

London • Dhaka • New York

January 2025

# DIPLOMATS

WORLD

The Only Diplomatic Magazine in Bangladesh

**Competitive Threats and Conspiracies: New Challenges for the  
Bangladeshi Garments Industry**

Development of Myanmar Civil War, Its Dynamics and Rohingya Repatriation

Bangladesh's Aspirations as a Middle-Income Country:  
Trajectory, Reality, & Perils

Better Political Climate need for Better Consumers'- Right





## BUSINESS UNITS

Textiles

Garments

Real Estate

Brokerage House

Automobiles

Power/LP Gas (Service)

Building Materials

Packaging

Telecom

Media

Agro Industry

Transportation

Information Technology

**HEAD OFFICE & FACTORY:**  
Nowpara, Madhabdi,  
Narsingdi-1604 Bangladesh  
Phone : +88 09610 110 220-5  
[www.jajbhuiyangroup.com](http://www.jajbhuiyangroup.com)

**CORPORATE OFFICE:**  
Gawsia Kashem Centre, 7th Floor,  
10/2 Arambag, Motijheel, Dhaka-1000.  
Phone : +88 02 41 070 208 -15  
+88 09610 110 220-5

**BARIDHARA DOHS OFFICE:**  
House no- 322 (Ground Floor).  
Road no-5, Phone : +88 02 8416905



# BEHIND DIPLOMATS

## Board of Advisors

Executive Advisor

**Abul Hasan Chowdhury**

Fmr. State Minister

Ministry of Foreign Affairs, GoB

Advisors

**Shahagir Bakth Faruk**, Educationalist

**Mohammed Bazlur Rahman CIP**, Entrepreneur

**Dr. Imtiaz Ahmed**, Academician & Researcher

**Dr. Mohammed Faruque**, Entrepreneur

**Barrister Monwar Hossain**, Lawyer

**A.S. Abdul Muiz (Sujon)**, Entrepreneur, Academician

**Prof. Dr. Abu Nasir Rizvi**, Physician, Academician

**Aminur Rahman**, Entrepreneur

**Md. Abu Sadeq**, Entrepreneur

**Mohammad Fayazur Rahman Bhuiyan**, Entrepreneur

**Liakot Ali Bhuiyan**, Entrepreneur

**Md. Niaz Morshed Elite**, Entrepreneur

**Md. Louthful Goni Titu**, Entrepreneur

**Lt Gen (Retd) Mohammad Mahfuzur Rahman, PhD**, Security Analyst

Editor

**Shahed Akhtar**

Ambassador & Fmr. Secretary, GoB

Executive Editor

**Nazinur Rahim**

Associate Editor

**AKM Sayedad Hossain**

**Md. Aynul Hoque, PhD**

**Ms Marzia Sultana**

Assistant Editor

**Dr. Rehena Akhter**

Creative Editor

**Lutfun Nahar Taposhi**

Creative and Multimedia Editor

**Babli Yasmin**

Contributing Editor

**Ayesha S Chowdhury**

Co-ordinator

**Sheikh Nazia Hasan**

Contributors

**Lt Gen (Retd) Mohammad Mahfuzur Rahman, PhD**

**Mohammed Alim Akhter Khan**

**Dr. Md Aynul Hoque**

**H. E. Dr. Abdelouahab Saidani**

**Shahed Akhtar**

**AKM Sayedad Hossain**

**Imran Khan**

**Major Del H Khan, SPP, psc ( retd)**

Design & Layout

**Afifa Mahjabeen**

Publisher

**Nazinur Rahim**



Address: House-02, (5th Floor), Road-11, Block-H, Banani, Dhaka-1213, Bangladesh

Phone: +88 0258811177, Hotline: +880 1972344788, Email: info@diplomats.news

Website: www.diplomats.news

# CONTENT

## P-07

Development of Myanmar Civil War, Its Dynamics and Rohingya Repatriation

## P-18

Competitive Threats and Conspiracies:  
New Challenges for the Bangladeshi  
Garments Industry

## P-27

Overview of the AOFA Series on  
Bangladesh-World Bank Relations: Way Forward

## P-35

Navigating the Threat of Dutch Disease: How  
Bangladesh Can Steer Clear of Economic  
Pitfalls and Foster Sustainable Growth

## P-44

Regional Security and CHT Peace  
Accord 1997: An Unfinished Peace  
Building Model of Bangladesh

## P-14

Better Political Climate need  
for Better Consumers'- Right

## P-23

Discovering the Beauty of Algeria:  
A Journey Through Time and Culture

## P-30

A Conversation with His Excellency Syed  
Ahmed Maroof: High Commissioner of  
Pakistan to Bangladesh

## P-39

Bangladesh's Aspirations as a Middle-Income  
Country: Trajectory, Reality, & Perils

## P-49

Diplomats Flash Corner



Diplomats' World extends its warmest wishes for a fulfilling and productive 2025. As the year unfolds, it brings pivotal global and national transitions. The return of Donald Trump to the U.S. presidency, backed by a strong mandate, signals potential shifts in international geopolitics, while Bangladesh embarks on an ambitious path of governance and institutional reforms.

Chief Adviser Prof. Muhammad Yunus is driving a transformative agenda, with key commissions on constitutional, electoral, police, and anti-corruption reforms submitting their recommendations. The Constitution Reform Commission has proposed recognizing food, clothing, shelter, education, internet access, and voting as fundamental rights. Notably, it suggests replacing "nationalism," "socialism," and "secularism" with equality, human dignity, social justice, and pluralism—while retaining democracy as the foundational principle of the state. Diplomats' World welcomes these long-awaited reforms, which mark a decisive step toward a more inclusive and progressive Bangladesh.

At the World Economic Forum in Davos, Prof. Yunus engaged in high-level discussions with global leaders, including German Chancellor Olaf Scholz, Finland's President Alexander Stubb, and Thailand's Prime Minister Paetongtarn Shinawatra, among others. A dedicated session on Bangladesh highlighted its efforts to attract foreign investment and expand export markets. These dialogues underscored Bangladesh's growing stature on the global economic stage and its commitment to fostering an investor-friendly environment.

Meanwhile, Foreign Adviser Tauhid Hossain met with Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi, securing a three-year extension of duty-free and quota-free access for Bangladeshi products post-LDC graduation in 2026. Discussions also addressed China's Belt and Road Initiative, strategic cooperation, and the Rohingya crisis, with China reaffirming its commitment to finding a sustainable solution. Strengthening ties with China remains integral to Bangladesh's long-term economic vision.

Bangladesh's relations with India continue to deepen, with India's Foreign Secretary emphasizing collaboration in connectivity, trade, energy, and capacity building. India reiterated its support for a democratic, stable, and inclusive Bangladesh, reinforcing the importance of mutual trust and respect in bilateral ties.

This edition of Diplomats' World delves into these critical developments, offering diplomats, academics, and business leaders valuable insights into the evolving global and regional landscape.

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



IMPORTER, INDENTER,  
CONTRACTOR & SUPPLIER



# SS GROUP OF COMPANIES

**RIVER DREDGING**  
**RIVER BANK PROTECTION WORKS**  
**CONSTRUCTION WORKS**  
**IMPORT, INDENTERING & SUPPLY**  
**MEDICAL EQUIPMENTS**

**SAFURA GREEN (LEVEL-A5), 761 SATMOSJID ROAD, DHANMONDI, DHAKA - 1209**

**01713429777, 01713429779**

**[www.ssenterprise.com.bd](http://www.ssenterprise.com.bd)**







# DEVELOPMENT OF MYANMAR CIVIL WAR, ITS DYNAMICS AND ROHINGYA REPATRIATION

Lt Gen (Retd) Mohammad Mahfuzur Rahman, PhD

## Current Dynamics of Myanmar Civil War:

The offensive operations of 'The Three Brotherhood Alliance (3BA) namely; Arakan Army (AA), Myanmar Democratic Alliance Army (MNDAA), and Ta'ang National Liberation Army in October 2023 presumably with the consent of China gave impetus to all Ethnic Armed Organizations (EAOs) including Peoples Defense Force (Armed Wing of Aung San Suu Kyi's NLD led National Unity Government). The simultaneous attacks all over the country overwhelmed the Junta's capacity to cope especially in land battles. The moral

component of TATMADAW (MN Armed Forces) took a serious toll i.e. huge defections, surrendering to EAOs without much resistance. TATMADAW's reinforcement capability to threatened sectors was in short supply. Initiatives to recruit young people in the military did not produce much result. The only option remained to TATMADAW was to resort to air attacks and the use of artillery fires from time to time on EAOs and their sympathizers. Under these circumstances, almost 60% of the territory is now under the control of EAOs. On 09 October, Kachin Independence

Army (KIA) captured Pinlebu a major city in Sagaing Region. In August Lashio, the capital of Shan State and Northeast Command lost to MNDAA. TNLA has continued its offensive in Northern Shan State and last month seized another strategic township Hsipaw. The overall situation reveals that EAOs are inching forward and converging on Central Command in Mandalay. This will seriously threaten the authority of TATMADAW and its legitimacy as the ruling establishment. AA making major inroads against Junta in Rakhine State to capture Western Command. However,





Arakan Army forces making significant inroads in Rakhine amidst escalating tensions with the Junta

TATMADAW reportedly, taking the newly formed Rohingya militia along has been able to stop AA advance in and around Maungdaw (Rohingya stronghold and important strategic township in Rakhine). This has caused further unhappiness in AA on Rohingyas in Rakhine. Though TATMADAW is struggling with the moral component of fighting power, the conceptual and physical components remain far from capitulation. Junta still holds the centre, hub of administration, and government machinery, the military-industrial complex and production hub, seaports, and airports (Note: Current Dynamics have further developed in Civil War).

### The Economic Dynamics:

In the last three years (after the coup in 2021) Myanmar's foreign trade though shrunk yet it has been around \$ 105 billion of which \$ 27 billion is in border trade. There are 17 border trade stations with five neighboring countries; China-5, Thailand-7, India-2, Bangladesh-2, and Laos-1. The daily trade volume with China through border stations is \$ 10 million and with Thailand approximately \$ 14 million

whereas with Bangladesh, it is \$ 35 thousand only. Out of these 17 border trade stations, 6 stations are under the control of EAOs, from which they have bagged benefits from trade of \$ 10 billion in the last three years. There is a war economy flourishing whereby all parties involved are benefitted politically and economically from fighting rather than winning or losing. They are financed by outside support, from loot and pillage, from drug trafficking, arms smuggling, and human trafficking all of which depend on violence to generate

revenue to sustain violence. So, what we are observing is a predatory social condition. These illicit economic activities have been affecting China's Yunnan Province seriously. Thus China is interested in authorized business activities in bordering areas. So, in the case of border trade Junta and EAOs have gone for profit sharing to maintain the status quo. This is a fragile arrangement susceptible to collapsing, potentially reviving the illicit economy. MNDA, TNLA, and KIA get a benefit of \$ 10 million in business a day. Karen National Army also gets benefits of \$ 14 million a day whereas, AA in the Bangladesh border only gets benefited from \$ 35 thousand. So the incentive through border trade is not incentivizing for relation-building with Bangladesh rather illicit business (during trafficking, arms smuggling etc.) is more lucrative for AA.

### China Factor:

China would like to see a stable Myanmar or a balance of power



Ethnic Armed Organizations advancing in Shan and Kachin States, consolidating control





Fragile trade agreements at Myanmar's borders, a lucrative war economy in action

between the Junta and EAOs so that the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) projects can go on and China's interests are preserved in Myanmar. The other issue is border trade should be picked up through a profit-sharing system between the Junta and resistance forces. This effort is likely to reduce illicit business along the China-Myanmar border. China's Yunnan province and its citizens were affected by such illegal business. The Junta was not paying attention to this concern of China in the China-bordering region of Myanmar. As such 3BA was encouraged to launch operation 1027. Following that China brokered a peace initiative

between the Junta and 3BA and a cease-fire was reached in the beginning of 2024. There were a few rounds of talks but no concrete agreement on border trade and no normalcy has been reached.

After the coup in 2021 in Myanmar, China sort of distanced away from the Junta and it surfaced clearly when China approved 3BA operations against the Junta around Northern Shan State and Kachin State bordering China. However, the recent visit of China's Foreign Minister Wang Yi to Naypyidaw on August 11, 2024, and inviting the Junta Chief to



General Min Aung Hlaing, right, during their meeting on Aug. 14, 2024, in Naypyitaw, Myanmar

Beijing looks like giving much-desired legitimacy to the regime by China. Furthermore, the source reveals that Chinese Premier Li Qiang is likely to give an audience to Min Aung Hlaing and two sides would discuss Myanmar's forthcoming election of 2025. This indicates there is a policy shift in Beijing regarding Myanmar. During Wang Yi's visit, the Junta requested China to withdraw supporting EAOs, and the regime assured protection of China's interest in Myanmar.

Meanwhile, China's special envoy for Myanmar, Deng Xijun expressed his concern about the EAOs West connection especially with the National Unity Government (NUG) including its armed group. In his meeting with top leaders of Wa State Army (the most powerful Armed Group in the Northern part of Myanmar reins an autonomous government in Wa State), he claimed, "The Myanmar Military is the founder of Myanmar State and the most important political force in Myanmar's political structure. Whether it's NUG or NLD; they cannot replace the Myanmar Military's position in Myanmar's political arena". He added capture of Lashio by MNDAA has destabilized the situation in the north of Myanmar allowing an opportunity for the US-led West to interfere.

