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DIPLOMATS WORLD

The Only Diplomatic Magazine in Bangladesh

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Greetings to our esteemed readers of Diplomats World. This month, Bangladesh is grappling with severe flooding that has devastated large parts of the country, resulting in significant loss of life and widespread destruction. In the face of this adversity, the entire nation has come together, extending support to those affected and showcasing a profound sense of resilience and solidarity.

Bangladesh has also experienced a pivotal moment of political upheaval. A mass uprising, led by courageous students and supported by the general public, demanded significant political reforms. Also the nation counts a tragic loss of hundreds of lives and thousands more injured. Diplomats World extends its deepest respect to the brave students and innocent civilians who made the ultimate sacrifice. The voices of the younger generation calling for the reconstruction of state institutions, the establishment of democracy, and the rule of law through meaningful reforms reflect a broader aspiration for a just and accountable future.

Following the fall of Prime Minister Hasina's government on 5th August an interim government led by Professor Muhammad Yunus was sworn in on 8th August. In his initial address to foreign diplomats, Professor Yunus emphasized that the interim government's foremost priority is to restore law and order in the country. He also welcomed the United Nations' initiative to send a probe team to conduct a fair and transparent investigation into the recent violence.

He informed that Prime Minister Modi reaffirmed his country's unwavering support for a democratic, stable, peaceful, and progressive Bangladesh, underscoring India's ongoing commitment to assist through various development initiatives. He also highlighted the importance of ensuring the safety and protection of Hindus in Bangladesh. In response, Professor Yunus assured that the interim government would prioritize the protection, safety, and security of all citizens, including minorities.

Professor Yunus also emphasized Bangladesh's commitment and reaffirmed the country's active participation in multilateralism, with the United Nations at its core. He highlighted Bangladesh's intention to continue and enhance its contributions to UN peacekeeping operations. The issue of the Rohingya crisis called for sustained international support for humanitarian operations and the safe, dignified, and voluntary repatriation of Rohingya refugees to Myanmar. Professor Yunus also urged trade and investment partners to maintain their trust in Bangladesh's economic stability and its crucial role in the global apparel supply chain. He stressed that the interim government would not tolerate any attempts to disrupt this vital sector. Looking ahead, he presented a vision of building a prosperous, poverty-free Bangladesh and called upon international partners to support this democratic transition.

This month's issue of Diplomats World features several insightful articles that provide in-depth perspectives on these recent events and developments. We hope you find the content engaging and thought-provoking.

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

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

Lt Gen (Retd) Mohammad Mahfuzur Rahman, PhD

As the world order is shifting from unipolar to multipolar, India is surfacing as one of the leading powers. It is claiming a permanent membership in the UN Security Council. However, leadership of such stature comes with great responsibility. Legitimacy, conduct, righteousness, and soft and hard power, all will substantiate acceptability as a responsible

leading power that commands moral authority to represent a vast majority's voice and aspiration of the people of this part of the world in the Security Council.

Although, it seems that India has difficulties with neighbors; big and small, friend and foe. China and Pakistan had fought wars with India but many

countries in the world fought wars but are absolutely in normal friendly relations overtimes. Smaller neighbors like Sri Lanka, on the doorstep of India, leaning to China. India's BJP Government politics is largely based on Hinduthva but then how the only Hindu Country in the world, Nepal is distant away. Bangladesh received unprecedented support



India's aspiration for a permanent seat in the UN Security Council: A rising power's quest for global influence and responsibility.

from India during its independence but public opinion in Bangladesh has largely gone against India. What about the Maldives? A small archipelago with five lacs people where anti-Indian sentiment brought Mr Muizzu in power. Possibly only Bhutan maintains some kind of good relations that in the Doklam issue it feels China is a stakeholder despite

India's reservation. The Bhutanese foreign minister's visit in October 2023 to China is another indication that Bhutan is a small country with a seven lacs population following suit like other neighbors of India. Now let's see the relationship of another regional and leading power, China with all these countries i.e. Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Nepal, Maldives,



Wagah Border Ceremony. India's complex relationships with neighboring countries: Historical tensions and contemporary challenges with Pakistan

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

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

Gujral Doctrine (he was Foreign Minister and Prime Minister



Benapole-Petrapole Checkpoint, a Bangladesh-India border: A symbol of intertwined histories and complex geopolitical realities

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

Jono Songhoti Somity) in 1997.

Indira Doctrine is more towards structural realism; India possibly drifted away from liberalism i.e. Gujral Doctrine. Is this causing India to lose friends in the neighborhoods? Under these circumstances will neighbors be comfortable to bid for India's seat in the UN Security Council? How the world body is going to

view India's legitimacy as a contender for such a responsible position when neighbors are uncomfortable?

Bangladesh Factor:

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



China's growing influence in South Asia: Strategic partnerships and development projects, such as Sri Lanka's Port City Colombo



Shifting allegiances: Nepal's evolving relationship with India amidst rising Chinese influence in the region

he/she may not have known the names of all the states of India. That is the kind of learning reality. If one closely takes a look at the map it would reveal that Bangladesh is located under the armpit of India. If for some reason Bangladesh is unstable or

made unstable it would be like a boil under the armpit of India. That would be a very unhappy/painful experience. At the same time if India sinks (politically, economically, socio-culturally) Bangladesh is likely to sink too because of

geographical gravitational pull. However, if Bangladesh sinks India may not sink. More so for geostrategic, economic, and security reasons ignoring Bangladesh or choosing to side with a part instead of a whole could be unwise. The recent revolution in Bangladesh and its outcome could be a lesson learned for India to review its relational philosophy with Bangladesh. In the end, it's very pertinent to understand that a democratic, stable, non-interfered, and prosperous Bangladesh is in the best interest of India. Maybe India needs to do soul-searching and may need to revisit its neighborhood policies, doctrines, and strategic culture for better and sustainable relationships with neighbors.

Lt Gen (Retd) Mohammad MahfuzurRahman, PhD
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RISING FROM THE ASHES: A BALLAD OF YOUTH, UNITY, AND THE UNBREAKABLE SPIRIT OF BANGLADESH

Nazinur Rahim

As Bangladesh faces an uncertain future following the collapse of the Awami League government, the country finds itself grappling with long-standing political corruption, economic inequality, and social unrest. The dramatic resignation of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and her reported flight to India on August 5, 2024, marked the end of her 15-year regime, but left behind a fractured nation.

The Roots of Discontent

The fall of the Awami League government was the culmination of years of growing public dissatisfaction. While Bangladesh has seen impressive GDP growth over the past decade, critics argue that this

economic development has failed to benefit most of the population. Corruption, nepotism, and cronyism have flourished under Sheikh Hasina's rule, with political elites and those connected to the ruling party accumulating disproportionate wealth.

Despite glowing economic indicators, the reality on the ground has been starkly different for ordinary Bangladeshis. Many have struggled with rising living costs, limited employment opportunities, and an increasingly repressive political climate. The 2023 Corruption Perception Index, published by Transparency International, placed Bangladesh near the

bottom, highlighting the widespread influence of political and bureaucratic corruption.

"The money spent on infrastructure like roads and bridges may boost GDP," said Professor Anu Muhammad, a leading economist, "but it doesn't translate into better economic well-being for the average person."

A Nation in Revolt

Public discontent with the regime reached its peak earlier this year when protests broke out across the country, demanding reforms to the public job quota system. The movement, initially driven by students, quickly grew into a nationwide uprising. Citizens from all walks of life



Nationwide protests in Bangladesh, citizens from all walks of life unite in their demand

took to the streets, driven by frustration over political repression, economic inequality, and the lack of opportunity.

One vendor from Dhaka, who has seen his business repeatedly disrupted by state harassment, described his decision to leave Bangladesh for better opportunities overseas. "I couldn't take it anymore," he said. "The corruption, the constant demands for bribes, the lack of justice—it's just too much."

Many like him have fled the country, taking desperate measures to escape the oppressive system. Illegal migration to Europe and other regions has spiked in recent years, with people risking their lives to cross dangerous seas rather than face the bureaucratic hurdles and corruption at home.

The Collapse of a Regime

The tipping point came on August 5, when reports emerged that Sheikh Hasina had fled the country. In the days following her departure, jubilant crowds filled the streets, celebrating the fall of the authoritarian regime that had

ruled with an iron hand for over a decade. Analysts have compared the fall of Hasina's government to the collapse of other dictatorial regimes in Bangladesh's history, notably the military rule of the 1990s.

"Sheikh Hasina's government relied on fear and coercion to maintain control," said one political observer. "But in the end, the people's frustration boiled over."

While the fall of the Awami League regime has brought a sense of relief to many, it has also left a vacuum in leadership. The interim government, expected to be led by Nobel laureate and Grameen Bank founder Dr. Muhammad Yunus, faces immense challenges in rebuilding the country's political and economic systems.

The Thorny Road Ahead

Despite the celebrations following Sheikh Hasina's departure, Bangladesh remains in a fragile state. There are concerns about the potential for lawlessness, communal violence, and economic

instability in the absence of a functioning government. Many fear that the collapse of the current regime could open the door to another cycle of political repression and corruption.

One of the primary demands of the protesters is the establishment of a fair and transparent political system. They have called for an end to family-based political dynasties and a meritocratic system of governance. There are also calls for deep reforms in the judiciary, civil service, and law enforcement to break the cycle of corruption and ensure that the rule of law is restored.

In addition to political reforms, economic challenges loom large. The country has seen a significant decrease in foreign direct investment, a decline in remittances through legal channels, and an increase in money laundering, all of which have contributed to economic instability. Restoring trust in the system will be key to revitalizing the economy and creating opportunities for ordinary Bangladeshis.

Bangladesh's economy, celebrated for its impressive growth over the past decade, has begun to reveal cracks that threaten the country's stability. The share market, for instance, has long been characterized by volatility and governance issues. With rampant insider trading and weak regulatory oversight, investors have become increasingly wary, leading to reduced participation. This crisis of confidence is preventing the stock market from realizing its potential as a significant driver of economic growth.

In the banking sector, the situation remains troubling. According to the Bangladesh Bank, non-performing loans (NPLs) surged to over 10% in recent years, causing liquidity stress within the system. Weak corporate governance, a lack of transparency, and undue political influence in loan approvals have exacerbated these challenges. Banks find themselves in a precarious position, unable to lend effectively, which hampers

debt from power subsidies has contributed to fiscal pressures, straining public resources.

