

Rising Asia

April-June 2015 Issue 01



Centre for East Asia (Foundation)
Bangladesh





Dedicated to the great
martyrs of the
Liberation War 1971

Rising Asia

A Quarterly Magazine of CEAF

Inaugural Issue
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Striving for Asian Solidarity



Centre for East Asia Foundation (CEAF)
Dhaka, Bangladesh

Rising Asia
A Quarterly Magazine of CEAF

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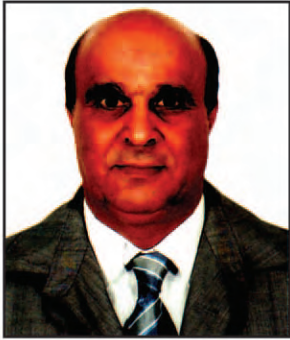
Editor's Note

The 'Rising Asia' magazine is the mouth piece of Centre for East Asia Foundation (CEAF). East Asia is now the epic centre of 21st century dynamics of economic growth and endurability of military balance, and as such very much in the focus of emerging new world order. In growth momentum, it is being closely followed by South Asia and Southeast Asia, and altogether, rising Asia has now become the chronometer of global development.

As a study group with keen interest in East Asian affairs, and in our country relations as well as development partnership with East Asian countries now in the driving seat of Asian growth, we find it necessary now to pursue the study of the phenomenon of rising Asia as a whole, and the significance of roles played by various global and regional institutions and power blocs therein. Our magazine, Rising Asia, is to be the voice of that study as well as the reflection of images of Asian life, country wise or region wise, along with a miscellany of social or human development issues. For the Asia study part, we intend to include in every issue one dissertation as a topic of in-house discussion in our symposiums. For Asian life and miscellany part, we intend to accommodate in each issue contributions on any country or inter country or general subjects ranging from arts and culture, sights and heritages, games and entertainments, science and technology, icons and celebrities, professions and performances, pictures and cartoons to philosophy, anthropology and human order.

We are making a modest beginning. We believe in due course the readership and the contributors will shape up the character of the magazine, and we seek their whole-hearted cooperation.

Nasim Mahmud
Editor, Rising Asia



Message

It is a commendable endeavor that the Centre for East Asia Foundation (CEAF) is undertaking to contribute to the growth of relations between Bangladesh and its Asia neighbors through studies and exchanges.

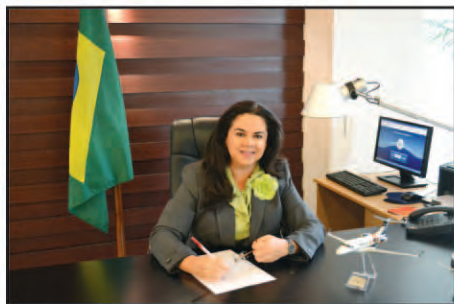
The world now turns its focus and faith towards Asia and as members of this region we must prepare and be ready to make full use of the many opportunities which is still unexplored. Our areas of strengths, complementation and cooperation should be identified and worked on together to address the many issues that we face as individual nations and as a regional community.

I am delighted to learn that CEAF is going to publish quarterly “RISING ASIA” magazine. This is very exciting. As the Palestine Ambassador to Bangladesh my heartiest congratulations to the CEAF for their noble and visionary initiative and look forward to reading the first issue very soon.

Shaher M.H. Abuiyyadeh

Ambassador

Embassy of the State of Palestine and
Dean of the Diplomatic Crops in Bangladesh



Message

Goodwill message to the Centre for East Asia Foundation

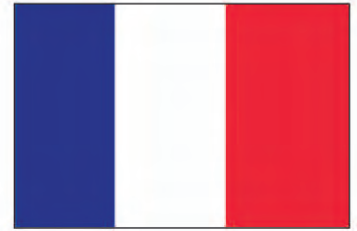
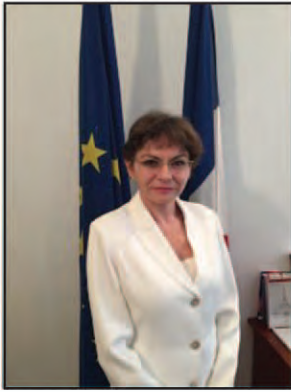
When it comes to thinking this region and the role of Bangladesh, the Centre for East Asia is a reference. Its several articles, lectures and cultural programs have proven to be essential sources of information on foreign policy and diplomacy, human rights, trade and security cooperation between Bangladesh and East Asian countries.

By dealing with these issues, the Centre enables not only policymakers, businesspeople and intellectuals to look for opportunities and complementarities between East Asian nations, but also draws the attention of other countries, such as Brazil. This is, after all, a promising region, with which we are trade partners, and from which our country receives much political support due to common themes on the multilateral agenda.

Finally, one must not forget to mention the work developed by the Centre among other civil organisations and groups interested in Asian integration. Paving the way towards a peaceful, moderate and tolerant Asian identity, backed on Human Rights, Security and Human Development, is one of the most observable goals of the Centre for East Asia.

I wish it a long and prolific life.

Wanja Campos da Nóbrega
Ambassador
The Federative Republic of Brazil



Message

France and Bangladesh, a strong relation of solidarity.