Meanwhile, China has punished MNDAA and TNLA by cutting off supplies and much-needed logistics. China also warned Wa State not to support these EAOs, with this signal Junta has stepped up bombing at Lashio.





Humanitarian crisis worsens as violence against Rohingyas triggers a new wave of refugees

#### The West Factor:

The Indo-Pacific, Quad, and AUKUS are part of China's containment strategy by the West. However, they have been greatly nullified by the BRI, Pakistan-China Economic Corridor, and Myanmar-China Economic Corridor. The Rohingya crisis, the coup of Myanmar in 2021 has given the US scope to be involved in Myanmar with the Burma Act that would isolate the Junta, impose sanctions, support pro-democratic force, and finally provide technical/non-lethal assistance to EAOs to dismiss Junta. Thereby curtailing China's influence in Myanmar. There is a Rohingya Act around the corner by the US that might be contesting China's influence in the Rohingya issue encompassing the Bay of Bengal. Very recently Mizoram Chief Minister's comment about having a Christian country in the tri-border region (India-Bangladesh-Myanmar)

indicated the West-led missionaries' long-term plan to create a buffer state between China and Myanmar.

#### India Factor:

India despite being a democracy was supporting the Junta and collaborating primarily for three reasons; (a) Myanmar is a part of India's look East and Act East

strategy. India has strategic projects like the Kaladan Multimodal Project and the India-Myanmar-Thailand Highway. (b) To fight India's insurgency Junta support was necessary to destroy insurgents' sanctuary inside Myanmar. (c) From the regional power outlook India did not want Myanmar to fall into the fold of China. So, even against the genocide and human catastrophe of Rohingya, India decided to stand by the side of Myanmar. However, the tide is turning against the Junta in Myanmar and a military defeat of TATMADAW is on the horizon. India recognized the existence of resistance groups and for the very first time has invited NUG, AA, KIA, and Chin National Forest to a seminar titled "Constitutionalism and Federation" in New Delhi on September 24, 2024.

#### ASEAN Factor:

ASEAN's initiative to deal with the Rohingya crisis was not very remarkable. Despite individual member states like Malaysia's pro-activeness could not make



Humanitarian crisis worsens as violence against Rohingyas triggers a new wave of refugees





ASEAN leaders push for renewed dialogue to address Myanmar's political and humanitarian crises

any headway primarily considering it was out of jurisdiction matter of ASEAN. However, after the coup in 2021, ASEAN states were vocal and wanted to bring an end to the humanitarian crisis in Myanmar that encompassed the Rohingya issue as well. It proposed a 'Five-Point Consensus for Peace' two years back but remains unimplemented due to the non-cooperation of the Junta. On October 9, 2024, at 'Summit' in Laos, Thai Prime Minister Paetongtarn Shinawatra proposed an informal consultation' in December to find a solution for Myanmar. For the first time in three years, Myanmar sent a senior foreign ministry official to the talk. This is a positive sign considered by ASEAN.

**Bangladesh Factor and My Take:** Bangladesh's foreign policy seems very conservative and does not allow complaining even if a wrong has been done to it. Its Gambia went to ICJ for Rohingyas, not Bangladesh. The

ICJ hearing was from 10-12 December; 2019 at The Hague where Gambia a small country in West Africa (with a population of 2.7 million and per capita income of \$ 707) took Myanmar to ICJ, sadly during the same time frame (11-14 December; 2019) Bangladesh Army Chief was visiting Myanmar, possibly to exhibit that Bangladesh has no issue with Myanmar and Rohingya issue is Myanmar's internal issue. Even Bangladesh does not officially address the Rohingya people as Rohingya'. It is termed as FDMN (Forcibly Displaced Myanmar Nationals). Because Myanmar does not want them to be called Rohingyas. Does Bangladesh have an independent policy/strategy about Rohingya Repatriation? If there is any that has not been surfaced in the public domain. Dhaka always relied on regional powers; India, China, and the international community. They have their agendas and national interests that may not tally with ours. The international

community would express sympathy, and provide humanitarian assistance but risking geopolitical interest is altogether a different matter. We cannot blame them for their strategy on Rohingya Repatriation if we do not have one. Rohingya Repatriation was not a national priority in Bangladesh. It is not our 'Centre of Gravity'. Hasina Regime's number one priority (especially after the 2014 election) was to establish its legitimacy by employing Bangladesh missions abroad, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and government machinery (in such an environment regime's interest is greater than country's interest). The Rohingya issue was not an existential threat to the regime. Dhaka did not negotiate with AA even after the coup of 2021 in Myanmar. AA Chief, Major General Twan Mrat Naing in 2022 in an interview with a Bangladeshi-born British journalist expressed his full sympathy for Rohingyas and was desirous to take back them in Rakhine as part and parcel of Myanmar in general and Rakhine in particular. In exchange, he expected sympathy for Rakhine people and humanitarian support from Bangladesh. Of course, Dhaka did not pay attention. Now, he terms Rohingyas as Bengali Muslims and repatriation is not on his agenda. Interestingly, now some of the Rakhine journalists and academics are calling Rohingyas as Chittagonians. A dominant group in Rakhine polity would like to discuss all kinds of harmonious development agendas with Bangladesh except the Rohingya Repatriation issue.



Global calls for democratic engagement with Myanmar's National Unity Government intensify

Seems opportunities slipped away. The Junta is no more a legitimate government of Myanmar nor does it control the majority administration of Myanmar. Even the Junta is sharing political and economic power through agreements now in Shan and Kachin States. Rohingyas after repatriation will go back to Rakhine and now Rakhine is mostly under the control of AA. In reality, AA runs judiciary, police, and civil administration in almost all of Rakhine except the military-occupied state capital and a few towns. However, Dhaka continues communication with Junta only. On the contrary, all the neighbors are now engaging with EAOs and their political parties besides the Junta. This is pragmatism. Very recently, the UN has warned about the

upcoming famine in Rakhine. Agriculture production has declined and combined with the near halt of trade two million out of three million people are at risk of starvation including Rohingyas still residing there. 60% population is displaced and more than half a million are now entirely on aid. However, TATMADAW's 'Four Cut Strategy' in Rakhine (restriction on food, medicine, and intra, interstate movement) has turned this humanitarian issue into a crisis. The recent violence has taken a new turn in Rakhine. So long since the military has been accused of persecution of Rohingyas, now, AA has been accused of targeting Rohingyas. This triggered a new wave of refugees fleeing into Bangladesh. TATMADAW persecution forced Rohingya

exodus in bulk but they did not deny the allegation of expulsion. On the other hand, now AA causing atrocities against Rohingyas and expulsion is taking place in small groups but AA denying their involvement.

NUG's position now taking Rohingyas back with equality and dignity once the situation is stable and democratic force in power in Myanmar and absorbing them in their society. NUG also expressed its intention to bring perpetrators of Rohingya human rights violations and genocide to justice. However, Dhaka is not meaningfully engaging NUG as well. In a seminar in Dhaka last year, the Foreign Minister of NUG joined online and expressed her frustration of not being able to engage Dhaka. Possibly Interim Government with so much of things going around will overlook engagement with NUG thereby missing the opportunity again. Likely Rohingya Repatriation is not on their radar now, neither it's their priority, inevitably nor in the interest of Rakhine/AA. This only highlights the grim reality of Rohingya Repatriation.

We need to remember if the pains and sorrows of neighbors do not touch us, in their happiness and joy they are also not going to remember us and our concerns as well.

**Lt Gen (Retd) Mohammad Mahfuzur Rahman, PhD**  
Former Principal Staff Officer  
Armed Forces Division  
and Advisor, Diplomats World





South Bangla Holdings Ltd.  
স্বপ্নের শুরু এখানেই

**ঢাকা মাওয়া ( নিমতলা বাসস্ট্যান্ড ) সংলগ্ন উচ্চ জমি**

**বসিলা থেকে মাত্র ১৫ মিঃ দূরত্বে**

**১২৫ ফিট এভিনিউ রোড, ৩০-৬০ ফিট আভ্যন্তরিত রোড**

**নাগরিক সকল সুযোগ সুবিধা সম্বলিত( ক্লাব হাউস,  
কনভেনশন সেন্টার ও স্পোর্টস কমপ্লেক্স )**

South Bangla Holdings Ltd.

ঠিকানাঃ

House 02 (5th Floor), Road 11,  
Block H, Banani, Dhaka-1213, Bangladesh

যোগাযোগ করুনঃ

01862143847 | 01733685622 | 01873964064  
01788888821 | 01747584764





# BETTER POLITICAL CLIMATE NEED FOR BETTER CONSUMERS'- RIGHT

**Mohammed Alim Akhter Khan**

**E**stablishing consumers'-right in Bangladesh is really a challenging task for public officials assigned to do so. Some common patterns of the challenges to be named are creating a shortage of items artificially, overpricing, hoarding, adulteration, producing or trading fake commodities, and many more alike. The gravity and size of the challenges are not insignificant; those are not negligible either for the greater public interest. Irregularities are found almost everywhere from tiny to large items, small traders to corporate giants are commonly seen to practice. Types and patterns of

irregularities are multiple and multidimensional.

Public servants or the team work in markets usually encounter traders involved with all the challenges above with almost all commodities and goods including food items drugs and medicines. Healthcare services or drugs provided usually are substandard creating potential threats to human life and health.

Whole the market seems playing blame-games, retailers always blame the wholesalers for the mishaps, and

wholesalers blame the agents or dealers the same way, and thus the rope of blame ultimately climbs to the peak signifying the problem a network of nexus. Practically items involved in, the ill processes are boundlessly worrying the society, more importantly nurtured by political influence.

Similarly most of the food items either in the restaurants or in the food shops are found commonly substandard or adulterated. The issue is really complex and alarming as most of the persons engaged in the process are unaware and untrained about food safety and





A Press Briefing on Consumer Right Issues

the owners always remain reluctant alike. Moreover, this serious problem is seen with a very callous attitude by the concerned though it is awfully hazardous for human life or health.

Another most worrying matter is plenty of fake or counterfeit items flood the markets. The problem further creates multiple problems altogether, it threatens the genuine producers or importers, cheats the consumers with price and quality, and bypasses the authority entrusted with the power of revenue collection.

The scenario is wide and deep in the society that brings consumers helpless, transforming the state into an effective entity. Citizen consider themselves alien in the state, feel discouraged to involve in productivity, and contributes less compare to their capability.

The recent incidence of ghostlike appearance of few South America bound some edible oil vassals in our mid sea

within a day just after review of prices of some edible oils on the reasons of price hike and price of US\$ in the international market does not signal an encouraging ethical practice by the community. Hence, ethical question, responsibility and commitment of concerned community come to the fore. Establishing corporate ethics in business climate is a major challenge therefore. The country ultimately needs strong ethical leaders and proper political culture for a better future in all respect. Decadence in public sector governance needs more and significant attention to reverse the system.

No doubt greed acts as the main diver of these malpractices and this is absolutely a result of an unethical practice prevailing in the society nurtured by corrupt politicians from the top, created through malpractices within the government. State of governance is heart delivering quality public services and a misgoverned country never produces good public service at all. Poor public servants would never succeed in protecting consumers' right. Interference in delivering public services is bound to impact the quality. In this context transparency and accountability face challenges in public services.

Among others, strong capability, neutrality, sense of professionalism could only ensure quality public service delivery. But it needs a parallel political leadership and culture. Public servants need to establish the rule of law in their day-to-day functions. Ensuring the rule of law by public servants working in a negative environment is tough and if challenges are wide and deep public servants feel themselves helpless.



Debate in Shadow Parliament on Market and Price





Visiting Wholesale Stock by DG, DNCRP

Moreover, ethical value of a society cannot be separated from the very political culture as well. Politicians are the principal weaver of the fabric of that society in particular. If the greedy and notorious business communities find the political climate an opportunity in their favor they naturally use the opportunity and take the benefit. Nexus of political leaders with ill business community brings the climate into a field of collect money by all means to satisfy their greed, turns the society into their prey creating frustrated among citizens.

Certainly, public departments to ensure consumers' right need to fight more in this ill situation. Only a society woven with strong ethical fabric could change the scenario. Political climate created with strong ethical value and with commitment could only save the consumers' right.

Inertia and reluctant attitude of public servants towards commoners are created for

many reasons and improper training, wrong attitude, corrupt mind, non-professional practices etc. built by the wrong guidance from the political masters might essentially be the root cause. It breeds not only reluctance or inertia in public servants; rather it produces trends of misuse of power, arbitrariness, and discriminatory attitude among public servants. Democracy never allows such anti-people attitude of public servants, but it gets power in arbitrary rule only. In the recent past,

Bangladesh experienced a bloody and cruel change of power handed over the country long due to a nexus of arbitrariness composed of groups of vested politicians, business tycoons, and public servants. The change carries a new message to all concerned, from politicians and to public servants to ensure democracy in every sphere of their task or face the consequences. Thus, public servants now must change themselves in practice and attitude. They must resist themselves from ill political culture for the greater interest of the citizen-the owner of the republic.