Healthcare is another area of concern. Bangladesh has made notable progress in expanding access to basic healthcare services, yet glaring disparities persist. A large portion of the population, especially in rural and underserved urban areas, still lacks access to quality healthcare. Government spending on healthcare remains

outdated curricula, and a lack of infrastructure, many students leave school without the skills needed to compete in the modern economy. The urban-rural divide is stark, with children in poorer regions disproportionately impacted. This gap threatens to exacerbate long-term inequalities, hindering the country's human capital development.

To overcome these challenges, Bangladesh needs a comprehensive, multi-pronged strategy that addresses both immediate needs and long-term structural reforms.



Despite impressive GDP growth, many Bangladeshis continue to live in poverty, highlighting the gap between the wealthy elite and ordinary citizens

private sector development, especially small and medium enterprises (SMEs).

The power sector, which once fueled economic ambitions, is also under strain. With growing electricity demand, the sector has seen significant investment, particularly in coal and gas-fired power plants. However, inefficiencies and frequent delays in project completion have left large parts of the population underserved, particularly in rural areas. Moreover, the burgeoning

inadequate, with only 2.4% of GDP allocated to this sector, far below the global average. This underfunding has resulted in overcrowded public hospitals, poorly paid medical staff, and a reliance on private care that many cannot afford.

Similarly, the education sector faces an uphill battle. While Bangladesh has achieved nearly universal primary school enrollment, the quality of education remains substandard. With teacher shortages,

1. Reforming the Share Market: Transparency and stronger regulatory frameworks must be at the heart of share market reforms. Strengthening the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) and empowering it to take swift actions against fraudulent activities will help restore investor confidence. Additionally, the government should focus on developing robust financial instruments that attract both local and foreign investors.

2. Banking Sector Overhaul: To tackle the non-performing loan crisis, stricter regulations and reforms in corporate governance are crucial. Establishing an independent body to oversee loan disbursements and ensuring political neutrality in banking operations could mitigate the risks of default. Further, the central bank must implement stringent stress tests and improve liquidity management to safeguard against future banking crises.

3. Modernizing the Power Sector: The focus needs to shift toward



Overcrowded and underfunded public hospitals reflect the urgent need for investment in Bangladesh's healthcare infrastructure

sustainable and renewable energy solutions. Expanding solar, wind, and hydropower capabilities will help diversify energy sources, reducing the fiscal burden of subsidies on traditional fuels. Moreover, greater efficiency in energy project management and transparency in contracting processes could accelerate progress in meeting the country's growing energy demands.

4. Strengthening Healthcare Infrastructure: Significant increases in government spending on healthcare are imperative. Investing in rural health facilities, training more healthcare professionals, and ensuring equitable distribution of medical resources will help bridge the gap between rural and urban healthcare access. Additionally, introducing affordable health insurance schemes can reduce the financial burden on households.

5. Reforming Education: The government must prioritize educational quality, not just access. Revising curricula to emphasize critical thinking, digital literacy, and technical skills can better prepare students for a globalized economy. Furthermore, investments in teacher training, infrastructure, and rural education programs will help bridge the urban-rural divide and create a more equitable education system.

A New Dawn for Bangladesh?

As Bangladesh stands at this critical juncture, the question remains: will the fall of Sheikh Hasina's government mark the beginning of a true democratic transformation, or will it be just another chapter in the country's turbulent political history?

As Bangladesh moves forward, there is cautious optimism among some sections of society. Many hope that the student-led

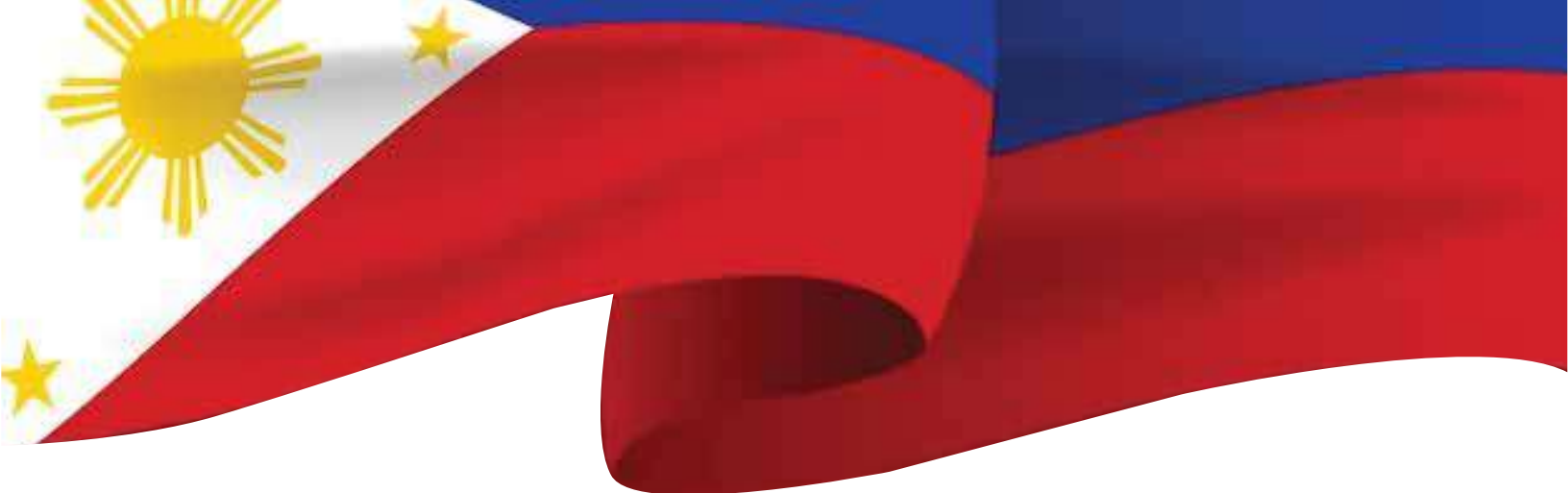
movement, which brought about the fall of the regime, can usher in a new era of democracy, justice, and economic fairness.

"It's time for a fresh start," said one protester. "We need leaders who are accountable to the people, not to their own political interests. We want a government that works for everyone."

However, history shows that transitions of power in Bangladesh have often been fraught with challenges. The country's path toward political stability and economic recovery will depend on the ability of the interim government to meet the demands of the people and establish a system that promotes equality, transparency, and justice for all.

From the ashes of a corrupted political system, Bangladesh will rise to overcome any challenge if we unite as a people, driven by a shared purpose and resilience. The strength of our nation lies not only in our collective effort but in the growing awareness among the younger generation. As they become increasingly vigilant, empowered by a deep sense of responsibility toward protecting the rights of every citizen, they stand as the most reliable invigilators of our democracy. With their dedication and the commitment of the people, Bangladesh will forge a future that triumphs over every obstacle.

Nazinur Rahim
Executive Editor
Diplomats World



PHILIPPINE EMBASSY HOSTS INAUGURAL CONCERT IN DHAKA

The Philippine Embassy in Bangladesh celebrated Buwan ng Wikang Pambansa (National Language Month) by hosting its first-ever concert, "Wika, Musika, at Pagkakaisa: Handog ng Pilipino sa Mundo" on August 30, 2024, at the Ascott Palace in Dhaka. The event, featuring Original Pilipino Music (OPM), brought together ASEAN Heads of Missions, diplomats, Bangladeshi friends, and the Filipino community. A highlight was Ambassador Leo Tito L. Ausan, Jr.'s composition, "Sanggol sa Basurahan" (Baby in a Bin), condemning the abandonment of newborns. The concert showcased the Philippines' rich cultural heritage, strengthening ties between the Philippines and Bangladesh.





CELEBRATING VIETNAM'S 79TH NATIONAL DAY: HONORING THE LEGACY OF PRESIDENT HO CHI MINH AND STRENGTHENING BANGLADESH TIES

H.E. Mr. Nguyen Manh Cuong

Iwould like to extend the warmest welcome and gratitude to our distinguished guests and Bangladeshi friends for joining us today to celebrate of the National Day of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam.

Exactly 79 years ago, on the 2nd September 1945, at the historic Ba Dinh Square in Hanoi, President Ho Chi Minh read the Declaration of Independence, proclaiming the birth of the

Democratic Republic of Vietnam or the Socialist Republic of Vietnam today. President Ho Chi Minh's famous saying, which is "Vietnam has the right to be a free and independent country - and in fact is so already. The entire Vietnamese people are determined to mobilize all their physical and mental strength, to sacrifice their lives and property in order to safeguard their independence and liberty", inspired every Vietnamese

generation during our national liberation struggle in the past and now motivates the Vietnamese young people to make their contributions to the national development and defense. The National Day of Vietnam (2nd September) is unquestionably the most important event in the heart of every Vietnamese people living in the country and overseas. On this day, the Vietnamese people all over the world gather



President Ho Chi Minh made an appeal in 1946 to all Vietnamese to rise up for national salvation after peace negotiations with France to recognize Vietnam as an independent country failed. The appeal was a turning point for Vietnam that began its struggle against the French colonialists

together to commemorate and pay tribute to President Ho Chi Minh, the Great Father of the Nation of Vietnam. Many meaningful cultural activities are also organized in order to cherish the mutual happiness, the values of national independence associated with socialism.

