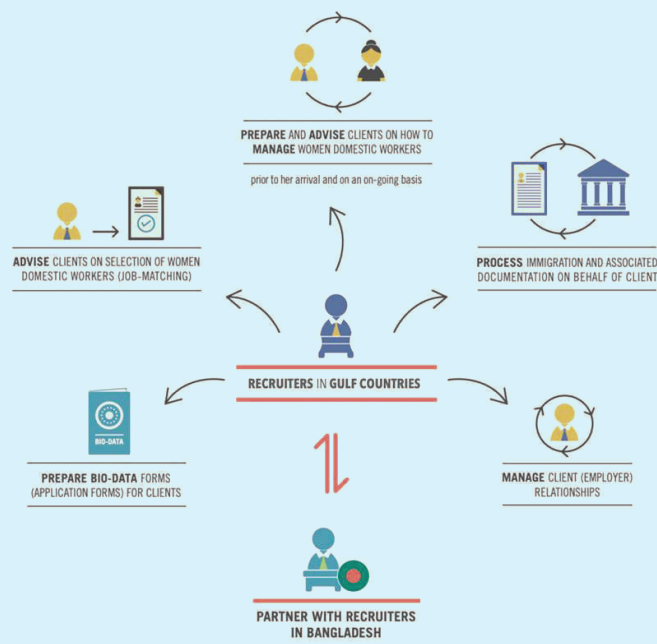
The Bangladesh government implemented the Overseas Employment and Migration Act (OEMA) in 2013 as the principal law for regulating labour migration¹⁰. The Act has failed to address some of the main issues on female migrant workers including:

- Prevention of fraud by recruiting agencies¹⁰**
 The OEMA defines guidelines rather than enforcing obligations, allowing recruiting agencies to bypass checks, such as the issuing of contracts and workers participation in mandatory training.
- Access to justice for victims¹¹**
 The Act does not cover the rights of workers who have been recruited through illegal channels. For formally registered workers, the Act allows them to take legal action against recruitment agencies but compensation criteria are not specified.

"The recruiting agent blamed me, they queried my character, they threatened me for filing the complaint, but there was no action against them. I must demand proper justice" – Naima (34), migrant in Saudi Arabia (cited in OKUP, 2021¹¹).

Role of Sub-Agents

Sub-Agents (locally known as Dalals), contracted unofficially licensed recruitment agencies, work as a chain in rural Bangladesh to lure women to work abroad through deception using falsified job contracts. According to Bangladesh Household Remittance Survey 2009, more than 53% of Bangladeshi female migrants use these intermediators¹³. They also charge high migration costs above USD 1,265 which women usually pay by taking loans or selling land. Conversely, the Bureau of Manpower Employment and Training (BMET) caps the migration fee at USD 225 for recruitment agencies¹⁴.



Info-graphic 4: Role of Gulf Country recruiters and sub-agents in Bangladesh (adapted from ILO, 2015)¹⁵

Gulf Countries

2

■ Access to reporting

Within the Gulf countries, dispute resolution policies and their application vary significantly. According to ILO Convention 189, member states are required to have effective and accessible complaint mechanisms alongside judicial processes to resolve disputes between workers and employers¹⁶. Yet, there is a lack of enforcement and impunity remains an issue. Workers describe complaint processes as costly and time-consuming where they rarely obtain compensation and often face retaliation¹⁷. Qatar introduced labour dispute committees¹⁸ showing development but there is a need for increased involvement of embassies in its role as a mediator between disputes¹⁹.

■ Kafala System

The Kafala System is widely practiced in the Gulf. It includes a sponsor institution/employer (Kafeels) to take full social, economic, and legal responsibility for migrant workers. Under this system, any foreign worker has to gain written consent from the Kafeel for changing employment or returning home. The recruitment agencies and employers often misuse this policy to seize passports, other immigration documents in addition to physically and sexually abusing women if they refuse to work in unsuitable conditions²⁰.

"After I pleaded to leave, my employer sent me to the agency. The agency beat me up that night 50 times with a stick." - Asma K, A Bangladeshi Female Migrant in Saudi Arabia (cited in Human Rights Watch, 2016¹⁴).

Bilateral Issues

■ Agreements between Bangladesh and Gulf Countries

By 2020, there were only two bilateral agreements regarding labor migration between

Bangladesh and its counterpart in the Persian Gulf region (agreements with Qatar and Kuwait). The rest were in the form of a non-binding Memorandum of Understanding with countries such as Bahrain, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates⁴. The lack of legal instruments to protect female migrant workers from Bangladesh is exacerbated by the fact that in most Gulf countries labor laws are absent. This contributes to the vulnerable situation for Bangladeshi female migrant workers²¹.



Recommendations

For Bangladesh Government

1. **Reformation and enforcement of the OEMA 2013** as recommended by the International Organization for Migration Bangladesh Country Office policy (2020)¹⁰ to increase consistency with upholding migrant workers rights and enforcement of this legislation within the agreement of the Ministry of Expatriates' Welfare and Overseas Employment and BMET.
2. **Prevention of fraud by recruiting agencies and sub-agents to protect female migrants** by adhering to stricter registration of agencies and licensing of Sub-Agents, with the creation of complementary sets of policies that rewards these intermediaries that meet and exceed government standards. Focused advertising for female migrants to utilize their services together with the statutory pre-departure training.
3. **Access to justice for victims of abuse whether they are formally or informally recruited** through illegal channels. There needs to be greater clarification of the compensation criteria as well as access to legal aid to support action against recruitment agencies. These must be communicated in BMET training centers, international airport restroom doors, agent's offices and safe places for women managed by Bangladesh Embassies.
4. **Strengthen the mitigation capacity in Embassies** through the Labor relations departments to provide services for female

migrants mitigate against and report abuses of employers, lack of status and threats of exploitation and trafficking. Embassies should

For Gulf Countries Governments

5. **Reform the Kafala System** by reducing dependency on the sponsoring employer through restricting the seizure of passport and other immigration documents of the foreign worker by the sponsor. Written consent from the sponsor to change employment or return to home country for valid reasons should be null and void as it violates workers rights.
6. **Include migrant workers' rights in existing Gulf labor laws** to give them access to legal protection and the ability to report against exploitation and violence. In addition, embassies should provide material regarding

include trained female staff who offer 24/7 free call lines, and access to legal aid.

human rights to registered migrants who are able to cascade this information through informal networks to migrants with illegal status.

Recommendations for both Bangladesh and Gulf Countries Governments

7. **Intensify bilateral negotiations to implement gender-responsive agreements** Existing best practice (Jordan) includes bilateral agreements and MoU that can act as the benchmark to create agreements that specifically regulate visa arrangements, salary, work hours, and legal protection of female workers.

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