In the recent past, it is experienced further that confusion among public servants in times of crisis creates frustration concerning assurance and enforcement of the law regarding consumer-rights. Incidents of insensitivity in public servants were seen common creating public suffering more. Public servants, as a custodian of public goods and resources, must not fail to attend properly in times of need. But



Visiting a Shop by DG, DNCRP





Consumers navigating a marketplace where price manipulation and adulteration remain pressing concerns

incidentally they were compelled to ignore the constitutional guarantee of ownership of the republic by its citizen.

Unfortunately, Bangladesh lost a valuable period of more than five decades and any further such incident might be a crime, a new and bright future is waiting to be built; all young bloods need to be aligned with the march. Public servants with utmost professionalism and

commitment with public expectation could further assure quality public service delivery. Attempting to protect consumers' rights among many public demands requires commitment as well as proper attention of public servants. Proper response to public demands by public servants is a must for a better world.

Consumers or citizens in greater perspective saw a serious damages in the past

regarding ethical values and commitment as well which needs to be replaced immediately with a positive one. For the last few decades nation saw most of its leaders corrupt, biased, bowed to greed or involved lavishly in ill practices, uncommitted to the welfare of the society, rather they encouraged all irregularities and odds alike. It may seem tough to reverse the scenario but it is necessary and otherwise, the challenge will remain the same.

The country thus expects its leaders to feel the reality soon, change themselves, and come forward with a positive vision to bring about a change. Citizens may hope a bright and sunny morning ahead is waiting. The society is prepared to embrace a brighter future. Certainly dawn of a new political culture will be replaced by citizens for betterment of the society and of consumers in particular.

**Mohammed Alim Akhter Khan**

Director General

Directorate of National Consumers' Right Protection



# COMPETITIVE THREATS AND CONSPIRACIES: NEW CHALLENGES FOR THE BANGLADESHI GARMENTS INDUSTRY

Dr. Md Aynul Hoque

**B**angladesh's ready-made garment (RMG) industry, which contributes over 80% of its export earnings, has emerged as a cornerstone of the nation's economy over the past few decades. It has earned a strong global position in the highly competitive apparel market. The RMG industry employs more than 4 (four) million workers of whose more than 80% are women. The sector also immensely contributes to the forward and backward supply chain that contributes to huge employment opportunities in logistics and bank industries too. Thus, the RMG industry is the backbone of Bangladesh's economy and development. Increased

competition from Vietnam and India may reduce Bangladesh's share in the global export market. Countries like Vietnam and India are investing in automation and industry 4.0 technologies to boost their export capacities while Bangladeshi RMG stands far behind them. Moreover, repetitive labor unrests imply that some foreign and local vested quarters are trying to destabilize our apparel industry and thus cause production and shipments delay. This propels Western buyers to transfer their orders from Bangladesh to similar other countries like India, Vietnam, Cambodia, and Sri Lanka. Therefore, we

assume that this sector is recently facing a mix of domestic and external threats that may weaken its competitive edge.

## **Looming competitive challenges to the RMG Industry**

### **Competition from South Asia and Neighboring Region:**

Countries like India, Vietnam, Cambodia, and even Pakistan are intensifying their presence in the global apparel market. These countries are investing heavily in their textile sectors, boosting productivity and infrastructure to meet the demands of major European and North American buyers. India, for example, has policies aimed at increasing its share of the global textile and





Key export markets for Bangladesh's ready-made garments

apparel market, which contributes to divert orders away from Bangladesh. Vietnam, with its trade agreements and a well-organized supply chain, also poses a strong competitive challenge.

### Labor and Compliance

**Pressures:** Global consumers and brands, such as Zara, H&M, Walmart etc, are increasingly focusing on ethical sourcing and sustainable production. Bangladesh has faced scrutiny over labor rights and factory safety standards, especially after the Rana Plaza collapse thus resulted in hundreds of workers' deaths in 2013. Any failure to maintain high labor standards and environmental regulations could result in reduced demand as Western buyers may shift to countries with better compliance records.

### Environmental Regulations and Sustainable Manufacturing:

Major apparel buyers, particularly from Europe and North America, are increasingly demanding eco-friendly practices and sustainable sourcing. Implementing green technologies and reducing carbon footprints can be costly,

and for a developing country like Bangladesh, the industry may face higher operational costs to meet these demands.

### Geopolitical and Trade Shifts:

Trade relationships and tariffs can shift quickly due to geopolitical changes, and Bangladesh's reliance on a few key markets such as the US and EU and makes it vulnerable to such changes. Trade deals like the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP), which includes countries such as China and Vietnam, could

enable other countries to gain a price advantage over Bangladesh due to preferential tariffs. Vietnam has already signed a Free Trade Agreement (FTA) with the European Union, ensuring that from 2027 onwards, its exports will face zero tariffs. This is a significant advantage for Vietnam in the European market. Bangladesh, if it graduates from Least Developed Country (LDC) status in 2026, will retain tariff-free access to European markets only until 2029. Vietnam, aiming to capitalize on this impending shift, is actively working to capture a substantial portion of the European market.

### Technological Advancements and Automation:

Our RMG sector is relatively labor-intensive which focuses less on technology adoption and lags behind India, Pakistan, and Vietnam in investing in automation, sustainable technology, and Industry 4.0 to cope with the fourth industrial revolution. Countries such as



Labor unrest presents a significant challenge to the sustainability of Bangladesh's RMG sector



Adopting Industry 4.0 technologies is essential for maintaining global competitiveness

China, India, and Vietnam are moving towards automation, which can lower production costs in the long run and increase efficiency thus making them more attractive to international buyers. Bangladesh should invest in automation and Industry 4.0 technologies to remain competitive.

### **Speculations of Conspiracy by Neighboring Countries**

There are unverified claims and speculations that neighboring countries may be engaged in strategic lobbying or other

practices to position themselves more favorably in the global garment sector. The following tactics are probably adopted by the competing neighbors: **Trade Lobbying:** Some argue that regional competitors lobby with Western buyers to promote their textile sectors by highlighting their capabilities in compliance, efficiency, and sustainability.

**Strategic Investment:** Countries like China and India have been investing in Bangladesh's garment sector, sometimes

perceived as ways to influence it indirectly. While these investments can provide growth opportunities, some view this as a way to curb Bangladesh's autonomy in critical industry decisions. Bangladesh should attract more FDIs from the Middle East and Europe into its RMG industry.

**Manipulation of Raw Material Prices:** With Bangladesh heavily dependent on imported raw materials like cotton from India and China, any sudden restrictions or pricing changes can have significant ripple effects on production costs and timelines. Bangladesh should also consider opening diversified sources for the RMG raw materials to mitigate future supply uncertainties and unseen shocks.

**Labor Unrest:** According to reliable sources August-September labor unrest is largely fueled by foreign actors, stoking disputes among labor groups over claims and control over the recycled fabric trade. Members of BGMEA claimed on 5th October 2024 that there is a third-party plot behind recent labor unrest that aims to destroy the sector. It is speculated that these issues are being exacerbated by influence from neighboring countries.

**Steps Forward for Bangladesh** Bangladesh could consider the following strategic responses to cope with the above-mentioned challenges and looming threats: **Investing in Sustainable Practices:** Embracing sustainable, energy-efficient, and environment-friendly technologies and improving



Sustainable practices in garment production secure long-term demand from Western buyers





Global trade shifts and export diversification are crucial for the future of Bangladesh's RMG industry

environmental compliance could give Bangladesh a competitive edge in the era of sustainable manufacturing and ethical consumerism.

#### **Diversifying Export Markets:**

Reducing dependency on the US and European markets by exploring trade relationships in Africa, the Middle East, and Latin America could cushion if Bangladesh faces any market share loss in Europe and North America.

#### **Investing in Automation and Industry 4.0 Technologies:**

Moving towards automated and semi-automated processes can improve productivity, reduce costs, and enable Bangladesh to compete with technologically advanced competitors. Some studies suggest that incremental technological automation is happening in the Bangladeshi RMG industry. However, the Indian, Sri Lankan, and

Vietnamese apparel industries are increasingly adopting digital technological elements of Industry 4.0. The Bangladeshi apparel industry has to invest in smart automation, artificial intelligence, big data analytics, and robotics as part of the Industry 4.0 journey. Industry 4.0 technologies can reduce production costs, improve quality, and reduce lead time which will enhance Bangladesh's competitiveness in the global market.

#### **Improving Worker Rights and Conditions:**

By ensuring safer working conditions, fair wages, and improved labor rights, Bangladesh can maintain its positive reputation and satisfy global buyers who prioritize ethical sourcing.

#### **Developing a high-value chain in the apparel industry:**

Presently, the RMG sector

mostly competes in low-value-adding tasks such as cutting, sewing, and finishing. Our apparel industry should develop competitive capacities in R&D, design, and branding management which are considered high-value-added activities. With the help of industry 4.0 technologies, our graduates and experts can also be able to create world-class fashion designs and branding for our apparel sector.

Strategic response to these threats will be essential to sustain growth in the face of intensified competition and evolving global geopolitical dynamics. The RMG industry in Bangladesh is not only crucial for the country's economy but also supports the livelihoods of millions. To address challenges such as political instability, labor unrest, and adverse international market conditions, the government and relevant authorities should implement long-term strategies with investment in Industry 4.0 and automation technologies, developing value chains, and promoting export diversification.

Maintaining unity is essential in countering the conspiracies and tactics employed by neighboring countries. To retain a competitive edge in the international market and thwart these conspiracies, Bangladesh should act with heightened vigilance and resolute measures.

**Dr. Md Aynul Hoque**  
Associate Editor  
Diplomats World

# HIGH COMMISSION OF INDIA CELEBRATES 76TH REPUBLIC DAY IN DHAKA

The High Commission of India hosted a grand reception on 25 January in Dhaka to commemorate the 76th Republic Day of India. High Commissioner Pranay Verma and Hon'ble Advisor for Planning and Education to the Government of Bangladesh, Dr. Wahiduddin Mahmud, delivered keynote addresses during the event.

The celebration witnessed the participation of dignitaries from various sectors, including representatives from Bangladesh's government, armed forces, political circles, civil society, business community, media, academia, cultural and religious spheres, and members of the diplomatic corps.

In his remarks, High Commissioner Pranay Verma expressed India's unwavering support for a democratic, stable, peaceful, progressive, and inclusive Bangladesh. "We look at our long-standing relations with Bangladesh with great importance and wish the people of Bangladesh well on their journey ahead," he said.

The event highlighted the deep-rooted ties between the two neighboring nations, underscoring the shared aspirations for regional peace and prosperity.







# DISCOVERING THE BEAUTY OF ALGERIA: A JOURNEY THROUGH TIME AND CULTURE

**H. E. Dr. Abdelouahab Saidani**

**N**estled along the Mediterranean coastline and brimming with a rich tapestry of history, Algeria stands as a land where tradition and modernity coexist harmoniously. From the bustling streets of Algiers to the serene Sahara, this captivating country offers an array of experiences for travelers seeking both adventure and cultural immersion.

Alongside the Mediterranean sea, there is a coast bordered by beaches and coves, prolonged inside by the plain of Tell and its

valleys where is concentrated the main part of the arable lands and the principal major cities like Algiers, Oran, and Constantine... there are two East-West directed mountainous chains: the Tellian Atlas formed by the mounts of Tlemcen, Ouarsenis, Titteri, Djurdjura, Babor, Bibans and Edough which culminates in Lalla Khadidja (2, 308m), and the Saharian Atlas with the solid mass of Aurès culminating with the mount of Chelia (2, 328m). In the middle of the Atlas, a zone of semi-desert high

plateaus, field of the esparto grass and of breeding and whose profile of a basin explains the presence of shotts (salted lakes) up to 40 meters below sea level, the shott Melhrir.

**Algiers: The White City**  
Perched on the hills of the Sahel, Algiers, often referred to as "Algiers the White," unfolds a stunning panorama of Moorish architecture and modern marvels. Its acropolis, the Kasbah, leans against the Bouzareah massif, while the city itself cascades down to a



A UNESCO World Heritage site, the Kasbah offers a glimpse into Algeria's rich history and vibrant local culture

majestic bay stretching from Pointe Pescade to La Pérouse.

### The Kasbah

A UNESCO World Heritage site, the Kasbah of Algiers is a labyrinth of twisting roads, staircase-like backstreets, and historic treasures. Half of its homes reflect Ottoman influences, boasting corbelled floors, intricate woodwork, and interior courtyards adorned with ceramics and columns. Within its confines lie old mosques, Ottoman palaces, and vibrant souks. Visitors can savor local delights like chorba frik, a hearty mutton and chickpea stew, followed by a refreshing mint tea in one of the many small cafes.

### Palatial Splendor

Algiers is home to some of the most exquisite palaces that echo its prestigious past. Dar Aziza, a quintessential Algerian house, showcases marble courtyards, colorful glass trellises, and intricate stuccos. Bastion 23, the palace of Raïs, features a hammam and living quarters

adorned with ceramics and sculpted woodwork. Other notable palaces include Dar Mustapha and Dar Hassan, each rich in architectural grandeur and historical significance.

### Historic Mosques

The city's spiritual heart lies in its mosques. The Grand Mosque, built in the 11th century by the Almoravids, exemplifies Islamic architecture with its foiled

arches and an ornate minbar dating back to 1098. The Ketchawa Mosque, originally Saint Philippe Cathedral, blends Byzantine and Islamic styles, while the Betchine Mosque, constructed in 1622 by an Italian corsair-turned-Algerian admiral, is a testament to Ottoman architectural prowess.