Over the past 79 years, under the visionary leadership of the Communist Party of Vietnam, with the valuable support from all the countries and friends around the world, the Vietnamese people have tirelessly strived to defend independence, sovereignty, unity, territorial integrity, to preserve self-determination of the nation and freedom, happiness of the people. Noticeably, after more than 37 years of “Doi Moi” Reforms, opening the economy and integrating to the world, Vietnam has grown vigorously and achieved great triumphs. The size and growth rate of the economy are increasing considerably. Vietnam has

become a middle-income developing country, with the current population of over 100 million. In 2023, the GDP growth rate of Vietnam was 5.05%, inflation rate was 3.25%, and the per capital income was estimated to reach 4,284 USD. Moving towards 2024, the Vietnam’s economic growth continues witnessing the upward

trend. In the first 8 months of 2024, the GDP increased by 6.42% and the export turnover was estimated at 190 billion USD, increased by 14.5% over the same period of last year. The export surplus reached 14.08 billion USD. Vietnam’s total investment capital abroad reached 137 million USD. The foreign direct investment capital made in Vietnam reached 18 billion USD, up 10.9% over the same period last year. This is the highest amount of realized foreign direct investment capital in the first six months of the year in the past 5 years. Creating the favorable environment for business and investment, Vietnam is an ideal destination for foreign investors and entrepreneurs. Up to now, Vietnam has received an estimated 588.4 billion USD in foreign direct investment. Vietnam currently ranks in the TOP 5 favorite investment destinations among Asia’s emerging and developing country according to the Global Opportunity Index (GOI) by Milken Institute (US). In terms of



National Independence Day parade at Ba Dinh Square, Hanoi



H.E. Tô Lâm General Secretary of the Communist Party and President of Vietnam since May 2024



H.E. Phạm Minh Chính Prime Minister of Vietnam since 2021



H.E. Trần Thanh Mẫn, Chairman of the National Assembly since 20 May 2024

tourism, Vietnam has received over 9.98 million international tourists from all over the world. The living quality of the people has been constantly improved, especially for farmers, people in remote areas, and ethnic minorities. Regarding national security, thanks to the "four no's" defense policy of Vietnam which means "no partaking in military alliances, no siding with one country to act against another, no foreign military bases in the Vietnamese territory or using Vietnam as leverage to counteract other countries, and no using force or threatening to use force in international relations", the socio-political stability are maintained, the national defense and security are well upheld in the country.

In the international arena, with the foreign policy of independence, self-reliance, diversification and multilateralization, Vietnam wishes to be a friend, reliable partner and responsible member of the international community.

Vietnam has established the official diplomatic relations with 193 countries and territorial areas, 7 of which have elevated the bilateral relations with Vietnam to the highest level – Comprehensive Strategic Partnership namely China (2008), Russia (2012), India (2016), Korea (2022), USA (2023), Japan (2023), Australia (2024). In 2021, Vietnam successfully fulfilled its term as non-permanent member of the UN Security Council, this is the second time Vietnam has taken on this important position. In 2022, Vietnam won the high trust and was elected as a member of the United Nations Human Rights Council for the 2023-2025 tenure. In terms of UN peacekeeping, up to 2023, Vietnam had sent nearly 800 military and public security officers to the UN Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) and other institutions. In September this year, in collaboration with the UNESCO Global Geoparks Council, Vietnam will host the 8th Asia Pacific Geoparks

Network Symposium (APGN 2024) with the scale of 800-1000 international delegates representing 90 countries around the world. Through this event, a great number of local products and natural heritages of the northern provinces of Vietnam will be introduced to international guests and friends.

In the South East Asia region, over the past 29 years since Vietnam joined ASEAN (28th July 1995), Vietnam has shown itself as an active, proactive and responsible member of the bloc, successfully assumed the role of ASEAN chairmanship in 1998, 2010 and 2020; making important contributions to common work of ASEAN and obtaining remarkable achievements in many aspects, including the building of the ASEAN Charter, the ASEAN Vision 2020, the ASEAN Community Vision 2025, the Master Plan on ASEAN Connectivity 2025, and the ASEAN Regional Forum Ha Noi Plan of Action in the 2020-2025 period.



Ha Long Bay, a UNESCO World Heritage site in northern Vietnam, is renowned for its breathtaking landscape of over 1,600 limestone islands and rich biodiversity. This iconic destination has captivated filmmakers and travelers alike, making it a must-visit for anyone exploring Vietnam

Vietnam and Bangladesh share many things in common in the cause of national building and development that both countries can mutually learn, promote and support each other. Throughout the long history with ups and downs, our good sentiment has remained unchanged. Over the past 51 years of traditional friendship, the two countries have been closely cooperating in multiple areas and became good partners. The delegation exchanges between Vietnam and Bangladesh are frequently held. Since the beginning of 2024, the ministerial-level delegation visits have been organized in order to explore the untapped potentials in rail transport, labor protection and social security assurance.

Moreover, both countries have close cooperation at regional and international forums. We extend mutual support in favor of each country's candidature at international forums. In terms of economics and trade, the two countries witness gradual growth year by year. Last year, the bilateral trade volume reached 1.05 billion USD. In the first 7 months of 2024, our trade volume reached 651 million USD. The two economies are on the right track to pursue the target of 2 billion USD in trade volume as committed by the highest leaders of both countries. In August this year, the 42-member business delegation of the Dhaka Chamber of Commerce and

Industry paid a working visit to Vietnam and enjoyed a number of fruitful B2B programs in Thai Binh Province and Ho Chi Minh City with the support of the Embassy and Ministry of Industry and Trade of Vietnam. In short, Vietnam – Bangladesh traditional friendship is certainly flourishing and Vietnam will always be a good friend of Bangladesh. The Government and People of Vietnam always keep in our hearts and greatly value the invaluable support that the Government and People of Bangladesh have extended to Vietnam from the past to the present. However, there are still many untapped potentials that both countries should further cooperate to explore in the coming time.

Lastly, I would like to express my sincerest thanks to Her Excellency, Ms. Farida Akhter, Honorable Adviser of the Ministry of Fisheries and Livestock of Bangladesh, and all our distinguished guests for sharing the moments of happiness with me and my wife, the Embassy and the Vietnamese community in Bangladesh, on this auspicious occasion today.

*Wish you good health and happiness!
Happy Vietnam National Day!
Long live Vietnam – Bangladesh friendship!
Thank you very much.*

H.E. Mr. Nguyen Manh Cuong
Ambassador
Vietnam to Bangladesh



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NAVIGATING THE MURKY WATERS: UNDERSTANDING THE PHILOSOPHICAL HISTORY OF FREEDOM TO RUMINATE FREEDOM 2.0

Mansura Amdad

It always does take a rather long walk to attain true freedom. What is being dubbed by the youth of Bangladesh as “Freedom 2.0” will take a while to be enshrined in the heart and soul of every single Bangladeshi. After the fateful events of July–August 2024 resulting in the martyrdom of students, children, and the general mass, Bangladesh has ushered in a new era of politics, represented by its general will. At this crucial hour,

it is important to determine the nature of freedom — the one core value with which the student-led movement resonated the most — that will be exercised by the people and its chosen representatives in the People’s Republic of Bangladesh.

In broad strokes, it requires a commitment to keep the freedom in place, the mechanisms of which is fairly

new to the people of the East in general. [This is a case propagated by Orlando Patterson, *Freedom: Volume I: Freedom in the Making of Western Culture* (London: I. B. Tauris, 1991).] This “Western” phenomenon of freedom, espoused by the liberal and democratic West (if perceived with the naked eye), is not monolithic, either. Annelien de Dijn makes a compelling case in *Freedom: An Unruly History*



The student-led movement symbolizes the quest for true freedom and democratic governance in Bangladesh

(Cambridge and London: Harvard University Press, 2020) that freedom was once considered to be different from democracy (in fact, Edmund Burke conceptualised democracy as potentially harmful to freedom!) (de Dijn 2020, 4). A democratic freedom, from this perspective, is “one where the

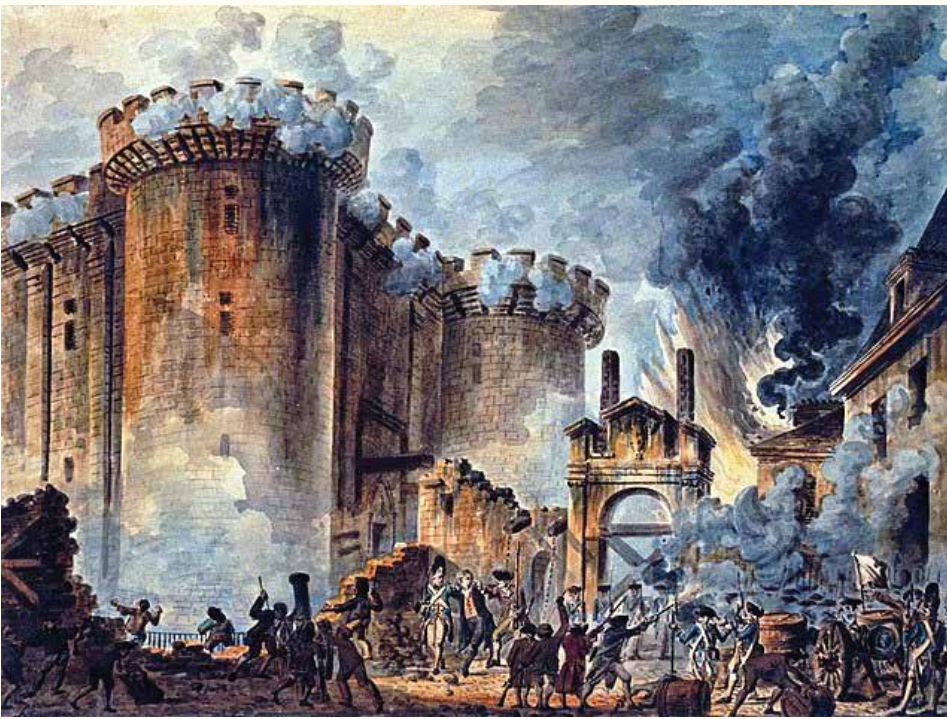
people rule themselves,” even when lacking a bill of rights, an independent judiciary, and other mechanisms to patrol the boundaries of legitimate state power. Algernon Sidney puts it in this manner: “a people could only be free if it was ruled ‘by laws of its own making.’” (de Dijn 2020, 2).

This conception of freedom was a result of contestations against another form of freedom, propagated mostly by practitioners — American, Dutch, Polish, and French revolutionaries of the late eighteenth century. What they had fought for was a humanist freedom — not a freedom where they quietly enjoy their lives — but the freedom to govern themselves in the way of the ancient Greeks and Romans: the freedom to govern oneself, one’s property, and one’s happiness (de Dijn 2020, 2) (Emphasis added).

The hugest tussle between freedom and democracy had been always provoked by fear mongering: the fear of “the newly enfranchised masses” using “state power for economic redistribution” — oft favouring the working classes and thereby disgruntling the elites (de Dijn



A student wearing a Spiderman costume poses in front of a Graffiti that reads “We need people’s government now,” at Dhaka University campus area in Dhaka, Bangladesh, Aug. 9, 2024



The Storming of the Bastille

A symbol of the fight for liberty during the French Revolution, echoing the spirit of 'Freedom 2.0' in Bangladesh as the youth lead the charge for a new era of democracy and self-governance

2020, 4–5). This had often resulted in a conceptualisation of freedom that had championed curtailing the masses' power, or democratic self-government — thereby resulting in the “laissez faire” notion of liberty: “minding one's own business” (de Dijn 2020, 5). This, in retrospect, is a major concern that the people of Bangladesh need pondering in the coming days.

A final ‘false freedom’ loosely veiling the defence of class interests has also been propagated before — where the end of such a falsehood would be through attaining true liberty, enshrined in ensuring the end of political and economic domination (de Dijn 2020, 5). Given the chequered nature of the country's political history, the people and its chosen executives must grow the consciousness not only about the lines between economic classes, but also about

the dimensions and contours of various ethnic, religious, demographic and gender groups, to name but a few.

Annelien de Dijn's most compelling argument is the real challenge that lies ahead for Freedom 2.0:

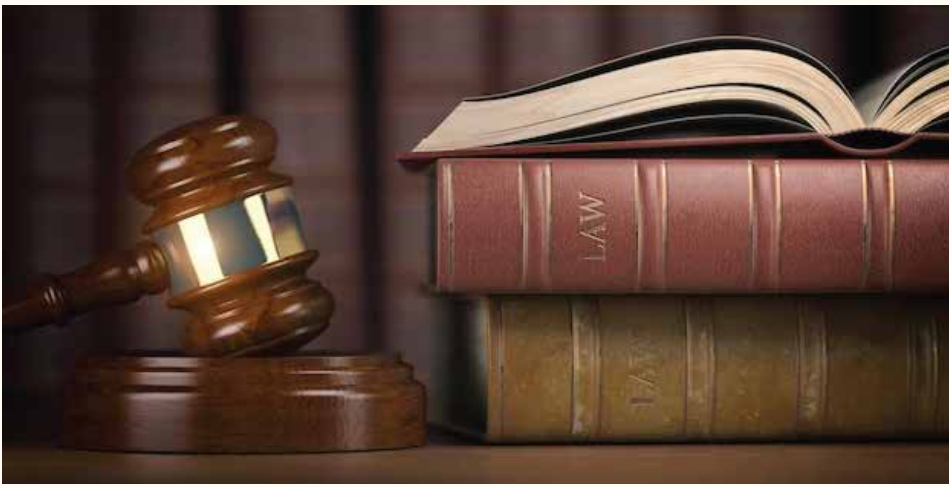
“Ideas about freedom commonplace today—such as the notion that freedom is best preserved by shrinking the sphere of government—were invented not by the revolutionaries of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries but rather by their critics. Today's most ardent freedom fighters like to portray themselves as heirs of the revolutionaries who created our modern democracies. But with their call for minimal government, contemporary enthusiasts of freedom far more resemble democracy's opponents than its architects.” (de Dijn 2020, 6).

Therefore, the question remains: to what extent will Freedom 2.0 govern people? The answer comes, again, from the rumination of history — this time, from a man on a mission to free slaves:

“Will not the good people respond to a united, and earnest appeal from us? Can we, can they, by any other means, so certainly,



Abraham Lincoln's words on freedom and governance resonate in Bangladesh's current struggle for true liberty



Transparency and legal frameworks are essential in ensuring that 'Freedom 2.0' is upheld in every corner of Bangladesh

or so speedily, assure these vital objects? We can succeed only by concert. It is not “can any of us imagine better?” but, “can we all do better?” The dogmas of the quiet past, are inadequate to the stormy present. The occasion is piled high with difficulty, and we must rise — with the occasion. As our case is new, so we must think anew, and act anew. We must disenthrall ourselves, and then we shall save our country.” — Abraham Lincoln, in the Annual Message to the Congress, Concluding Remarks, December 1, 1862. (Emphasis original.)

With these words, Abraham Lincoln, in the middle of the

raging Civil War, reminded the Congress of the United States about the challenges of introducing the Emancipation Proclamation (on the rights of the former slaves). Where the importance hinged upon not only the policymakers per se, but also the goodwill of the people of the land. Where every single person's actions on the basis of goodwill will fulfill the conditions of liberty in its veritable sense.

Bangladesh, in 2024, needs setting up the agenda pertaining to its national interest, based on the core values of its *raison d'être* and the demands of the

people who have brought about the change through the expression of their own political will. A defined set of national interests is required for advancing any country's policies in domestic and international spheres — and Bangladesh requires calibrating this by balancing between the capabilities of the state and aspirations of its citizens, all while maintaining its strategic autonomy.

Transparency and the rule of law, however, are of crucial importance for both the bottom-up and top-down levels of politics. The government of the people, by the people, and for the people must retain this spirit, while the normative aspects of being proper citizens must be exercised by the people themselves.

Consciousness about responsibilities, therefore, is not enough on its own — acting upon each of our own responsibilities is the only way the country can move forward to achieve true freedom.

Mansura Amdad

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BANGLADESH'S UNBREAKABLE SPIRIT SHINES

As floodwaters surged through Bangladesh, a nation's soul was laid bare in a display of breathtaking solidarity and compassion. In the aftermath of a recent uprising, the deluge became a backdrop for humanity's finest hour. From the humble rickshaw-puller who transported the injured with a heart full of courage, to the young and old alike who crafted rafts from whatever they could find, every act of kindness wove a tapestry of hope. Religious institutions set aside their celebrations to support their stricken neighbors, and the military wove a safety net across the hardest-hit regions, reaching even the most unreachable places. Donations flowed from all walks of life, including those with the least to give. This overwhelming response is a testament to the boundless spirit of Bangladesh, a powerful reminder that in the darkest of times, the light of human connection and resilience shines the brightest.





GAINING INDEPENDENCE, STATE FORMATION, AND ITS CONTEXT

Shamima Sultana

According to the United Nations, there are 195 independent countries in the world today. Out of these, 193 are members of the United Nations, while the remaining two enjoy independence but are not part of the UN. These 195 countries are spread across seven continents: Asia, Europe, Africa, North America, South America, Australia, and Antarctica. Each continent hosts multiple countries, and each independent country has its own geographical boundaries and map.

When we talk about freedom, it's challenging to capture its depth and complexity in just a few words. However, I will try to

explain briefly what we mean when we talk about freedom.

The Meaning of Freedom

Freedom refers to liberation from subjugation or control. It comes in many forms, including national or state freedom, individual or civil liberty, political freedom, cultural freedom, academic freedom, and intellectual freedom.

Individual or civil liberty refers to the right of a citizen in a free state to live a free life. It includes the freedom to express one's political, social, and personal opinions without interference from others. However, should any individual act in a way that is

considered treasonous, the state, through its policymakers, will take action as per its laws.

State independence, on the other hand, refers to a state's freedom from external control. It involves a country's ability to establish and manage its system of governance. Every independent state has its constitution, which guides its policymakers in governing the country. States manage their affairs according to their principles and laws, and one state is expected not to interfere in the internal affairs of another.

The Context of Independence
In every independent state in



Gathering for the first shutdown of 21 February, 1952. The Language Movement of Bangladesh

the world, the people once raised the demand for freedom. This demand often emerged when the ruling powers created disparities in needs, viewpoints, governance, and livelihoods among people living within the same geographical boundaries. These people, feeling oppressed and discriminated against, sought to form new states, freeing themselves from unjust rule and exploitation.

An excellent example of this is the struggle of the Bengali people, which led to the formation of modern-day Bangladesh. To understand this, we need to delve deeper into why the Bengalis demanded independence and how they achieved it.

The Road to Bangladesh's Independence

From history, we know that the boundary between East Bengal (present-day Bangladesh) and West Bengal was formally determined during the partition of India in 1947. On August 14, 1947, Pakistan was established, and East Bengal became part of Pakistan, known as East Pakistan. At that time, the people

of East Bengal believed that with the creation of Pakistan, their fortunes would improve under a new state. But, as days passed, the people of East Pakistan quickly realized that their expectations would not be fulfilled.

The rulers of Pakistan began conspiring to establish a single culture and identity based on their wishes. This created a significant cultural, social, economic, and political divide, with East Pakistan often facing discrimination. Pakistan's rulers sought to develop West Pakistan with resources from the East,

and they attempted to suppress the Bengali language, leading to a crisis that threatened the identity of the people of East Pakistan.

The Language Movement

One of the first significant confrontations occurred in 1952 when students and citizens of East Pakistan protested to protect their language. They wanted Bengali to be recognized as an official language of Pakistan, along with Urdu. The protest escalated, and the Pakistani authorities cracked down harshly, leading to the deaths of several students. This event became known as the Language Movement, and it sparked a strong desire among the Bengali people to protect their culture and rights.

The Six-Point Demand

As the discrimination continued, the call for autonomy grew louder. On February 5, 1966, Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, the leader of the Awami League, presented a Six-Point Demand advocating for Bengali autonomy within Pakistan. This was essentially a framework for ensuring greater



June 7, 1966: Six Points were Bengalis' charter of freedom



Women freedom fighters of the 1971 Bangladesh Liberation War

political and economic rights for East Pakistan.

The 1970 Elections and Aftermath

The turning point came during Pakistan's first general election on December 7, 1970. The Awami League, led by Bangabandhu, won a landslide victory in East Pakistan, securing the majority of seats in the national parliament. However, despite this electoral success, the ruling powers in West Pakistan were unwilling to hand over power to the Bengalis. Pakistan's military

ruler at the time, General Agha Mohammad Yahya Khan, refused to allow Sheikh Mujibur Rahman to form the government, further aggravating tensions between East and West Pakistan.

The Non-Cooperation Movement

In response to the suspension of the National Assembly's scheduled session and the refusal to transfer power, Bangabandhu called for a Non-Cooperation Movement on March 1, 1971. This movement

was essentially a civil disobedience campaign, and it brought the administration and economy of East Pakistan to a standstill. People from all walks of life—farmers, laborers, government officials, and even members of the military—joined the movement in support of Bangabandhu's call for autonomy.

The Liberation War

The struggle for independence reached its peak on March 7, 1971, when Bangabandhu delivered his historic speech at the Racecourse Maidan (now Suhrawardy Udyan) in Dhaka. In this speech, he called on the Bengali nation to prepare for the struggle for freedom. His famous words, "This time the struggle is for our freedom; this time the struggle is for our independence," became a rallying cry for the Bengali people.

The Pakistani military responded with a brutal crackdown, launching Operation Searchlight on the night of March 25, 1971. This was a ruthless campaign to suppress the Bengali independence movement, and it led to widespread violence, including the massacre of thousands of civilians.