### The Coastal and Mountainous Charms of Algeria

Beyond Algiers, Algeria's diverse geography beckons exploration. The turquoise coastline east of Algiers offers picturesque beaches and coves fringed with olive trees and cypresses. The Sidi Ferruch peninsula, with its marina, provides ample opportunities for underwater fishing and marine activities.

### Oran: A Blend of Cultures

Algeria's second-largest city, Oran, thrives with dynamic energy. The city's Spanish colonial history is evident in its architecture, including numerous Hispanic-Moorish



Timgad, a Roman masterpiece, stands as a testament to Algeria's ancient past and architectural grandeur





Ziamamansouriah beach, Algeria

buildings. Surrounded by vineyards, Oran serves as a hub for trade, industry, and culture.

#### **Ancient Cities: Living History**

Algeria is a treasure trove of ancient cities that transport visitors back in time. Among the most notable are Timgad, Tipaza, and Djemila.

#### **Timgad**

Founded in the year 100 AD by Emperor Trajan, Timgad is a masterpiece of Roman urban planning. Its well-preserved ruins include a theater, 14 thermal baths, a capitol, and a library with a semicircular reading room. The triumphal arch and the mosaics housed in

the Timgad Museum are particularly noteworthy. Once a cultural hub, the city now hosts the "Aurès in Festival," celebrating local arts and crafts.

#### **Tipaza**

Tipaza, nestled at the foot of Mount Chenoua, combines seaside allure with mountainous beauty. Its rich history includes remnants of Roman, Byzantine, and early Christian civilizations. The town's archaeological sites, such as the legal basilica and ancient necropolis, make it a UNESCO World Heritage site.

#### **Djemila**

Perched on a slope near the confluence of two rivers, Djemila is a stunning example of Roman urban adaptation. Its temples, basilicas, and markets, set against a backdrop of rolling hills, reflect the ingenuity of Roman town planning. The site's altitude of 900 meters adds to its dramatic appeal.



The rugged peaks of the Hoggar Mountains offer breathtaking landscapes and a spiritual retreat amid the Sahara's vast expanse



The oases of Algeria are vibrant centers of life, showcasing unique architecture and the enduring culture of the Sahara

### **The Sahara: A Land of Endless Horizons**

Algeria's Sahara Desert is a realm of unparalleled beauty and tranquility. The Tassili n'Ajjer plateau, a UNESCO World Heritage site, is famed for its ancient rock art depicting a time when the Sahara was lush and verdant.

#### **Tassili n'Ajjer**

Exploring Tassili n'Ajjer is a journey through time. Sites like Jabbarren, Tamrit, and Sefar showcase intricate frescoes and petroglyphs that tell stories of

early Saharan life. Accessible by camel or four-wheel-drive, this plateau is a haven for adventure seekers and history enthusiasts alike.

#### **Hoggar Mountains**

The Hoggar Mountains, with their rugged landscapes and towering peaks, offer a stark contrast to the desert plains. Assekrem, a hermitage perched at 2,180 meters, provides breathtaking views of the surrounding valleys and is a spiritual retreat where Father Charles de Foucauld once lived.

### **Tuareg Culture**

Traveling through the Sahara offers a unique opportunity to engage with the Tuareg people, whose traditional lifestyle and rich cultural heritage continue to thrive. From the granitic massifs of Taessa to the vibrant oases, their resilience and artistry are evident.

### **The Oases: Cradles of Civilization**

Algeria's oases, such as Ghardaïa, Beni Isguen, and El Ateuf, serve as sanctuaries of life in the arid desert. These settlements, founded by the Ibadites, feature distinctive architecture, bustling markets, and an unwavering commitment to preserving their cultural identity.

Algeria is a land where history, culture, and natural beauty converge. Whether wandering through the ancient streets of the Kasbah, marveling at Roman ruins, or basking in the serenity of the Sahara, every moment in Algeria is a step into a storybook of timeless charm. For travelers seeking a destination that offers both depth and diversity, Algeria is an unparalleled treasure waiting to be discovered.

**H.E. Dr. Abdelouahab Saidani**  
Ambassador  
Embassy of Algeria in Bangladesh





# OVERVIEW OF THE AOFA SERIES ON BANGLADESH-WORLD BANK RELATIONS: WAY FORWARD

**Shahed Akhtar**

**A**n impactful session organised by the Association of Former BCS (FA) Ambassadors - AOFA, which brought together a distinguished audience comprising former Ambassadors, MOFA Additional Secretary, Academia, Media Representatives, and Trainee Foreign Service Officers. The event featured insightful presentations by Mr. Abdoulaye Seck, World Bank Country Director for Bangladesh and Bhutan, and Dr. Mustafizur Rahman, a renowned economist of the Centre for Policy Dialogue

(CPD). Ambassador Riaz Hamidullah, Additional Foreign Secretary also addressed the session.

Mr. Abdoulaye Seck's address focused on the pivotal role of the World Bank in supporting Bangladesh's energy sector amidst global economic challenges. He highlighted that the World Bank is committed to assisting Bangladesh in securing energy from international sources and ensuring timely payments for energy imports. This assurance

is particularly significant against the backdrop of a mounting global energy crisis and its implications for Bangladesh's economy.

Mr. Seck emphasized that one of the major priorities for the World Bank is to help Bangladesh obtain energy at an affordable price. He reassured attendees of the institution's readiness to provide significant budget support by December, underlining that this commitment is designed to boost investor confidence and



Ambassador Shahed Akhtar, VP AOFA at FSA

contribute to the stabilization of the nation's foreign reserves and currency.

In response to ongoing challenges such as electricity import bills and securing uninterrupted energy supplies, Mr. Seck reiterated the World Bank's dedication to bridging financing gaps, supported by the institution's robust budget and strategic initiatives. He called for collaborative efforts between global suppliers and local stakeholders to mitigate the risks associated with energy shortages and ensure long-term sustainability.



Ambassador Abdullah President AOFA handing Memento to World Bank Country Director

Dr. Mustafizur Rahman offered an analytical perspective on the economic implications of Bangladesh's energy policies and the broader financial landscape. He critiqued the recent trends in the country's foreign exchange reserves, noting a decline from over \$40 billion two to three years ago. Dr. Rahman attributed this trend to the "misguided policy" of defending an unsustainable exchange rate, which has strained the country's fiscal health.



Ambassador Abdullah President AOFA handing Memento to Dr. Mustafizur Rahman to CPD

Emphasizing the importance of strategic economic adjustments, Dr. Rahman advocated for measures such as renegotiating and restructuring external debts to align with Bangladesh's current economic realities. He stressed the need for significant domestic resource mobilization and the importance of digitalizing this process to enhance efficiency and transparency. Dr. Rahman's remarks underscored that while reforms are underway,





President AOFA Ambassador Abdullah flanked by Director World Bank and Senior Economist CPD and other Ambassadors at FSA

achieving sustainable economic stability would require targeted, analytical, and technical actions from both the government and its development partners, including the World Bank.

Both Mr. Seck, World Bank Director, and Dr. Mustafizur Rahman shared converging views on the necessity of comprehensive policy reforms to navigate Bangladesh's economic challenges. The speakers highlighted that ensuring affordability in energy procurement and reinforcing

budgetary support mechanisms would bolster the nation's resilience in facing future crises.

The session resonated with Former Ambassadors emphasizing the interplay between international partnerships, effective governance, and economic strategy in shaping Bangladesh's path forward. The discussions reinforced the critical role of proactive, multi-faceted approaches to fostering stability and growth, particularly in the

energy sector, which serves as a cornerstone of Bangladesh's development agenda.

## Recommendations

1. **Strengthening International Collaboration:** The dialogue underscored the importance of maintaining strong partnerships with global financial institutions like the World Bank to support energy transition and secure essential resources.
2. **Policy Adjustment and Resilience:** Bangladesh must reassess its economic strategies, focusing on sustainable exchange rate policies and innovative approaches to debt management.
3. **Domestic Resource Mobilization:** Enhanced digital infrastructure for resource mobilization can create pathways for increased public revenue and reduced reliance on external assistance.

This session organized by AOFA was a timely initiative, reinforcing the AOFA's role as a platform for high-level discourse and policy-oriented dialogue essential for navigating Bangladesh's complex economic landscape.

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



## A CONVERSATION WITH HIS EXCELLENCY SYED AHMED MAROOF: HIGH COMMISSIONER OF PAKISTAN TO BANGLADESH

(A brief biography of His Excellency Syed Ahmed Maroof.)

Born in 1967 in Quetta, Syed Ahmed Maroof holds a Master's degree in Statistics from the University of Balochistan and has completed advanced training in Negotiation Skills and Spanish (Level 3) from UNITAR, New York.

He joined the Foreign Service of Pakistan in 1996 and has held various significant positions at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, including Desk Officer, Deputy Chief of

Protocol, Director, and Director General. Additionally, he has served in prominent roles at the Prime Minister's Office.

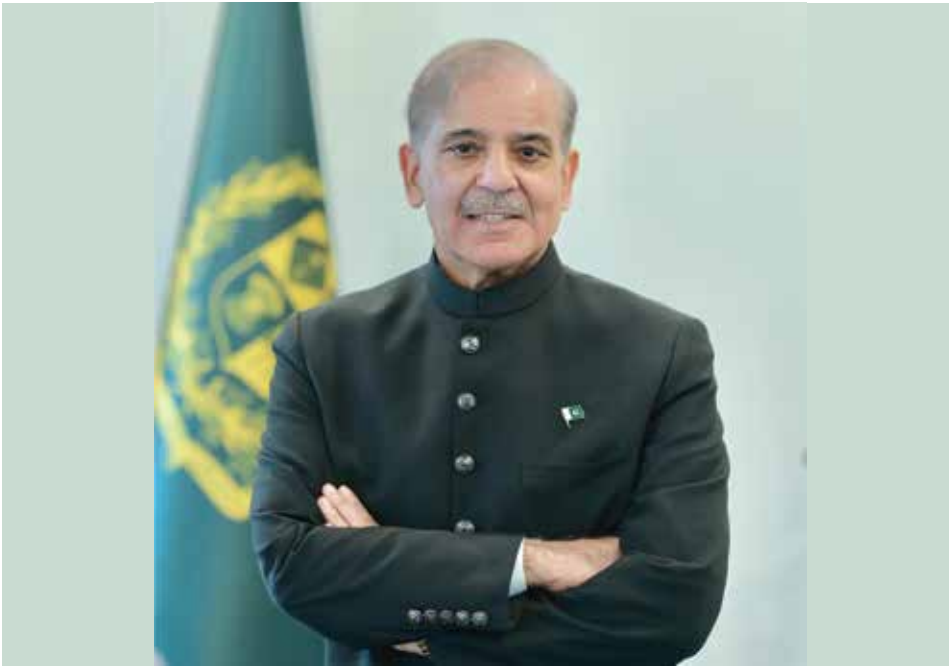
His distinguished diplomatic career spans assignments worldwide, including roles as Minister/DHM in Nairobi, Consul General in Birmingham, and postings in Brasilia, Kathmandu, London, and New York. Since October 2023, he has been serving as Pakistan's High Commissioner to Bangladesh, bringing with him extensive experience and proficiency in Portuguese.

In his leisure time, he enjoys woodworking, painting, and cooking. He is married.

**Diplomats World Magazine:** Let's begin by exploring the economic and business relations between Pakistan and Bangladesh. How would you assess the current state of these ties?

**H.E. Syed Ahmed Maroof:** Economic and trade relations between Pakistan and Bangladesh have made remarkable progress in recent years. In the 2022–2023 fiscal year, our bilateral trade volume reached nearly \$1 billion—the





H.E. Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif, Prime Minister of Pakistan

highest to date. Of this, Pakistan's exports to Bangladesh were approximately \$700 million, with the remainder being Bangladesh's exports to Pakistan.

Recent developments, such as the establishment of direct shipping lines, have further enhanced trade. For instance, the second direct ship to Chittagong recently carried double the load of the first, significantly reducing shipment times from 40 days to under 15 days. This improvement has eased logistical challenges, benefiting exporters and importers alike.

Key Pakistani exports to Bangladesh include dolomite for glassmaking, RMG components, clinker for cement, and agricultural products like onions and potatoes. As Ramadan approaches, discussions about exporting rice and onions to

ensure price stability are underway. The trajectory of our economic ties is promising, and we are optimistic about sustained growth.

**Diplomats World Magazine:**

Are there any upcoming initiatives to further strengthen bilateral trade or address existing challenges?