Despite this, the Bengali people resisted. Farmers, laborers, students, civil servants, and soldiers all united in the Liberation War, which lasted for nine months. During this time, an estimated three million Bengalis were killed, and two hundred thousand women were violated by the Pakistani military. The horrors of this war left a deep scar on the nation,



Freedom fighters during the 1971 liberation war of Bangladesh against Pakistan



Educating the younger generation about the true story of Bangladesh's independence is crucial to maintaining national pride and unity

but the people's determination for freedom never wavered.

Victory and Recognition

Finally, after nine months of bloody conflict, Bangladesh emerged victorious. On December 16, 1971, the Pakistani military surrendered, and Bangladesh was born as an independent nation. The country's independence came at a high cost, but it also brought with it a sense of unity and pride.

Bangladesh gradually gained international recognition, with Bhutan becoming the first country to recognize its independence on December 6, 1971, followed by India later that same day.

The Formation of Bangladesh

Following independence, Bangladesh, now officially known as the People's Republic

of Bangladesh, became the 95th independent sovereign state in the world. The country, with a land area of 56,977 square miles, was finally free to determine its destiny. The new nation had its flag, its borders, and a government formed by the people.

While the Liberation War of 1971 was one of the largest and most significant wars for independence in modern history, it was also a symbol of what it takes to achieve state formation. Every independent country in the world has undergone similar struggles in one form or another, going through periods of conflict, negotiation, and eventual victory.

The Importance of Preserving History

In 2024, Bangladesh remains a

proud nation, having undergone several changes, movements, and even revolutions since its independence.

It is crucial to ensure that young people in Bangladesh grow up with a correct understanding of their nation's history. They need to know that Bangladesh became independent on December 16, 1971, after a long and bloody struggle. Teaching them anything contrary to this would only distort their sense of national identity and pride.

The Legacy of Independence

Today, every citizen of Bangladesh holds the spirit of the Liberation War in their hearts. It is a legacy that reminds them of the sacrifices made by their forefathers and the incredible resilience that led to their freedom. It is the duty of every Bangladeshi to protect and preserve this legacy for future generations.

As we look back on the story of Bangladesh's independence, we can see the power of unity, determination, and the desire for freedom. These are the values that continue to shape Bangladesh today, ensuring that its people remain strong, proud, and free.

Shamima Sultana

Writer, Journalist and Cultural activist



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ASEAN'S GLOBAL IMPACT: DRIVING ECONOMIC GROWTH, POLITICAL STABILITY, AND REGIONAL HARMONY

AKM Sayedad Hossain

The Association of Southeast Asian Nations, or ASEAN, was established on 8 August 1967 in Bangkok, Thailand, with the signing of the ASEAN Declaration (Bangkok Declaration) by the Founding Fathers of ASEAN: Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines, Singapore and Thailand. Brunei Darussalam joined ASEAN on 7 January 1984, followed by Viet Nam on 28 July 1995, Lao PDR and Myanmar on 23 July 1997, and Cambodia on 30 April 1999, making up what is today the ten Member States of ASEAN.

The Founding of ASEAN

On August 8, 1967, the Foreign

Ministers of Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore, and Thailand met in Bangkok to sign the ASEAN Declaration, establishing the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN). This founding document, signed by Adam Malik, Narciso R. Ramos, Tun Abdul Razak, S. Rajaratnam, and Thanat Khoman, outlined goals for regional cooperation in economic, social, cultural, and educational fields, and committed to promoting peace and stability in Southeast Asia. The declaration marked a significant step towards uniting Southeast Asian nations in

friendship and cooperation for mutual prosperity. Despite differing perspectives, the ministers successfully laid the foundation for one of the most successful regional organizations in the developing world.

The Significance of the ASEAN Charter

The ASEAN Charter, which came into force in 2008, marked a significant evolution in the organization's history. It provided ASEAN with a legal framework and conferred legal personality, formalizing its status as an intergovernmental organization. This charter is



On 8 August 1967, five leaders – the Foreign Ministers of Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore, and Thailand – sat down together in the main hall of the Department of Foreign Affairs building in Bangkok, Thailand, and signed a document

legally binding on all member states and establishes new bodies like the ASEAN Coordinating Council and Community Councils, which are designed to enhance ASEAN's ability to function cohesively.

The ASEAN Charter also introduced two additional Deputy Secretary-General positions to focus on the ASEAN Economic Community and Community and Corporate Affairs, underscoring the importance of economic integration and organizational development. These changes have enabled ASEAN to meet more frequently, fostering a closer, more coordinated approach to regional and global issues.

ASEAN in the Global Economy

ASEAN's economic influence is increasingly recognized on the global stage. With a combined GDP of over \$3.6 trillion in 2023, ASEAN ranks as the fifth-largest economy globally, after the United States, China, the European Union, and Japan. The region's strategic location, abundant natural resources, and young, dynamic workforce have made it an attractive destination

for foreign direct investment (FDI).

One of the critical pillars of ASEAN's economic power is its commitment to trade liberalization and economic integration. The ASEAN Economic Community (AEC), established in 2015, is a milestone in regional economic integration, aiming to create a single market and production base that facilitates the free flow of goods, services, investment, capital, and skilled labor. This integration enhances ASEAN's economic competitiveness, making it a key player in global

supply chains, particularly in electronics, automotive, textiles, and agribusiness sectors.

Furthermore, ASEAN has been proactive in establishing free trade agreements (FTAs) with major global economies, including China, Japan, South Korea, India, Australia, and New Zealand. The Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP), which came into effect in 2022, is the world's largest trade agreement, covering about 30% of the global population and GDP. ASEAN's central role in initiating and driving RCEP underscores its influence in shaping global trade architecture.

ASEAN's economic influence is not confined to trade alone. The region's emphasis on digital transformation and innovation is positioning it as a leader in the global digital economy. Countries like Singapore, Malaysia, and Indonesia are emerging as hubs for fintech, e-commerce, and digital services, attracting investments from global tech giants. The ASEAN Digital Integration



ASEAN leaders in Melbourne, Tuesday, March 05, 2024



Framework, launched in 2019, aims to harmonize digital regulations, promote cross-border e-commerce, and support the development of digital infrastructure, further cementing ASEAN's role in the global digital landscape.

ASEAN in World Politics

ASEAN's political influence is grounded in its commitment to maintaining regional peace, stability, and security, which are essential for its economic prosperity. The ASEAN Way, characterized by consensus-building, non-interference in domestic affairs, and quiet diplomacy, has been the cornerstone of its approach to regional and global issues.

One of ASEAN's most significant contributions to global politics is its role as a mediator and dialogue facilitator in conflicts. ASEAN-led forums, such as the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF), East Asia Summit (EAS), and ASEAN Plus Three (APT), provide platforms

for dialogue and cooperation among major powers, including the United States, China, Russia, and Japan. These forums help to prevent conflicts and promote peace and stability in the Asia-Pacific region, which is vital for global security.

ASEAN's centrality in regional security is particularly evident in its approach to the South China Sea dispute. While the issue remains a source of tension among some ASEAN members and China, the organization has consistently advocated for peaceful resolution through dialogue and adherence to international law, particularly the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS). The ongoing negotiations between ASEAN and China for a Code of Conduct (COC) in the South China Sea highlight ASEAN's diplomatic efforts to manage and mitigate regional conflicts.

Moreover, ASEAN's influence in world politics extends to its

engagement with external powers through the ASEAN Dialogue Partner mechanism, which includes major global actors like the United States, China, India, the European Union, and Russia. These dialogues enhance ASEAN's strategic importance, as they allow it to balance relations with multiple powers, thereby maintaining its autonomy and avoiding dominance by any single actor.

ASEAN in Regional Development and Unity

ASEAN's efforts in promoting regional development and unity are central to its mission. The organization's initiatives in infrastructure development, education, health, and poverty alleviation have significantly contributed to improving the quality of life across Southeast Asia.

One of ASEAN's flagship initiatives is the Master Plan on ASEAN Connectivity (MPAC), which aims to enhance physical, institutional, and people-to-people connectivity across the region. By improving transport infrastructure, harmonizing regulations, and promoting cultural exchanges, MPAC is driving regional integration and creating a more interconnected ASEAN.

Education is another area where ASEAN has made significant strides. The ASEAN University Network (AUN), established in 1995, promotes collaboration among leading universities in the region, facilitating academic exchanges, joint research, and the development of regional higher education standards.



One Vision, One Identity, One Community

Education and cultural initiatives play a crucial role in fostering a sense of ASEAN identity and unity among its diverse populations.

In the area of public health, ASEAN's collective response to the COVID-19 pandemic showcased its ability to act swiftly and effectively in times of crisis. The ASEAN Comprehensive Recovery Framework (ACRF), adopted in 2020, outlines a coordinated approach to pandemic recovery, focusing on health systems strengthening, economic recovery, and social protection. ASEAN's solidarity during the pandemic has reinforced the importance of regional cooperation in addressing shared challenges.

ASEAN's commitment to sustainable development is also evident in its efforts to address environmental challenges, such as climate change, deforestation, and biodiversity loss. The ASEAN Agreement on Transboundary Haze Pollution, signed in 2002, is an example of regional cooperation to address environmental issues that affect multiple countries. ASEAN's active participation in global climate negotiations and its efforts to promote renewable energy and green technologies within the region demonstrates its commitment to a sustainable future.

ASEAN's influence on the global economy, world politics, regional development, and

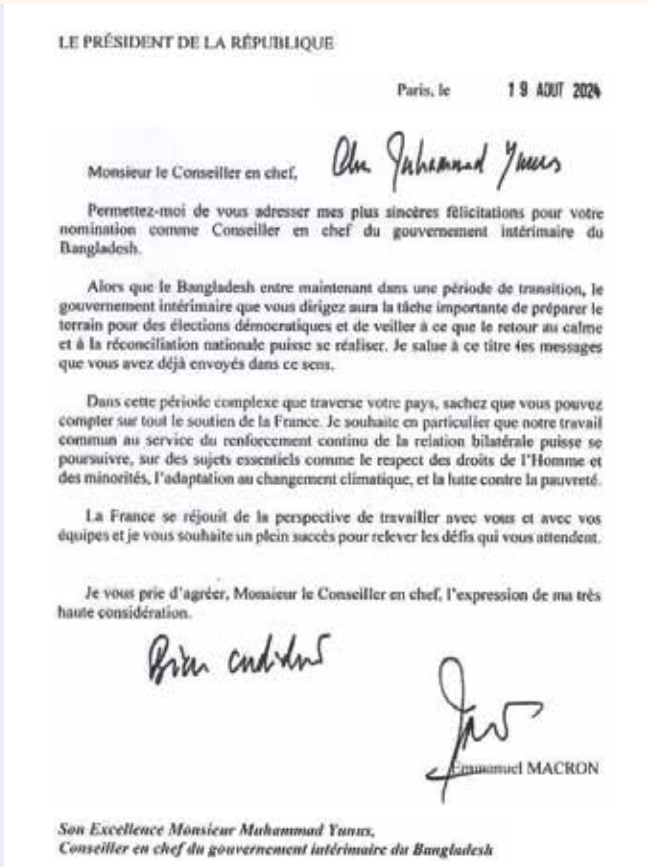
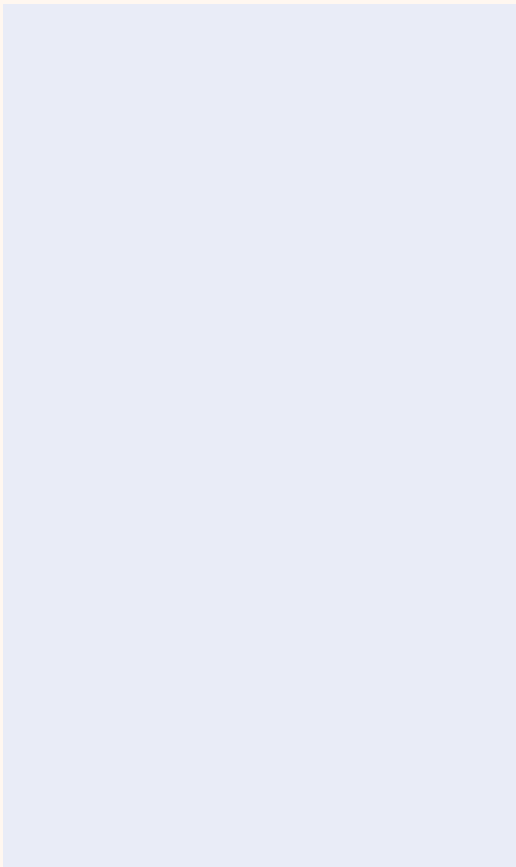
unity is undeniable. Through its economic integration efforts, diplomatic initiatives, and commitment to regional cooperation, ASEAN has established itself as a key player on the world stage. As the organization continues to evolve, its role in shaping the future of Southeast Asia and its contributions to global peace, stability, and prosperity will only grow. ASEAN's success in balancing national interests with regional goals serves as a model for other regional organizations worldwide, highlighting the importance of unity, cooperation, and dialogue in addressing the complex challenges of the 21st century.

AKM Sayedad Hossian
Associate Editor
Diplomats World

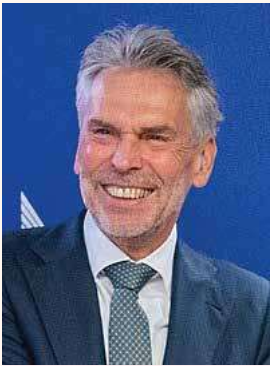
GLOBAL LEADERS AND MAJOR NATIONS EXTEND GREETINGS TO DR. MUHAMMAD YUNUS



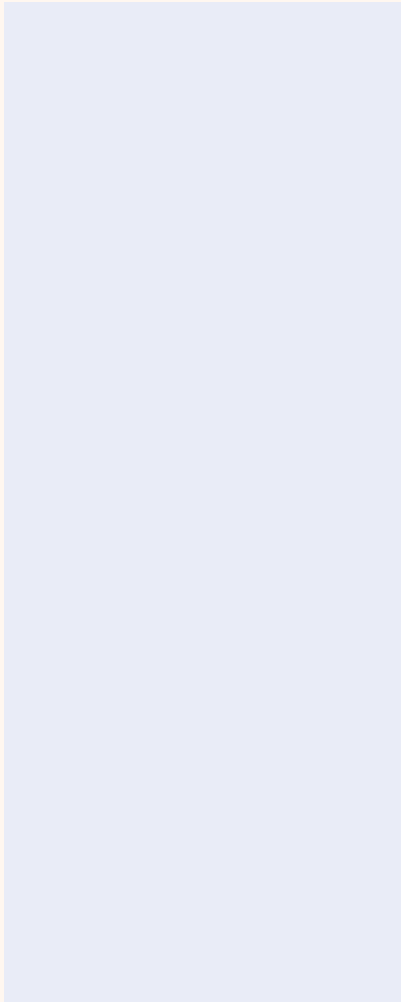
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RISING WATERS, RISING SPIRITS: HOW BANGLADESH'S PEOPLE TURNED A FLOOD INTO A FORCE FOR UNITY

Prof. Dr. Abu Nasir Rizvi

When does a flood stop being just a natural disaster? Is it when politics seeps into the murky waters or when entire communities find themselves grappling with both nature's fury and human failure? The August 2024 flood in Bangladesh raises such questions as millions of lives remain affected across multiple districts. From Feni to Noakhali, Sylhet to Munshiganj, the deluge has been unforgiving. But was this disaster purely an act of nature, or did human intervention turn the situation from bad to catastrophic?

In August 2024, heavy rain simultaneously poured over

northeastern India—Tripura, Assam, and Meghalaya—unleashing torrents that would soon make their way downstream into Bangladesh. With the gates of hydropower plants and barrages opened to release the excess water, the downstream flow surged dangerously across seven of Bangladesh's transboundary rivers. As the water surged past flood control dams, the rivers overflowed their banks, engulfing towns, villages, and entire districts.

Over five million people found themselves caught in the floods, their homes, livelihoods, and safety swept away by the tide.

The rising waters proved fatal for at least twenty people, while millions more found themselves marooned in floodwaters that refused to recede. The severity of the crisis reignited debates that have long simmered beneath the surface. Is this flood a natural disaster, or is it a politically caused calamity? Are such distinctions even meaningful when every disaster has both natural and political dimensions?

Certainly, the rains played a major role. August's rainfall was extraordinary in both intensity and duration. Similar patterns have been observed globally in recent years, from the flash



Flooded Village with Submerged Homes

floods in Sylhet and Bandarban to unexpected floods in Dubai. Climatologists are clear—these floods, along with meteorological droughts, are effects of climate change. The scientific consensus is that global warming, exacerbated by the continued burning of fossil fuels, has intensified the climate crisis. But while nature's role in triggering these floods is obvious, it's hard to ignore the political forces at play. Who bears responsibility for climate change? How did the upstream river management exacerbate the floods, and could better preparation have prevented the devastation?

These floods are far from an isolated incident. In fact, their causes lie at the heart of Bangladesh's transboundary river management with India. Of the 57 common rivers shared between Bangladesh and its neighbors, India controls 54. This control manifests in the form of dams, barrages, and hydropower

projects that have altered the natural flow of rivers and created new vulnerabilities for those living downstream. The opening of gates in India's hydropower plants and dams during heavy rains, like those seen in August, contributes to the downstream flooding in Bangladesh. Though this may be a necessary measure for flood control in India, the



A woman and her child wade through floodwaters in Feni, one of the worst-hit areas. [Zakir Hossain Chowdhury/AFP]

lack of timely communication and coordination between the two countries makes Bangladesh more susceptible to sudden floods.

Complicating matters further is Bangladesh's internal water management. The August 2024 floods have highlighted the steady decline of natural floodplains and water avenues. Over the years, rivers have been narrowed by human encroachment, wetlands have been filled up for urban development, and vital canals have disappeared, leaving water with nowhere to go during heavy rains. The floodwaters spread across the land, drowning homes, roads, and fields.

The country's preparations for such disasters have come under harsh scrutiny. Despite forecasts predicting the floods, both from the Bangladesh Meteorological Department and the South Asian Climate Outlook Forum, preparations fell short. Many wondered why, despite all the predictions, the state was caught

off-guard. Was there not enough time to act, or was it a lack of will and coordination? Could more lives have been saved, and could the damage have been mitigated if preparations had been stronger?

As floodwaters surged across the districts, many recalled how preparedness varies by region. For example, the coastal areas, especially in the Satkhira-Khulna region, have developed a relatively robust culture of forecasting and disaster preparedness. Cyclone Sidr in

rice crop during the Boro season. Elsewhere, people have become accustomed to preparing for floods during the monsoon, but August floods have caught many off guard. Even though warnings were issued before and after the July uprisings, the speed and intensity of the floods were far beyond what most people had prepared for.

Despite previous commitments between India and Bangladesh regarding transboundary river management, India was slow to

But to focus solely on India's actions would be to ignore the deeper issues surrounding river management. The broader politics of transboundary rivers is one of control, both upstream and downstream. For decades, large dams have been constructed upstream, primarily in India, blocking the natural flow of water into Bangladesh. These dams, along with deforestation and mining operations, have created a situation where floods and droughts have become more severe.



Communities across Bangladesh came together to support those affected by the floods, exemplifying resilience and solidarity

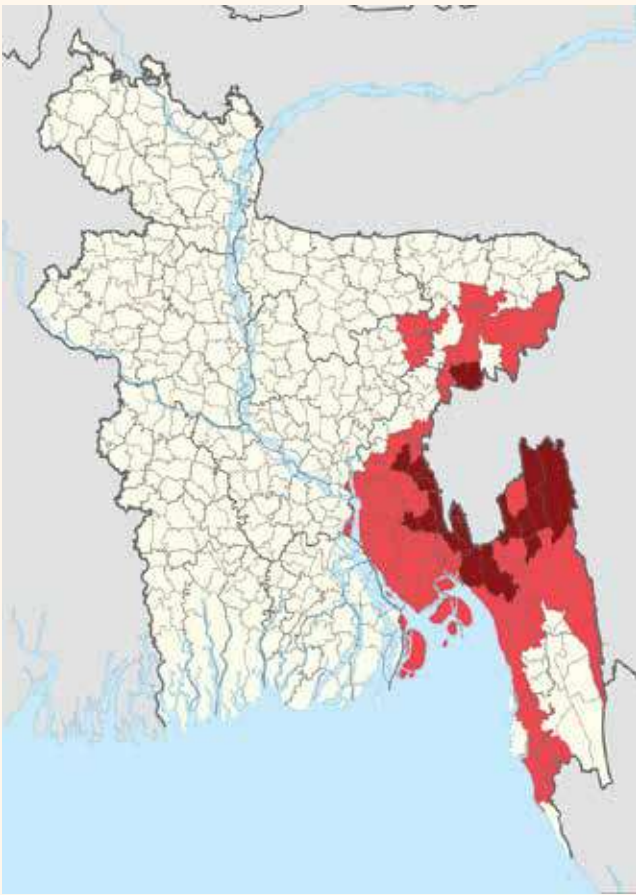
2007 and Cyclone Aila in 2009 taught important lessons that have since been institutionalized. When a cyclone is forecasted, warnings are now disseminated through radio, television, and increasingly, social media, ensuring people know how to prepare.