**H.E. Syed Ahmed Maroof:**

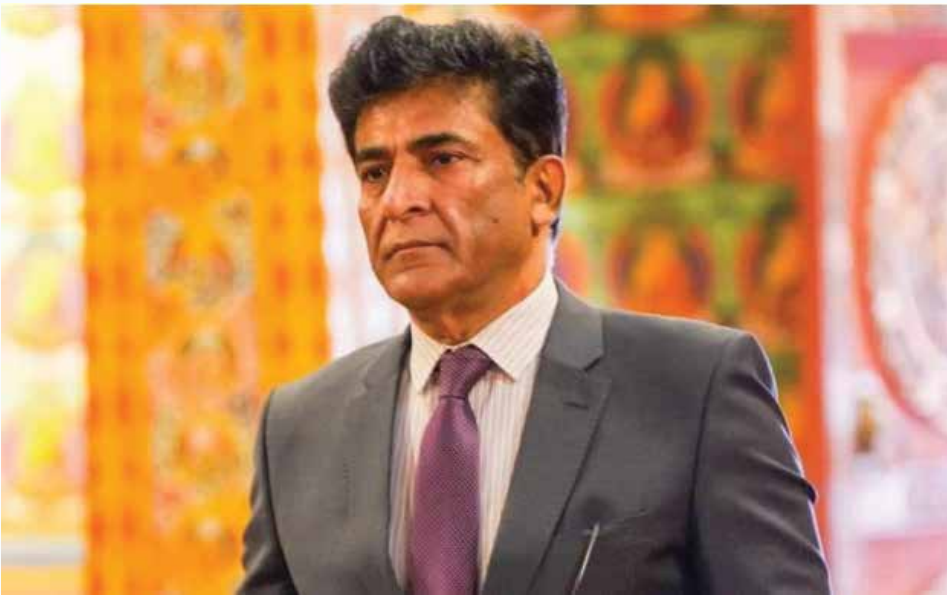
Currently, there are no significant trade barriers, but the absence of direct shipping lines was a major hurdle that has now been resolved. Moving forward, we aim to reinvigorate platforms like the Joint Economic Commission (JEC), which has been dormant for 15–16 years. The JEC will allow both countries to address challenges, propose solutions, and explore new opportunities for collaboration.

Additionally, chambers of commerce from both countries are engaging virtually. The Dhaka Chamber, for example, has initiated dialogues with its counterparts in Karachi, Lahore, and Rawalpindi. Such interactions between business communities are paving the way for enhanced trade relations and potential joint ventures.

**Diplomats World Magazine:** Are there any new commodities or sectors being considered for bilateral trade?



H.E. Asif Ali Zardari, President of Pakistan



H. E. Syed Ahmed Maroof, High Commissioner of Pakistan to Bangladesh

**H.E. Syed Ahmed Maroof:**

There is substantial potential for expanding our trade portfolio. While existing commodities are experiencing growth, the identification of new items depends on the interests of business communities on both sides. We act as facilitators, enabling businesses to explore mutually beneficial opportunities.

Agriculture and manufacturing are areas with significant potential. Current discussions include agricultural products like rice and onions. With the ongoing positive momentum, trade diversification is expected to develop naturally.

**Diplomats World Magazine:**

Which sectors show the most potential for collaboration, considering the comparative advantages of both countries?

**H.E. Syed Ahmed Maroof:**

Collaboration thrives on leveraging comparative advantages. For instance, Bangladesh excels in

ready-made garments (RMG), while Pakistan is strong in agriculture, textiles, and livestock. Pakistani cattle breeds, known for their genetic enhancements, offer great potential for livestock collaboration.

Seasonal and geographic advantages also complement each other, enabling consistent supply chains between the two countries. We are already in

discussions with relevant ministries, and I am optimistic about further developments in agriculture and livestock.

In manufacturing, Pakistan's expertise in technology transfer and resource sharing can also foster deeper collaboration. Both countries stand to benefit from such partnerships.

**Diplomats World Magazine:**

Are there any Pakistani companies exploring investment opportunities in Bangladesh or vice versa?

**H.E. Syed Ahmed Maroof:**

While large-scale investments are limited, there are notable examples of collaboration. Surti Textiles, a Pakistani company, has investments in Bangladesh, and Pakistani expertise has significantly contributed to Bangladesh's RMG sector.

Additionally, the connection between BSRM in Bangladesh



Direct shipping routes between Pakistan and Bangladesh have significantly reduced trade barriers





Academic exchanges strengthen people-to-people ties, with 144 Pakistani students currently in Bangladesh

and Amreli Steel in Pakistan highlights the potential for synergy in industrial development. These examples inspire optimism for future investments and collaborations.

**Diplomats World Magazine:** Are there initiatives for academic collaboration or student exchanges between the two countries?

**H.E. Syed Ahmed Maroof:**

At present, 144 Pakistani medical students are studying in Bangladesh, as identified during recent security assessments. This underscores the existing academic ties, though they remain limited.

To enhance collaboration, Pakistan's Ministry of Education has proposed 100

scholarships for Bangladeshi students in fields like business administration, medicine, engineering, and emerging technologies. This initiative is nearing approval and will help foster goodwill and deeper understanding between our nations' youth.

**Diplomats World Magazine:**

Thank you, Your Excellency, for sharing your valuable insights. We look forward to witnessing the continued growth and collaboration between Pakistan and Bangladesh.

**H.E. Syed Ahmed Maroof:**

Thank you for the opportunity. It was a pleasure to contribute to your esteemed publication.



## MYANMAR EMBASSY IN DHAKA CELEBRATES 77TH INDEPENDENCE DAY WITH GRAND RECEPTION

The Myanmar Embassy in Dhaka hosted a grand reception on January 5, 2025, to mark the 77th Independence Day of Myanmar. The event took place at the Renaissance Dhaka Gulshan Hotel and was graced by the presence of H.E. Professor Dr. Bidhan Ranjan Roy Poddar, Hon'ble Adviser to the Ministry of Primary and Mass Education of the Interim Government of Bangladesh, who attended as the Chief Guest.

The reception featured speeches by H.E. U Kyaw Soe Moe, the Ambassador of Myanmar, and H.E. Professor Dr. Bidhan Ranjan Roy Poddar, both highlighting the historical significance of Myanmar's independence and the strength of bilateral relations between Myanmar and Bangladesh.

A cake-cutting ceremony followed the speeches, along with a photo session to commemorate the occasion. The event was attended by senior officials from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Bangladesh, the Armed Forces Division, ambassadors, heads of missions, and diplomats from various embassies in Dhaka, as well as military attachés, international organization representatives, Bangladeshi entrepreneurs, businessmen, and Myanmar nationals residing in Bangladesh.

The evening was marked by camaraderie and shared aspirations for strengthening ties between Myanmar and Bangladesh.







# NAVIGATING THE THREAT OF DUTCH DISEASE: HOW BANGLADESH CAN STEER CLEAR OF ECONOMIC PITFALLS AND FOSTER SUSTAINABLE GROWTH

**AKM Sayedad Hossain**

**B**angladesh has emerged as one of the fastest-growing economies in Asia, largely driven by its thriving ready-made garments (RMG) sector and a steady influx of remittances from its expatriate workforce. These sectors have propelled the country towards significant economic progress, lifting millions out of poverty and positioning it as a rising economic power in South Asia. However, rapid growth in these areas brings with it a potential risk known as "Dutch Disease," a phenomenon that, if not addressed, could undermine long-term development by damaging other crucial sectors of the economy. This article explores whether

Bangladesh is susceptible to Dutch Disease and presents strategic pathways to avoid it, ensuring sustainable and balanced economic growth.

## **Understanding Dutch Disease: A Literary Insight**

The term "Dutch Disease" first appeared in the 1970s following the economic challenges faced by the Netherlands after the discovery of large natural gas fields in the 1960s. Initially, this discovery seemed like a blessing; however, the inflow of foreign currency caused the Dutch guilder to appreciate sharply. As a result, other sectors, particularly manufacturing, became less competitive

globally, leading to a decline in industrial output.

The essence of Dutch Disease lies in an economic imbalance where one booming sector leads to currency appreciation, reduced competitiveness in other industries, and eventually economic overdependence on a single source of income. This concept, although initially tied to natural resource discoveries, has since been applied to economies reliant on other sectors such as remittances and industrial exports. The risk of such an economic imbalance is particularly relevant for Bangladesh as it is heavily mainly on RMG exports and remittances.



## Bangladesh's Economic Landscape: At Risk of Dutch Disease?

Bangladesh does not rely on the export of natural resources like oil or gas, yet its economy shows certain parallels to those vulnerable to Dutch Disease. The country's RMG sector accounts for around 80% of total export earnings, while remittances provide a significant source of foreign exchange. This has created a narrow base of economic growth, making Bangladesh vulnerable to external shocks. If demand for RMG products diminishes due to global market shifts or heightened competition from other countries, or if remittance flows are disrupted by geopolitical tensions, the economic consequences could be severe.

### Key indicators that Bangladesh might be at risk include:

1. **Over-reliance on a Single Sector:** Bangladesh's garment industry dominates its export basket, with little diversification into other industries. As the global garment market becomes increasingly competitive, Bangladesh risks losing its comparative advantage,

particularly to emerging low-cost producers like Vietnam, India, and Ethiopia.

2. **Appreciation of the Taka:** Although the Bangladeshi Taka has not seen sharp appreciation like in classic Dutch Disease cases, the steady inflow of foreign currency from remittances and RMG exports exerts upward pressure on the currency. A stronger Taka could make Bangladesh's exports more expensive, eroding the competitiveness of its manufacturing sector and stalling export diversification efforts.

3. **Sectoral Imbalance:** With much of the country's focus on RMG and remittances, other sectors like agriculture, light manufacturing, and high-tech industries are lagging. This over-concentration could become problematic in the face of external market shifts.

### The Pathway to Avoid Dutch Disease: Strategic Recommendations

To prevent the economic pitfalls of Dutch Disease, Bangladesh

must take a comprehensive and forward-looking approach to its economic planning. The following are some of the critical pathways the country can adopt to ensure its continued prosperity without falling victim to economic imbalances.

#### 1. Diversifying Export Sectors

A key strategy to avoid Dutch Disease is economic diversification. Bangladesh must look beyond its RMG sector and develop a broader range of export industries. The country already has potential in areas such as pharmaceuticals, light engineering, leather goods, and IT services. By fostering innovation and incentivizing investment in these sectors, Bangladesh can expand its export base, reduce reliance on garments, and create a more resilient economy.

For example, the pharmaceutical industry has shown promise in both domestic and international markets. The government could promote this sector by providing tax incentives, easing regulatory hurdles, and supporting research



## AT A GLANCE



Govt sets \$80b export target by 2024



Garment's contribution to export still **84.5%**



Govt identifies **14** industries as most priority sectors



**18** identified as promising sectors



Commerce ministry to write to finance to allow bonded facility to **10** more sectors



### Most priority sectors include...

High-value-added denim, man-made fibre, garment accessories, pharma, plastic goods, footwear, leather goods, jute and diversified jute goods, agri-products and processed agro-products, light engineering, software, IT and IT-enabled services and freelancing

### Emerging sectors include...

Electric goods, ceramic products, value-added frozen foods, printing and packaging, paper and paper products, rubber and rubber products

## PROMISES MADE IN EXPORT POLICY



Exporters to receive loans at reduced interest rates



Rebates in income tax



Support to market goods, explore new markets and attract FDI



Bonded warehouse facilities

and development (R&D). Similarly, the IT sector holds immense potential for growth, particularly in business process outsourcing (BPO) and software development, where Bangladesh could compete with regional players like India.

## 2. Strengthening Manufacturing and Infrastructure

To avoid overdependence on any single industry, Bangladesh should invest in strengthening its manufacturing sector. Creating specialized economic zones (SEZs) and attracting foreign direct investment (FDI) in diverse manufacturing areas such as electronics, automobiles, and machinery could boost industrial growth. By enhancing

infrastructure – including transport, energy, and communication systems – the government can reduce production costs and improve business competitiveness.

Moreover, modernizing supply chains and investing in high-value sectors like renewable energy, green manufacturing, and biotechnology can open new avenues for sustainable growth.

## 3. Modernizing Agriculture and Agro-Industry

Despite the country's progress in urban development, a large proportion of the Bangladeshi population remains dependent on agriculture for their livelihood. However, agricultural

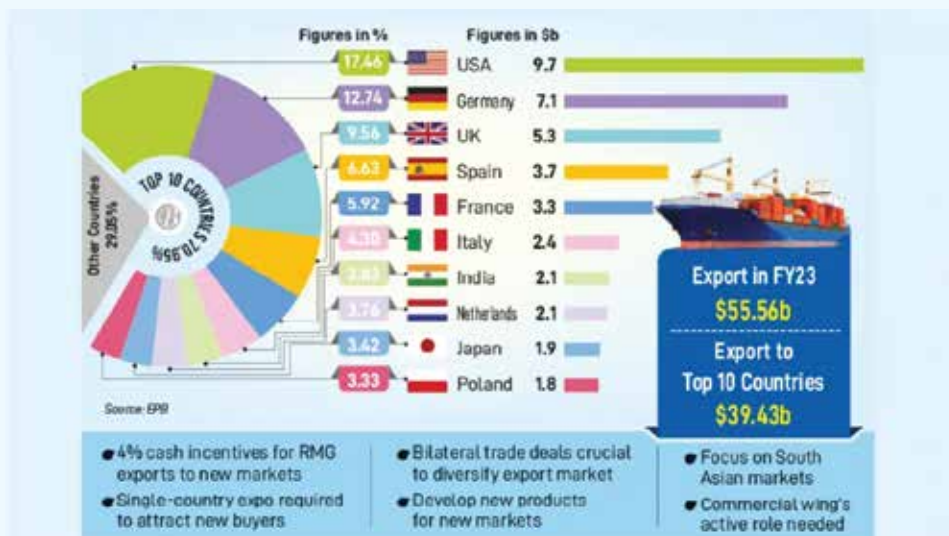
productivity has stagnated due to outdated farming methods, inadequate infrastructure, and limited access to modern technology. To prevent Dutch Disease-like symptoms from eroding agricultural competitiveness, Bangladesh needs to modernize its agro-sector. Investments in irrigation systems, crop diversification, and value-added agro-products can ensure that agriculture remains a significant contributor to the economy.