Yet such preparedness has not spread evenly across the country. In the northeast's haor regions like Sunamganj and Netrakona, disaster preparation typically revolves around protecting the

provide early warnings of the excessive rainfall. This breach of commitment had serious consequences for Bangladesh, whose citizens had little time to brace for the impact. With rivers overflowing across multiple districts, many found themselves in desperate situations, some without power, roads cut off, and villages submerged in waist-deep water. Feni and Noakhali were among the worst-hit districts, with locals reporting that they hadn't seen flooding this severe in over 30 years.

The dams are not merely engineering marvels; they are symbols of a broader "transboundary river dictatorship" that places the lives and livelihoods of downstream communities at the mercy of decisions made by upstream governments. This imbalance goes against international agreements that promote equitable water sharing between nations. The Bangladesh-India Joint River Commission, established in 1972, was intended to manage these shared rivers fairly. Yet, despite decades of negotiations, not enough has been done to ensure that downstream communities are protected.

In this context, the 2024 floods are not simply a natural disaster—they are a symptom of a broader water justice issue. Bangladeshis, especially those living in vulnerable regions, feel the effects of this unequal river management firsthand. The floods leave behind scars that will take years to heal, and many are calling for a reevaluation of the entire approach to river



August 2024 Bangladesh floods effected areas: ■ Effected areas ■ Worst effected areas

degradation. Yet, in practice, little has changed. Both in Bangladesh and India, rivers are controlled, dammed, and diverted, with little regard for the long-term consequences. The 2024 flood makes clear that this destructive development philosophy is unsustainable.

So, what comes next for Bangladesh? The flood has exposed the need for urgent action on multiple fronts. On a global level, countries must address climate change, as the increased frequency

shared rivers in a way that protects lives on both sides of the border.

Most importantly, Bangladesh must continue to fight for water justice, ensuring that its people are no longer at the mercy of upstream dams and political decisions. Floods may be natural, but how we respond to them is a choice. Will Bangladesh choose to remain vulnerable, or will it take a stand for its people and its rivers?

As the floodwaters begin to recede, now the real work begins. The positive outcome of this devastating flood has been a remarkable display of unity among people from all walks of life—regardless of age, class, or religion. Citizens have come together in solidarity, offering aid, support, and comfort to those in need. This collective response reflects an evolving awareness of the strength found in unity, showing that when we stand together, we are capable of overcoming even the most difficult challenges. If this spirit continues, there is no doubt that we can face any crisis with resilience and hope for a brighter future.

management. Should the priority be on maintaining large dams and hydropower projects, or should more be done to ensure that rivers are allowed to flow freely?

In 2019, Bangladesh's High Court declared rivers to be living entities, a ruling intended to protect them from further

of extreme weather events threatens vulnerable regions like Bangladesh. Locally, the government must invest more in disaster preparedness, ensuring that when the next flood comes, citizens are ready. There is also a need for stronger cooperation between Bangladesh and India, so that both nations can manage their

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VIETNAM'S 79TH NATIONAL DAY CELEBRATED IN DHAKA ON AUGUST 31, 2024

On August 31, 2024, the Embassy of Vietnam in Bangladesh hosted a grand reception to commemorate the 79th National Day of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam. The event took place in Dhaka, with Farida Akter, Advisor to the Ministry of Fisheries and Livestock of the Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh, honored as the Chief Guest.

The reception was hosted by H.E. Mr. Nguyen Manh Cuong, Ambassador of Vietnam to Bangladesh, and Mdm. Ha Thi Thanh Van, saw the participation of numerous ambassadors, high commissioners, and heads of missions from various diplomatic missions in Dhaka. The event was also attended by senior officials from civil society, government, and the military, marking a significant celebration of Vietnam's national pride.

This gathering highlighted the strong diplomatic relations between Vietnam and Bangladesh, symbolizing the continued friendship and cooperation between the two nations.





CUP QUALITY OF TEA: FEW SIGNIFICANT FACTORS PLAY AN IMPERATIVE INFLUENCE

A. S. M. Akram

There is no doubt that Tea is one of the well-known non-alcoholic beverages in the Global Village. On the topic of regional consumption patterns, Asia-Pacific is the largest tea market Hub, accounting for over 60% of global consumption. North America and Europe are also major markets for tea intake.

Tea is cultivated in various countries throughout the globe. The main producers of tea include China, India, Sri Lanka, and Kenya. India is the largest producer of black tea while China and Japan are the largest producers of green tea. But Turkey plays a significant role as the largest consumer of tea. According to the habit of tea taking, each Turk consumes approximately 1,300 cups of tea annually. It should be pointed out that Turkish culture and this beverage merge in a contentment or salvation manner. Likewise, Bengalis also offer tea as a welcome drink to visitors or guests as Turkish People.

Due to climatic conditions, the influence of topography, shading conditions, and different cultivars of the *Camellia sinensis* plant (tea), the final product may have vastly differing flavors with quality beverage items. Tea is grown at elevations from sea level and up to altitudes of more than 7,000 feet. Considering altitude, different topographic situations like flat, hillock, and hill teas are classified. Generally speaking, plants cultivated at higher elevations grow more slowly and have complex flavor profiles. It will have a significant



Steaming cups of Bangladesh tea, offering a rich and aromatic taste of tradition and culture

role in bright full liquor and higher antioxidant levels too. The distinctive metaphors of tea plantations at high altitudes in countries such as Sri Lanka, Kenya, India and China, which all produce high-quality teas that

are in very unweaving demand on the global Tea market.

In 2022, Bangladesh produced 93.85 million kgs of Tea but a handsome record won in 2021 than the last couple of decades

with a quantity is 96.52 million kgs. Really, it was a great year!

Teas from higher altitudes resulted in higher levels of TFs and its fractions, aroma composition, and water extract while crude fiber remained unaffected (Muthumani et al. 2013). Elevation has a major effect on the quality of tea. As elevation increases, the growth rate of the shoot decreases. Factors that contribute towards slower growth at high altitudes also lead to improved quality of tea (Owuor et al. 1990).

It is well-known among tea lovers that some of the most much-admired teas are grown at high altitudes. Ceylon, Darjeeling and Assam are some of the most renowned teas in the world. If we look at the Hilly region of Bangladesh like Chattagram & Sylhet, tea estates



Bangladesh tea garden women workers diligently tending to the fields, showcasing their dedication and resilience in every leaf they harvest



From leaf to cup: Discover the intricate process of tea production in Bangladesh. Each step, from plucking the fresh leaves to withering, rolling, oxidizing, and drying, ensures the rich flavors and quality of our cherished tea

are generally planted up on the hilly range, which gives our tea its superior flavor profile and represents good quality tea accordingly.

In Bangladesh, we found the bright prospect for tea cultivation in the Northern Region but due to flat land & Plantations in low-lying areas that experience steadily high temperatures produce tea that tends to lack flavour, aroma, colour, and essential oils. This is because the tea plants grow too quickly and, as a result, lack certain substances and aromas necessary to create a tea's character. This usually ends up as filler teas, that is, part of a blend.

Another unwavering factor is the climate which plays a vital role in ensuring good quality tea. The tea tree grows best in a tropical and subtropical climate. It needs plenty of rain, a minimum of 60 inches a year, and a dry season that lasts no longer than three months. The ideal average temperature is around 18°Celsius

to 20°Celsius, with a minimum of 5 hours of sunshine and requires a relative humidity of 70% to 90%.

There is also a significant effect of plant age and processing

Turkish Tea Culture: A symbol of hospitality and tradition, where each Turk consumes approximately 1,300 cups of tea annually. Much like in Bengali culture, tea is often offered as a welcoming gesture to guests, reflecting the deep cultural significance of this beloved beverage

system on the biochemical traits and quality of tea. Generative clones are preferable for better yield and cup quality as well. Furthermore, good Soil type, drainage & irrigation system, control of pests & blights, maintenance of shade trees, green manure, cover crops, mulching, and drought management play a vital role in the survival of the tea bush from a tea plant into a productive full-fledged tea bush and ensuring cup quality of tea.



Serial No	Composition	%
1	Protein	17
2	Fatty materials	5
3	Carbohydrates	5
4	Crude fibres	20
5	Minerals	4
6	Caffeine	3
7	Catechins	13
8	Solid matters	33

Cup quality is also ensured during its tea process. Fresh green leaf contains 75% moisture and 25% dry matter, when garden collected tea leaf is withered and properly manufactured, after then the composition of dry leaf is found which plays an important role in quality tea making.

Tea catechins or tea tannins are the colorless chemical compounds of bitter taste and

they also contribute to good color, briskness (spiritedness), taste, depth, and tea characteristics of the aromatic flavor of black tea.

The plucking standard also plays a vital role in the cup quality of tea. Two leaves and a bud are desirable to generate quality tea making. This type of tea remains an upright quantity of tea tannins, caffeine, fermenting enzyme, and less moisture

which leads to bloomy (flowery) & granular tea that provides bright, strong and sweet-smelling brew(liquor) under a highly standard manufacturing process and environment as well.

Fermenting and drying processes are very important factors to ensure good quality of tea. After drying, the enzyme is destroyed and the biochemical reaction is stopped, after firing tea matures and develops a pleasant flavor within 5-7 days. But the thiarubigin concentration falls due to the absorption of moisture during storage and causes deterioration of the quality of tea. So, made tea should be packed immediately and stored in a suitable chamber with great care till sent to the auction house.

A. S. M. Akram
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CHIEF ADVISOR H.E. PROFESSOR MUHAMMAD YUNUS BRIEFS FOREIGN HEADS OF MISSIONS AND INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS IN DHAKA



The Honorable Chief Advisor of the Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh, H.E. Professor Muhammad Yunus, held a significant Meet and Greet program at Hotel Intercontinental in Dhaka, where he briefed the Heads of Missions from foreign countries and representatives from International Organizations stationed in the capital.