Integrating agriculture with industrial sectors, such as food processing, will help add value to primary products and create a more diversified export base. Encouraging agro-based industries will also reduce rural-urban migration pressures and boost rural economies.

## 4. Enhancing Human Capital and Skills Development

Sustainable economic growth depends on a well-educated and skilled workforce. Bangladesh's heavy reliance on low-wage labor in the RMG sector must give way to more value-added, knowledge-based industries.





Investing in education, vocational training, and digital literacy will help equip the workforce for the demands of a modern, diversified economy.

Public-private partnerships in skill development can be crucial in fostering innovation and entrepreneurship. Bangladesh must focus on creating a workforce that can excel in high-tech industries, advanced manufacturing, and service sectors such as healthcare, IT, and finance.

**5. Managing Currency Fluctuations and Exchange Rates**  
 To prevent the risk of an overvalued currency, the Bangladesh Bank must maintain a balanced and competitive exchange rate. A managed floating exchange rate policy can help shield the economy from sharp currency appreciations that

would harm export competitiveness. The central bank should also consider currency interventions when necessary to avoid sudden capital inflows that could inflate the Taka's value.

Remittance inflows, while beneficial, should be managed carefully. Instead of encouraging excessive consumption, policies should focus on channeling remittance earnings into productive investments, such as entrepreneurship, housing, and rural development.

**6. Encouraging Innovation and Technology**  
 For Bangladesh to avoid the pitfalls of over-reliance on a single sector, it must embrace innovation and technology. Government initiatives that foster R&D, promote technological upgrades, and

encourage the adoption of Industry 4.0 practices can be game-changers for the country's industrial base. Bangladesh can follow models of successful Asian economies like South Korea and Singapore, which transformed from labor-intensive economies to tech-driven powerhouses by prioritizing technological advancements and innovation in every sector.

Bangladesh's remarkable economic journey is one of resilience, hard work, and visionary leadership. However, to continue on this upward trajectory, the country must recognize the potential risk of Dutch Disease and take proactive measures to avoid it. By diversifying its economy, investing in new industries, managing its exchange rate carefully, and modernizing key sectors like agriculture and manufacturing, Bangladesh can steer clear of economic imbalances and secure a prosperous and sustainable future.

Through visionary policies, strategic investments, and a commitment to human capital development, Bangladesh has the opportunity to not only avert Dutch Disease but also to emerge as a diversified and robust economy and make it ready to face global challenges and opportunities head-on.

**AKM Sayedad Hossain**  
 Associate Editor  
 Diplomats World





# Bangladesh's Aspirations as a Middle-Income Country: Trajectory, Reality, & Perils

Imran Khan

**A**midst recent political transitions, Bangladesh stands at a pivotal moment in its journey toward becoming a middle-income nation. This ambitious goal unfolds against the backdrop of shifting governance dynamics and evolving economic strategies. In this context, a timely roundtable discussion, titled “Bangladesh's Aspirations as a Middle-Income Country: Trajectory, Reality & Perils,” was held on December 17, 2024, at the Foreign Service Academy in Dhaka. Organized by Diplomats World, Bangladesh's premier diplomatic publication, the event brought together distinguished economists, diplomats, and scholars to share their insights.

## The Political and Economic Crossroads

Bangladesh's transition to middle-income status in recent years has brought both opportunities and significant challenges, placing the nation at a critical juncture. While aspirations remain high, the country is contending with pressing issues such as declining education standards, corruption in vital sectors, and unplanned urbanization-factors that have drawn attention both nationally and internationally.

Delivering the keynote address at the event, Dr. Debapriya Bhattacharya, a distinguished fellow at the Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD) and convener of

the Citizen's Platform for SDGs, Bangladesh, offered a candid assessment of the nation's current trajectory. He underscored the urgent need for comprehensive reforms and well-defined economic policies to sustain growth and bypass stagnation trap.

Dr. Bhattacharya began his address with a sobering observation: “Bangladesh is already caught in the middle-income trap. Our labor productivity remains low across industries, agriculture, and services. Without prioritizing reforms and addressing structural inefficiencies, our progress risks being derailed.”



**Audience Interaction:** Participants actively listen and contribute to the seminar on "Bangladesh's Aspirations to be a Middle-Income Country: Trajectory, Reality, and Perils," highlighting the collective commitment to shaping a sustainable economic future

### The Middle-Income Trap: Unveiling Bangladesh's Economic Challenges

Bangladesh's progression to middle-income status has been celebrated as a landmark achievement, but the underlying economic reality tells a more nuanced story. While government reports project optimism, Dr. Debapriya Bhattacharya openly criticized the inflation of growth figures by previous administrations, emphasizing that the actual data reflects worrying stagnation—a hallmark of the middle-income trap.

This “trap” describes a scenario where economic growth slows after reaching middle-income levels, making it challenging for a country to transition into a high-income economy. For Bangladesh, the crux of the issue lies in low labor productivity across pivotal sectors such as garments, agriculture, and services. “The lack of productivity in these key areas is a glaring red flag that demands immediate

action,” Dr. Bhattacharya warned, highlighting the nation’s heavy reliance on the ready-made garments (RMG) sector as a longstanding driver of growth.

To overcome this stagnation, he stressed the urgency of export diversification. Sectors like jute,

leather, and information technology (IT) hold tremendous potential but remain underutilized due to inadequate policy support and limited incentives. Dr. Bhattacharya urged policymakers to prioritize these sectors as part of a broader strategy to ensure sustainable economic progress.

### Education and Migration: Bangladesh's Twin Challenges

The discussion also shed light on two critical issues hindering Bangladesh's progress—education and migration. Dr. Debapriya Bhattacharya expressed deep concern over the country’s inadequate investment in education, with less than 2% of GDP allocated to this vital sector. He criticized the disproportionate emphasis on expanding higher education while neglecting foundational improvements in primary education. “Rather than establishing universities in every district, the focus should be on enhancing the quality of primary



**Panel Discussion in Progress:** Experts and policymakers engage in a vibrant discussion during the seminar "Bangladesh's Aspirations to be a Middle-Income Country: Trajectory, Reality, and Perils," shedding light on the nation's economic journey, challenges, and opportunities





Experts at the roundtable discuss Bangladesh's economic trajectory, challenges, and the road ahead

education,” he argued, highlighting inefficiencies in budget allocation and the urgent need for meaningful educational reforms.

Migration was another pressing topic of discussion. Dr. Bhattacharya drew attention to the excessively high cost of migration for Bangladeshi workers—three times higher than what their Nepali counterparts face. He attributed this to widespread corruption, where a network of intermediaries exploits vulnerable migrant workers. “This corruption not only depletes the hard-earned income of migrant workers but also erodes their faith in the system,” he noted, emphasizing the need for stronger regulatory oversight to protect workers’ rights and reduce costs.

**Urbanization and Governance: Navigating Growing Pains**  
Bangladesh’s rapid but largely unplanned urbanization has given rise to a host of challenges, including traffic congestion, inadequate public services, and escalating crime rates. These issues have made maintaining law and order increasingly difficult, particularly in metropolitan hubs like Dhaka and Chattogram. Dr. Debapriya Bhattacharya stressed

the urgent need for strategic urban planning and governance reforms to tackle these problems effectively. “A change in government does not necessarily translate to a change in governance,” he remarked, highlighting that systemic cultural reforms are essential for achieving meaningful improvements.

**Perspectives from the Panel**  
The panel discussion brought together a distinguished array of experts who offered unique insights into Bangladesh’s economic and developmental trajectory. Among the speakers presented were Lt. Gen (Retd) Mohd Aminul Karim, ndc, Idmc, Psc, PhD, Professor, Analyst and writer; Dr. Manjur A. Chowdhury, Zoologist and

Environmental Rights Activist; Sayed Jubair Bin Hossain, Lecturer at Dhaka University; Mr. Iftikharul Karim, Former Ambassador; Dr. Abdelouahab Saidani, Algerian Ambassador to Bangladesh; and Md. Mohashin Miah, Chairman of Bangladesh Commerce Bank Ltd.

The speakers spoke about Bangladesh’s deferment from its LDC graduation, noting that this delay provides the country with a critical window to address existing vulnerabilities. He warned, however, that without swift action to implement structural reforms, the opportunity could be wasted.

The discussion then turned toward the security implications tied to economic progress. It was emphasized that a stable economy is fundamental to maintaining internal security. Concerns were raised about corruption, which, if left unchecked, could expose the country to further risks.

Environmental concerns were also highlighted, with specific mention of the damage being inflicted on Bangladesh’s natural resources due to rapid industrial growth. Speakers cautioned that



The ready-made garments sector remains a key driver of Bangladesh’s economic growth but requires urgent productivity reforms



Reducing the cost of migration and ensuring fair wages for workers abroad remain pressing challenges

without immediate interventions, the long-term environmental costs could overshadow short-term economic gains.

Education reform was another pressing issue discussed, with a call for moving away from rote learning. It was suggested that nurturing critical thinking and problem-solving abilities would better equip the future workforce to meet the challenges of a globalized economy.

Attention was also drawn to the importance of strengthening diplomatic ties, especially in the areas of trade and investment. Stronger international partnerships were seen as crucial for securing better export terms and attracting much-needed foreign direct investment to support Bangladesh's economic ambitions.

Speakers also warned against the dangers of unequal growth, noting that development efforts must be inclusive, benefiting both urban

and rural populations. Middle-income status, they argued, should be viewed not as an end goal, but as a milestone on the path to sustainable and equitable development.

The importance of financial sector reforms was underscored, with an emphasis on increasing transparency and inclusion, especially for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). Strengthening the financial system, it was suggested, would be key to fostering sustainable economic growth and resilience in the future.

#### A Path Forward

As the dialogue concluded, Shahed Akhtar, Ambassador & Fmr. Secretary, GoB, and Editor of Diplomats World, offered a balanced perspective. While acknowledging the significant challenges, he emphasized Bangladesh's resilience and potential. "Bangladesh has consistently risen above adversity. What we need now is a clear,

unified strategy to overcome the middle-income trap and ensure that our growth is inclusive and sustainable," he said.

The findings of the white paper presented at the event underscored the need for structural reforms in critical areas such as education, governance, and export diversification. With the impending challenges of LDC graduation, Bangladesh must adopt a proactive approach to mitigate risks and capitalize on emerging opportunities.

The session was moderated by Mr. Imran Khan, a Banker and Policy Analyst. Mr. Khan summarised the key points, and deliverables. He spotlighted that "considering 7.2% GDP growth rate and existing population growth rate trend, it will take 6-7 more years to reach at middle-income status. But, the GDP growth rate in 2023-2024 was unusually low; and forecast for 2024-2025 is also less than 6%. If it continues, then as per calculations, we need longer time to reach middle-income status."

This pivotal dialogue reinforced the importance of unity and collective effort in shaping the nation's economic future. By focusing on targeted reforms, investing in education and innovation, and addressing corruption, Bangladesh can continue its journey toward equitable and sustainable development, ensuring a prosperous future for all.

**Imran Khan**

Banker | Policy Analyst  
& Member of Chatham House  
(Royal Institute of International Affairs), UK



## 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.





# REGIONAL SECURITY AND CHT PEACE ACCORD 1997: AN UNFINISHED PEACE BUILDING MODEL OF BANGLADESH

- a book review and unveiling ceremony\*

**Major Del H Khan, SPP, psc ( retd)**

**B**rigadier General Md Nasimul Gani (retd) has background knowledge and practical experiences in conflict-prone Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT), Somalia and South Sudan. He observed the pre and post-Peace Accord period. Even after 27 years, some challenges remained stubbornly persistent in the Peace Accord. The separatist propaganda for the so-called "Jummaland" had escalated on social media, filled with misinformation and disinformation. And yet, the same question echoed in my mind: Why does unrest persist despite the Peace Accord in 1997?

**Author's Contribution and Work**  
This very question lies at the

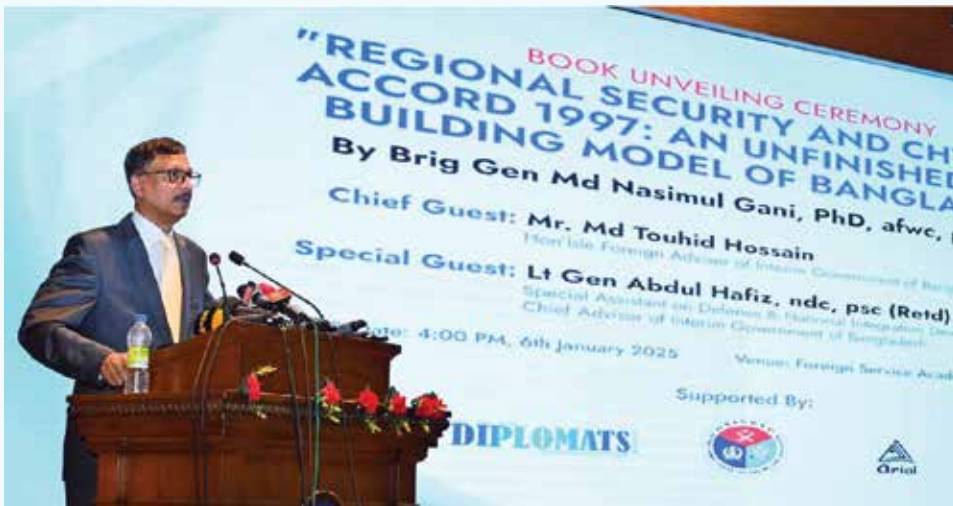
heart of his seminal work. His book sheds light on the promises made by the Peace Accord, the progress achieved, and, most importantly, the unfinished journey toward lasting peace. His meticulous research and firsthand experience make this book a compelling read. He combines a scholar's rigor with the insights of a seasoned practitioner, making his analysis not only credible but also deeply engaging. His work is befitting and essential because it reminds us of the stark reality: peacebuilding is an ongoing process, and agreements alone cannot resolve deeply entrenched conflicts.

## **Key Themes and Insights to Generate Curiosity**

This book is a treasure trove for anyone interested in regional security, peace building, and conflict resolution. Among its many thought-provoking chapters, two stood out for me.

1. The chapter on the partial implementation of the Peace Accord provides a detailed account of the 72 commitments made and how only 25 have been fully realized. This analysis offers readers a deep dive into the challenges of fulfilling such agreements, making it a must-read for policymakers and peacebuilders alike.
2. Another captivating chapter discusses the role of social media





Foreign Affairs Advisor Md. Touhid Hossain addresses the book unveiling ceremony "Regional Security and CHT Peace Accord 1997: An Unfinished Peace Building Model of Bangladesh" as the Chief Guest



Brigadier General Md. Nasimul Gani (Retd.) delivering an insightful speech on the challenges and prospects of the CHT Peace Accord 1997



Lt Gen Abdul Hafiz, ndc, psc (Retd), Special Assistant to the Chief Advisor, delivering his speech as the Special Guest

in fueling separatist propaganda. He masterfully unpacks how misinformation campaigns are weaponized to destabilize the region and what can be done to counter them.

The tribal leadership resorted to armed insurgency in 1973 due to non-inclusion of tribal people's rights and privileges in the Constitution of Bangladesh of 1972.

There are conflicting views and attitudes of different dissident groups, political parties, intellectual community and regional and international players about Peace Accord. Some are putting their best efforts to internationalize the issue. Kuki uprising in 2023 around Bandarban district of CHT and recent insurgency situation in Myanmar have created new security concern and perpetual policy updates in this region.

The national security of Bangladesh and regional security considerations depend heavily on CHT and its peaceful and secured environment. It is linked with different undercurrents and deep-rooted factors and issues having colonial legacy. India factor remains to be cardinal factor in bilateral relations.

The book puts forward number of recommendations . Some are enumerated below:

- \* Government to consider CHT Peace Accord as a critical social cohesion and national security issue.
- \* Government to undertake required constitutional revision to accommodate provisions within the unitary character of



Major Del H. Khan, SPP, psc (Retd.) shares his perspectives on regional security and peacebuilding in Bangladesh

Bangladesh.

- \* Government to modify and implement provisions of Land Commission confirming the legal guarantees to both ethnic and Bengali people.

- \* Government to reconstitute the Ministry of Affairs of CHT as the “Ministry of Ethnic Affairs” to suit social fabrics and integration of all small ethnic groups all over Bangladesh.

- \* Government to consider SAARC and BCIM as an instrument of regional cooperation and consultation.

- \* Government to ensure curbing critical NTS threats by integrating peoples.

- \* Government to deter traditional security threats by organizing a very small, professionally and technologically smart conventional joint forces and adequate strategic capabilities.

- \* Government to consider ‘People’s participation and support’ as ‘Principles of War’ to dictate policy and future strategic buildup.

- \* Government to develop strategies for greater civil –military cooperation.

- \* Government to provide

necessary policy to strengthen core state institutions.

- \* Government to introduce “National Conscription System” and create a reserve force.

- \* Government to ensure repatriation of the Rohingyas.

The failure option may be to take alternative policies to support the Arakan and Rohingya insurgency.

- \* Government to declare a clear national policy regarding Banngabhumhi Movement, water sharing and river management (including review of Delta Plan 2100) and land/water and air transit with India and regional

connectivity with Myanmar, Nepal and Bhutan.

- \* Governments to incorporate nature of nationalism (Bengali/Bangladeshi) in the constitution based on national consensus.

- \* Government to prepare comprehensive, balanced, and adaptable foreign policy.

- \* Government to identify the traditional and NTS threats for creation of Akand Bharat/Unified India policy of India and disseminate to people its strategic guidelines to deter, prevent and protect our sovereignty and integrity.

- \* Government to prepare and build up technological strategic assets.

- \* Government to develop strategic intelligence gathering capabilities against Hybrid war.

- \* Government to ensure integrity and sovereignty of CHT, old Chittagong division and Rangpur division against any irresponsible demand.

- \* Government to identify, protect and use its strategic resources including the Bay of Bengal etc.

### Adding the Glimpses

The book offers a provocative new perspective of Bangladesh.



Prof. Salimullah Khan highlights the historical and political significance of the CHT Peace Accord during his address at the book unveiling ceremony





**Lt Gen (Retd) M Nuruddin Khan is interacting with injured and blind student Omar Farukh of July Revolution**

Some of the rave views of worth personalities Dr. Shamir Andrew Ally, Dr. Shaikh A. Hamid, Mr. Qayyum Khan, Dr. Rania Azmi, General Iqbal Karim Bhuiyan, Professor Dr. Salimullah Khan, and Lt. Gen (Retd) Mohd Aminul Karim have been mentioned . During the unveiling of the book, on 06 January 2025, the Former Chief of Army Staff Lt Gen M Nuruddin Khan, Prof Salimullah Khan, and Major Del H Khan, Special Guests Special Assistant to Chief Advisor Lt Gen Abdul Hafiz, ndc, psc (reted) and Chief Guest Advisor on Foreign Affairs Mr Md Touhid Hossain all spoke

on the book and related issues. They mentioned the fallacy of delay, misjudgments, security situations and factors mentioned in the book. They felt the necessity of resolving the core issues within the shortest possible time and agreed with the recommendations.

“The book was dedicated to the brave martyrs, injured and all participants of July- August 2024 revolution of Bangladesh”. The publisher (arial), Diplomats, Al Ghani Foundation and Retired Armed Forces Welfare

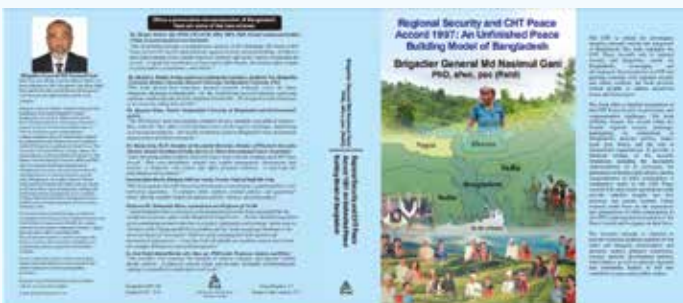
Association (RAOWA) supported the ceremony.

Diplomats, civil society members, students, injured student Omar Faruq, military, heroic freedom fighters, civil officers, and media were present. Taqiul Ghani ( son of Brig Gen Gani) anchored the program.

### **Final Reflections and Call to Action**

From my personal experience, I know that true peace is not just about silencing the guns. It requires addressing the root causes of conflict, empowering local communities, and bridging the gap between policy and reality. Brigadier General Gani’s book underscores these principles, offering valuable lessons for Bangladesh and beyond.

As we reflect on the CHT, let us recognize that while much has been achieved, there is still a long way to go. This book is not merely a critique but a call to action—a reminder that the promises made in 1997 must be honored to build a peaceful and prosperous future for the region.



**\* This is a book review of Brigadier General Md Nasimul Gani, PhD, afwc, psc (reted)**

**Major Del H Khan, SPP, psc ( reted)**  
Distinguished Bangladesh Army Veteran and  
Former UN Peacekeeper

# Diplomats Journey

**Diplomats** started its journey in 2018 as the first and only publication of diplomatic news in Bangladesh with the aim of highlighting the progress of democratization and economic developments in Bangladesh.

Nazinur Rahim, Founding Director of Ireland Bangladesh Chamber of Commerce and Industries (IBCCI), he is the co-founder of **Diplomats**. Since its inception, Mr. Rahim has been working as the Publisher and Executive Editor. He is also involved in IT, Software development & digital transformation business in home and abroad. M.A. Rouf, JP was the Founder Chief Advisor of Diplomats Publication. Currently Mr. Shahed Akhtar, Fmr. Ambassador & Secretary, GoB is the Editor of Diplomats and Mr. Abul Hasan Chowdhury, Fmr. State Minister, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, GoB is the Executive Advisor of Diplomats.

The **Diplomats** is available in print as well as online subscriptions. Currently, it has between 25,000 and 30,000 regular subscribers via online through Email, WhatsApp and Facebook, and more than 3,500 regular subscribers of the printed version. **Diplomats** is the only publication of its kind in Bangladesh. The main objective of this publication is to promote Bangladesh among foreign diplomats, expatriates, and foreign nationals at home and abroad. At the same time, **Diplomats** is working tirelessly to present Bangladesh's image to the world very positively.

From the array of activities of **Diplomats**, few of the following are notable-

**Diplomats** presented **Set-Top Box** to all the Missions abroad with the aim of enabling the viewers to watch Bangla TV channels abroad. The initiative was taken to promote Bangladesh's art, culture, and various development activities. The set-top boxes are expected to enable showcasing Bangladesh in every corner of the world.

The first **Genocide Corner** has been set up at the Bangladesh Foreign Service Academy with the help of **Diplomats Publication** in order to present the glorious history of Bangladesh's War of Liberation and at the same time, the horrific atrocities carried out by the occupation forces during the war in 1971.

So far, as many as Thirty-Five seminars have been organized by **Diplomats** in many different countries, including Italy, France, and United Kingdom. In these seminars Bangladesh's progress and achievements have been highlighted. Honorable Minister, Foreign Diplomats, and senior officials from various international organizations participated in these seminars.

At present, **Diplomats Publication** is being sent to all the foreign missions of Bangladesh around the world. At the same time, all the Foreign Embassies, International organizations, Banks, media, Member of Parliament, and key decision makers in Bangladesh are receiving copies of **Diplomats Publication** on a regular basis.



**NEW U.S. CHARGÉ D'AFFAIRES, AMBASSADOR TRACEY JACOBSON, MEETS CHIEF ADVISOR YUNUS TO STRENGTHEN U.S.-BANGLADESH RELATIONS**

The newly appointed U.S. Chargé d'Affaires, Ambassador Tracey Jacobson, had a productive meeting today with Chief Advisor Yunus, further solidifying the growing partnership between the United States and Bangladesh. During the meeting, Ambassador Jacobson emphasized the U.S.'s ongoing support for a thriving and democratic society in Bangladesh, reinforcing the shared commitment to strengthening bilateral ties. The discussions centered around deepening collaboration in various sectors, including governance, economic growth, and regional security, with a focus on fostering democratic values and sustainable development in Bangladesh.

**KUWAITI AMBASSADOR H.E. MR. ALI TUNYAN ABDUL WAHAB HAMADAH PRESENTS CREDENTIALS TO THE HON'BLE PRESIDENT OF BANGLADESH**

In a significant diplomatic event, the Ambassador of the State of Kuwait to Bangladesh, H.E. Mr. Ali Tunyan Abdul Wahab Hamadah, presented his credentials to the Hon'ble President of Bangladesh at a formal ceremony held at the Presidential Palace on January 14, 2025. This marks the beginning of his tenure as the Kuwaiti Ambassador in Dhaka, further strengthening the bilateral ties between Kuwait and Bangladesh. The presentation of credentials is a customary diplomatic tradition that highlights the formal recognition of an ambassador's authority to represent their country. The meeting was a testament to the growing relationship and cooperation between the two nations across various sectors, including trade, culture, and diplomacy.

**SOUTH KOREA REAFFIRMS SUPPORT FOR BANGLADESH'S INTERIM GOVERNMENT AND REFORMS**

H.E. Mr. Alexander G. Khozin, the newly appointed Ambassador of the Russian Federation to Bangladesh, met with H.E. Mr. Md. Touhid Hossain,

the Honorable Foreign Adviser of Bangladesh, at the Foreign Adviser's office.

The discussion covered a wide range of issues related to enhancing bilateral relations between the two nations. Key topics included collaboration in the power and energy sector, the Rooppur Nuclear Power Plant project, trade and business expansion, food security, fertilizer supply, workforce export, and human resource development through higher education. The two also discussed global matters of shared importance.

The Honorable Foreign Adviser extended his warm wishes to Ambassador Khozin for success in his new role as the Russian Ambassador to Bangladesh.

### BANGLADESH AND CHINA REAFFIRM 'COMPREHENSIVE STRATEGIC COOPERATIVE PARTNERSHIP' DURING BILATERAL TALKS



Bangladesh and China have reaffirmed their commitment to deepening their 'Comprehensive Strategic Cooperative Partnership' during bilateral talks held between Bangladesh's Hon'ble Foreign Adviser Md. Touhid Hossain and Chinese Foreign Minister Mr. Wang Yi at the Diaoyutai State Guest House in Beijing.