The event, which aimed to strengthen diplomatic ties and foster international cooperation, saw the participation of diplomats from various nations and global organizations. Professor Yunus, a globally respected figure for his pioneering work in microfinance and social business, shared the government's vision for the future, emphasizing the importance of collaboration in addressing global

challenges such as climate change, economic development, and social justice.

Following the meeting, Mr. Shafiqul Alam, Press Secretary to the Honorable Chief Advisor, addressed journalists, providing an overview of the discussions and highlighting the key points raised during the briefing. Mr. Alam noted that the exchange was productive, with many foreign representatives expressing their commitment to supporting Bangladesh's development initiatives.

The event is seen as a strategic move by the government to engage the international community in its efforts to achieve sustainable development goals and to bolster Bangladesh's position on the global stage.

UN RESIDENT COORDINATOR GWYN LEWIS REAFFIRMS UN SUPPORT FOR BANGLADESH'S INTERIM GOVERNMENT



UN Resident Coordinator Ms. Gwyn Lewis met with the Hon'ble Adviser for Foreign Affairs, Mr. Md. Touhid Hossain, where she reaffirmed the United Nations' support for the interim government of Bangladesh. During their discussion, the Adviser emphasized the importance of the UN Country Team's continued work

across various areas of mutual interest, particularly in promoting good governance and the rule of law.

Ms. Lewis shared perspectives on enhancing UN support for independent investigations, transitional justice, and human rights protection in Bangladesh. The meeting also covered key topics such as economic cooperation, Bangladesh's upcoming LDC graduation, climate change, and ongoing UN humanitarian operations in the country.

The Adviser highlighted the importance of the UN's meaningful support in addressing the aspirations of the Bangladeshi people, especially the youth, and their expectations of the interim government.

AMBASSADOR IWAMA KIMINORI PAID A COURTESY CALL TO HONORABLE FINANCE AND COMMERCE ADVISER DR. SALEHUDDIN AHMED



On August 19, Ambassador IWAMA Kiminori paid a courtesy call to Honorable Finance and Commerce Adviser Dr. Salehuddin Ahmed.

Ambassador IWAMA conveyed Japan's intention to continue supporting Bangladesh's development and prosperity while standing by the interim government led by Chief Adviser Dr. Muhammad Yunus.

Ambassador IWAMA further mentioned that since the founding of Bangladesh, Japan has not only focused on developing infrastructure and strengthening the industrial base but has also consistently worked on other issues such as governance enhancement, local development, improving the quality of healthcare and education, as well as disaster prevention and climate change measures. Ambassador IWAMA reiterated Japan's readiness to continue Japan's cooperation, taking into account the priorities of the interim government.

Ambassador IWAMA also expressed Japan's hope that Bangladesh will make continued efforts to stabilize macroeconomics under current circumstances and improve the investment environment.

In response to these remarks, Adviser Dr. Salehuddin Ahmed expressed his gratitude for Japan's support and hoped to enhance the cooperation. Both sides concurred that they would closely work together to advance the Japan-Bangladesh relationships.

AMBASSADOR YAO WEN DONATES RELIEF FUNDS ON BEHALF OF THE RED CROSS SOCIETY OF CHINA TO THE BANGLADESH RED CRESCENT SOCIETY



On August 26, 2024, Chinese Ambassador to Bangladesh, Yao Wen, met with Professor Dr. M U Kabir Chowdhury, Chairman of the Bangladesh Red Crescent Society, to donate \$100,000 on behalf of the Red Cross Society of China. This donation was intended to support flood victims in Bangladesh following recent devastating floods.

During the ceremony, Ambassador Yao expressed China's deep concern for the loss of life and property in Bangladesh, noting the shared experience of natural disasters between the two nations. He affirmed China's commitment to further assisting Bangladesh in disaster relief and reconstruction, strengthening the comprehensive strategic partnership between the two countries.

Professor Chowdhury thanked China for its timely and valuable support, emphasizing the strong friendship between Bangladesh and China, particularly in times of crisis.

Additionally, Ambassador Yao previously donated \$20,000 to the "Chief Advisor's Relief and Welfare Fund" and provided 6 million Taka worth of relief supplies to Feni, a severely affected city. Chinese enterprises in Bangladesh have also actively contributed, donating over 4.13 million Taka and providing supplies worth about 6.19 million Taka, with ongoing efforts to support flood-affected areas.

KING OF THAILAND BESTOWS ROYAL DECORATION ON HONORARY CONSUL AMIR HUMAYUN MAHMUD CHOWDHURY



His Majesty King Maha Vajiralongkorn Phra Vajiraklaochaoyuhua of Thailand has graciously awarded Mr. Amir Humayun Mahmud Chowdhury, the Honorary Consul of the Kingdom of Thailand to Chittagong, the Companion (Fourth Class) of the Most Noble Order of the Crown of Thailand. This prestigious honor recognizes Mr. Chowdhury's significant contributions to fostering and strengthening the friendship and cooperation between Bangladesh and Thailand.

For the past 18 years, Mr. Chowdhury has been dedicated to supporting the Royal Thai Government and assisting Thai nationals residing



in Bangladesh. In recognition of his efforts, the Royal Thai Embassy held a Royal Decoration Presentation Ceremony, followed by a reception, at the Ambassador's Residence on August 22, 2024. Distinguished guests, including Mr. Chowdhury's family members and officials from the Royal Thai Embassy, attended the event to congratulate him.

The Most Noble Order of the Crown of Thailand, established by King Chulalongkorn in 1869, is conferred upon Thai civil servants and foreign nationals who play an outstanding role in promoting bilateral relations and cooperation.

ASEAN DHAKA COMMITTEE CELEBRATES 57TH ASEAN DAY



The ASEAN Dhaka Committee (ADC) commemorated the 57th anniversary of the founding of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) at the Royal Thai Embassy, the current Chair of the ADC. The celebration began with the ASEAN Flag Hoisting Ceremony, followed by a reception attended by dignitaries and representatives from various sectors.

Her Excellency Mrs. Makawadee Sumitmor, Ambassador of Thailand, delivered a speech highlighting the unity and strength of ASEAN, which is built on cooperative mechanisms fostering mutual trust with partner countries. She emphasized

ASEAN's mission under the current chairmanship of Lao PDR, centered on the theme "ASEAN: Enhancing Connectivity and Resilience." This theme focuses on promoting international connectivity and resilience to support development efforts.

Ambassador Sumitmor also praised Bangladesh's active engagement with ASEAN and the ADC, particularly in collaborative activities such as diplomacy training and sustainable fishery workshops.

ASEAN, founded on August 8, 1967, through the signing of the ASEAN Declaration (Bangkok Declaration), now comprises ten Member States: Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, and Vietnam. In Bangladesh, the ADC was established in 2014 and includes eight ASEAN Missions in Dhaka. The ADC Chair rotates every six months, with the Royal Thai Embassy currently holding the position.

CHIEF OF ARMY STAFF VISITS FLOOD-AFFECTED AREAS IN PARSHURAM, FENI DISTRICT



The Chief of Army Staff, General Waqar-uz-Zaman, OSP, SGP, PSC, visited the flood-affected areas in Parshuram, Feni district. During his visit, he was briefed on the various flood response activities conducted by the Bangladesh Army at the Comilla Cantonment. Following the briefing, he took a helicopter to observe the flood situation in Parshuram and its surrounding areas in the Feni district. While on-site, he provided necessary guidance to the army personnel engaged in rescue operations.

The Principal Staff Officer of the Armed Forces Division, the Engineer-in-Chief of the Bangladesh Army, the General Officer Commanding the 33rd Infantry Division, and the Area Commander of Comilla Area, along with other senior army officials, accompanied him during the visit.

It is noteworthy that the Bangladesh Army has deployed troops from the 17th, 24th, and 33rd Infantry Divisions in Sylhet, Chittagong, and Comilla regions, respectively, to assist in rescuing flood victims. These troops are tirelessly conducting rescue operations to relocate people trapped by the floodwaters to safe locations. They are also distributing relief materials and providing medical services to those affected by the floods.

The Chief of Army Staff has directed the Bangladesh Army to continue these humanitarian efforts until the flood situation stabilizes.

NAVY CHIEF VISITS FLOOD-AFFECTED FENI DISTRICT



Admiral M Nazmul Hassan, the Chief of the Bangladesh Navy, visited the flood-affected areas of Feni district on Tuesday. During his visit to Fulgazi Upazila, he assessed the situation, interacted with locals, and met with the Navy contingent, local administration, and law enforcement agencies. He also monitored the overall flood situation in Feni by boat and provided necessary directives to the Navy personnel involved in rescue, relief, and medical operations. The Navy has deployed over 300 personnel, equipped with boats and life jackets, to assist in rescue efforts across various districts, including Chittagong, Khulna, and Bhola. The Navy Chief emphasized the importance of coordinated efforts for effective disaster response and assured continued medical services as long as necessary.

BANGLADESH AIR FORCE DISTRIBUTES RELIEF IN FLOOD-AFFECTED AREAS



The Bangladesh Air Force (BAF) has been continuously distributing relief supplies to flood-affected areas using their helicopters. On Friday, August 23, 2024, Air Chief Marshal Shaikh Abdul Hannan, BBP, OSP, GUP, nswc, psc, Chief of Air Staff of the Bangladesh Air Force, visited the flood-affected regions by helicopter to monitor the overall situation. Various organizations, including Incepta Pharmaceuticals, Asian Paints, and Impress Telefilm's "Prokiti O Jibon," have contributed relief supplies to the BAF for distribution among the flood victims.

The BAF aircraft are on standby to conduct relief distribution and rescue operations at any time. Additionally, the Bangladesh Air Force has already activated its Disaster Management Cell, ensuring they are prepared to respond to the situation at any moment.

RICKSHAWS: DHAKA'S MOBILE ART

The rickshaw, a small, three-wheeled vehicle, is a symbol of Dhaka and Bangladesh. Handcrafted by artisans, these vehicles are painted with vibrant designs featuring flowers, animals, historical events, and national heroes. Adorned with tassels and plastic flowers, rickshaws become moving art exhibitions, integral to urban life. The craft, taught orally and through practice, involves both men and women painters. Celebrated in festivals and media, rickshaws represent a dynamic form of urban folk art and a shared cultural identity. In 2023, UNESCO recognized the cultural significance of this tradition by inscribing Dhaka's rickshaws and rickshaw paintings on the List of Intangible Cultural Heritage.



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