This marks the first official bilateral visit abroad by Hon'ble Adviser Hossain, who is accompanied by senior officials from various Bangladeshi ministries. The visit, coinciding with the golden jubilee of diplomatic relations between the two countries, covered a wide range of topics including trade,

investment, infrastructure development, and people-to-people exchanges.

Foreign Minister Wang Yi expressed China's respect for Bangladesh's sovereignty and reiterated support for the country's stability, reforms, and development. The discussions also included key cooperation areas such as agriculture, education, energy, and infrastructure projects under the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI).

Both sides emphasized the importance of continued collaboration, particularly in sectors like water resources, railways, and the blue economy. They also discussed the ongoing Rohingya crisis and reaffirmed their commitment to working on a durable solution.

The talks concluded with the signing of the 'Implementation Plan of the MoU on Exchange of Hydrological Information Sharing of the Yaluzangbu-Jamuna River,' and discussions on Chinese-funded development projects in Bangladesh.

The visit highlighted the strengthening of bilateral relations, with both nations eager to celebrate their 50 years of diplomatic ties and deepen strategic cooperation moving forward.

### AMBASSADOR OF THE REPUBLIC OF KOSOVO H.E. MR. LULZIM PLANA PRESENTS CREDENTIALS TO THE HON'BLE PRESIDENT ON JANUARY 14, 2025



On January 14, 2025, H.E. Mr. Lulzim Plana, Ambassador of the Republic of Kosovo to Bangladesh, officially presented his credentials to the Hon'ble President of Bangladesh at the Presidential Palace. This formal ceremony marked the beginning of Ambassador

Plana's diplomatic mission in Bangladesh, strengthening the bilateral ties between the two nations.

During the meeting, the Ambassador conveyed Kosovo's commitment to enhancing diplomatic relations and fostering cooperation in areas of mutual interest, including trade, culture, and international diplomacy. The Hon'ble President welcomed the Ambassador and expressed optimism about the future of bilateral relations, emphasizing the importance of strengthening ties between Bangladesh and Kosovo.

The ceremony was attended by senior officials from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and other key diplomatic representatives, reflecting the significance of the event in furthering diplomatic and economic exchanges.



## DHAKA HONOURS SAUDI ENVOY WITH 'BANGLADESH MEDAL FOR DIPLOMATIC EXCELLENCE'



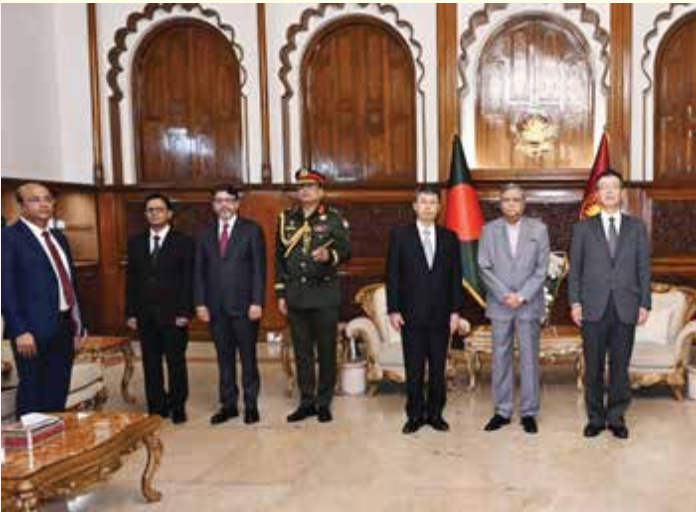
Saudi Arabia's Ambassador to Bangladesh, Essa Yousef Essa Alduhailan, has been awarded the prestigious "Bangladesh Medal for Diplomatic Excellence" for his remarkable contributions to strengthening Bangladesh-Saudi Arabia relations.

At a ceremony at the Foreign Service Academy, Foreign Adviser Md Touhid Hossain highlighted Ambassador Essa's visionary leadership, which elevated bilateral ties across trade, investment, and energy security.

During the pandemic, the envoy safeguarded the welfare of Bangladeshi expatriates and ensured job continuity, cementing bonds between the two nations. His tenure also saw over 50 high-level visits and groundbreaking initiatives like digital Hajj and Umrah services.

Ambassador Essa dedicated the award to Saudi King Salman bin Abdulaziz, Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, and Foreign Minister Prince Faisal bin Farhan, expressing gratitude to Bangladesh for the honor.

## AMBASSADOR OF JAPAN, H.E. MR. SAIDA SHINICHI, PRESENTS CREDENTIALS TO THE HON'BLE PRESIDENT ON JANUARY 15, 2025



On January 15, 2025, His Excellency Mr. SAIDA Shinichi, the newly appointed Ambassador of Japan to Bangladesh, presented his credentials to the Hon'ble President of Bangladesh. The ceremony, which took place at the President's Office, marked the official beginning of Ambassador Shinichi's diplomatic mission in Bangladesh. During the presentation, both leaders discussed strengthening bilateral relations between Japan and Bangladesh, focusing on areas of trade, investment, and cultural exchange.

## AMBASSADOR H.E. ABDELOUAHAB SAIDANI GRACES CARDIFF INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL DHAKA AS CHIEF GUEST



H.E. Abdelouahab Saidani, Ambassador of Algeria to Bangladesh, attended a vibrant event at Cardiff International School Dhaka as the chief guest. The Ambassador was warmly received and honored by the school community.

As part of the celebrations, H.E. Saidani took the salute from an impressive students' march-past, showcasing discipline and unity. He later presented awards to winners, recognizing their outstanding achievements and encouraging them to strive for excellence.

The Ambassador commended the school's efforts in fostering academic and extracurricular excellence while promoting leadership and teamwork among students. The event concluded with applause and appreciation for the students, teachers, and the esteemed presence of H.E. Saidani.

### NEWLY APPOINTED JAPANESE AMBASSADOR PAYS COURTESY CALL ON BANGLADESH'S FOREIGN ADVISER



The newly appointed Japanese Ambassador to Bangladesh, H.E. Mr. SAIDA Shinichi, met with Hon'ble Foreign Adviser Md Touhid Hossain at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The Foreign Adviser congratulated Ambassador Shinichi on assuming his new position and assured him of full cooperation during his tenure.

During the meeting, Ambassador Shinichi reaffirmed Japan's strong support for Bangladesh's interim government and shared that an upcoming Parliamentary Vice Minister-level visit will convey Japan's political support. He emphasized the importance of holding Foreign Office Consultations (FOC) soon and maintaining high-level exchanges between the two nations.

The Ambassador expressed satisfaction with the ongoing negotiations for the Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA) and informed the Foreign Adviser of the planned visit by the JICA Chief in March. He also announced Japan's decision to provide five patrol vessels for coastal patrolling and readiness to sign an agreement on air pollution monitoring equipment for Bangladesh.

The Foreign Adviser thanked Japan for its steadfast support, recognizing it as Bangladesh's largest bilateral development partner and highlighting Japan's role in key development initiatives. He appreciated Japan's efforts toward a durable solution for the Rohingya crisis, including its humanitarian assistance and support for those relocated to Bhashan Char. The Foreign Adviser sought Japanese support for the upcoming Rohingya crisis conference in Doha, co-hosted by Bangladesh and the United Nations.

Both sides discussed enhanced bilateral collaboration and mutual support in election-related matters at international forums. The meeting concluded with the Foreign Adviser expressing hope that Bangladesh-Japan relations will achieve new heights under Ambassador Shinichi's leadership.

### SOUTH KOREA REAFFIRMS SUPPORT FOR BANGLADESH'S INTERIM GOVERNMENT AND REFORMS



The Special Envoy of the Foreign Minister of the Republic of Korea, Ambassador Lee Jeongkyu, reiterated South Korea's support for Bangladesh's Interim Government and its reform initiatives during a meeting with Foreign Secretary Ambassador Md. Jashim Uddin.

Ambassador Lee expressed satisfaction with the strong trade, investment, and economic ties between the two nations, highlighting the presence of 150 Korean companies in Bangladesh and the growing interest in investment opportunities in key sectors.

Foreign Secretary Md. Jashim Uddin briefed the Special Envoy on Bangladesh's ongoing reform initiatives to promote transparency and accountability, as well as the interim government's efforts to ensure a smooth election process.

Both sides emphasized the importance of increased business engagements and swift progress on an Economic Partnership Agreement to enhance bilateral trade and investment. The meeting concluded with a commitment to advancing high-level engagements to further strengthen Bangladesh-South Korea relations.



## PAKISTAN AND BANGLADESH SIGN MOU FOR RICE EXPORTS : A MOVE TO STRENGTHEN BILATERAL TRADE RELATIONS



In a significant move to enhance bilateral trade, the Trading Corporation of Pakistan (TCP) and the Directorate General of Food, Bangladesh, have signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) for the export of rice from Pakistan to Bangladesh. The agreement was formalized during a signing ceremony where Syed Rafeo Bashir Shah, Chairman of TCP, and Mr. Md. Abdul Khaleque, Director General of the Directorate General of Food, Bangladesh, represented their respective countries.

The event was attended by key dignitaries, including Syed Ahmed Maroof, the High Commissioner of

Pakistan, Shakeel Ahmed Mangnejo, Special Secretary of Pakistan's Ministry of Commerce, and Md. Masudul Hasan, Secretary of Bangladesh's Ministry of Food. All attendees expressed their enthusiasm for the agreement, which aims to boost trade and strengthen economic ties between the two nations.

Following the MoU signing, the High Commissioner for Pakistan, Syed Ahmed Maroof, paid a courtesy call to Mr. Ali Imam Majumder, the Honorable Adviser for Food in Bangladesh. The meeting focused on enhancing bilateral trade relations, and the High Commissioner presented a symbolic gift of rice on behalf of Pakistan's Prime Minister, Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif, further emphasizing the significance of the partnership.

This agreement signals a promising development in trade relations, particularly in the agricultural sector, which is expected to benefit both countries economically.

## EU AND UN WOMEN PARTNER TO COMBAT SEXUAL AND GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE IN BANGLADESH WITH €4.8 MILLION INITIATIVE



The Indian and Bangladeshi Armed Forces jointly celebrated the 54th anniversary of the Liberation War of 1971 on Bijoy Diwas, reflecting their shared history and enduring friendship.

In Kolkata, events began with a wreath-laying ceremony at Vijay Smarak by Muktijoddha Maj Gen Abdus Salam Chowdhury (Retd) and Brig Gen Md Aminur Rahman, attended by the Governor of West Bengal. The delegation also engaged with the GOC-in-C Eastern Command and met Indian veterans and dignitaries.

In Dhaka, Indian veterans joined a reception hosted by Bangladesh's President at Bangabhaban. They interacted with Bangladesh's service chiefs and senior dignitaries, sharing memories of their united fight with Bir Muktijoddhas during the 1971 Liberation War.

Both nations reaffirmed their deep-rooted bond, forged in the spirit of justice, freedom, and equality, underscoring their commitment to peace and harmony.

# DIPLOMATS

WORLD

The Only Diplomatic Magazine in Bangladesh

## Subscription

WILL BE PAID BY

STAMP

Valid only for Bangladesh

REPLY ENVELOPE

## DIPLOMATS

Address : House - 58, Road - 03, Block - B, Niketon Society, Gulshan - 1, Dhaka - 1212, Bangladesh

Phone : +88 02 4881 2430, Hotline : +880 1972344788, email : [info@diplomats.news](mailto:info@diplomats.news)

website : [www.diplomats.news](http://www.diplomats.news)

Subscription  
FORM

Yes I would like to subscribe to Diplomats  
for ..... issues from the month of .....

### Personal Details:

Please complete this form and return to the address below  
Alternatively you can order online on telephone

☐ Mr ☐ Mrs ☐ Others

Name:

Job title:

Company:

Delivery Address:

Post Code:

Telephone:

E-mail:

The above information is purely for the purpose of subscription and  
delivery of the publication/s of the Diplomats. This information  
not be shared with or distributed to any other entity and will be  
stored at the highest data privacy and storage levels.

Payment Total Tk. 2400 (200 BDT Per Issue)

- ☐ Cheque enclosed ( payable to Diplomats)  
☐ Cash Payment  
☐ Bkash

### For more details, please contact

Phone: +88 02 4881 2430

Hotline: +880 1972344788

Email: [info@diplomats.news](mailto:info@diplomats.news)

[www.diplomats.news](http://www.diplomats.news)

Subscription  
FORM





## SURGICAL EXCELLENCE WITH ROBOTIC SURGERY

# VERSIUS - The Next Generation Surgical Robot by Cambridge Medical Robotics.

### Benefits of Versius Surgical Robot:

- Minimally Invasive
- Less Blood Loss
- Shorter Hospitalisation
- Quick Recovery
- Less Pain
- Lesser Chance of Infection

### Versius Is Used For Common Surgical Conditions/organs:

- Gall Bladder Stones
- Appendicitis
- Hernia
- Weight Loss Surgery
- Nephrectomy
- Fibroid

**SAFURA GREEN (LEVEL-A5), 761 SATMOSJID ROAD, DHANMONDI, DHAKA - 1209**

**01713429777, 01747584764**

**[www.ssenderprise.com.bd](http://www.ssenderprise.com.bd)**





[www.diplomats.news](http://www.diplomats.news)