As Ambassador of France in Bangladesh, I have the honour to welcome the birth of a new quarterly magazine, Rising Asia. This publication is launched by the Centre for East Asia. This Centre is a Foundation working on the relations between Bangladesh and its Asian partners, as well as non-Asian powers having a significant strategic presence in the region.

It is an honour for me to write this goodwill message for Rising Asia, but it is also an opportunity that is offered to me, and that I seize, to promote the old friendly relationship France and Bangladesh have developed over the years, in all its dimensions.

To develop this relationship, our French diplomacy in Bangladesh will be a transversal and connected diplomacy, with a few key words to help building links and projects, and sharing ideas: “network”, “pragmatism” and “global world” – because this is the world we are living in.

Bangladesh is a large country, fully determined to achieve its goal of being part of the middle-income countries group by 2021. This goal is not a dream: Bangladesh is considered by famous institutions like Goldman Sachs and the French insurer COFACE as one of the “Next Eleven”: that is, one of the eleven countries which global GDP will equalize in the coming decades that of the well known countries of the G7.

France is fully determined to support Bangladesh’s march towards 2021 and beyond. This support is a demanding support: France and Bangladesh have to build a comprehensive, confident and open-minded relationship to develop their ties. This is the right way to move together towards the future. This is already the case in many fields: in the fields of development cooperation, cultural cooperation, as well as our bilateral economic relations and many other dimensions.

I am deeply convinced that Bangladesh and France have a mutual interest to work closer, because both our people share many values and priorities.

As for values, France and Bangladesh are both fond of culture, respect for their history, their poetry, their literature, their music, their artistic works... We both like the spirit of freedom, we like political debates and freedom of speech at all the levels of our respective societies. This requires peace to prosper.

As for priorities, I would like to underline one of the most important ones: France and Bangladesh develop a very similar vision to the global strategy the world has to develop to face the so big challenge of climate changes' impacts, in our people's daily lives; both our countries are deeply aware that we are reaching a turning point on the issue of climate changes. That's why France, as much as Bangladesh, believes that the International Climate Change Conference which will take place in Paris in December, 2015, has to be a successful conference – not only for Paris, but for all the countries of the world, for the sake of a safe future for our planet and its next generations.

Another priority is health. Within the framework of the Millennium Development Goals, France is fully involved in the implementation of the 6th objective, aiming to combat AIDS, malaria, and other diseases. In these fields in Bangladesh, through multilateral channels, although nobody knows about it, France has contributed for 65 M\$ since 2000, to support Bangladesh's struggle against these diseases.

France is also mobilizing the French bilateral Agency for Development AFD and its funds to support Bangladesh in its strategy to give safe water and sanitation to its population as soon as possible. This is a matter of life and sustainability for Bangladesh, and France is side by side with Bangladesh to help the country achieve its goals.

All of us know that Bangladesh is a hub between the South Asia and South East Asia, and we all know the opportunities about to come for the country, as a hub between these two worlds.

But I would like to stress on another aspect of our bilateral relationship with Bangladesh: for fifteen years, some French orthopedist and anesthetist surgeons have come every year around Cox's Bazar to fight the heavy consequences of rachitism. They have offered many children a new life, because they can now run and play, and have a normal life.

Beyond all the political and high level issues, some simple values are fundamental: solidarity and humanism. This is my message.

H.E Mrs Sophie AUBERT
Ambassador of France



Message

I am very pleased to learn of the upcoming publication of the “Rising Asia” magazine by the Centre for East Asia Foundation (CEAF). I offer my heartiest congratulations to Mr. Nasim Mahmud and his colleagues at the CEAF for their timely initiative.

While the idea of the ‘rise of Asia’ and even of ‘the Asian century’ has been around for some time and has been received with enthusiasm by Bangladesh public, there is plenty of space to promote knowledge and understanding of various Asian countries, which in time should bring about closer cooperation between Bangladesh and other Asian countries. Bangladesh, with its steady economic progress and remarkable human development, is certain to benefit from closer cooperation and friendship with other Asian countries, many of which has also shown robust and resilient growth.

I wish the CEAF all success in its effort to publish ‘Rising Asia’ magazine and to significantly contribute to the promotion of mutual understanding and cooperation among Asian countries.

Iwan Wiranata-atmadja

Ambassador of the Republic of Indonesia
to the People’s Republic of Bangladesh



Message

I felicitate the publication of *Rising Asia* at this critical juncture as Asia has become the centre of world economic growth.

Japan-Bangladesh relationship has entered a new stage through the last year's mutual visits of our Prime Ministers. I hope the two countries continue working closely fostering greater regional cooperation for socio-economic development, peace and stability in Asia based on the shared values of rule of law, democracy, basic human rights.

We are in our era in which it is no longer possible for any single nation to secure its own peace only by itself. Moreover, Japan is a country that depends a great deal on the peace and stability of the international community. That is why Japan wishes to work even more proactively for the peace of the region as well as beyond, and wishes to raise the banner of "Proactive Contributor to Peace."

Finally I sincerely hope that *Rising Asia* will contribute to a better understanding of readers in Bangladesh on dynamics of the Asian region.

Mr. Shiro Sadoshima
Ambassador of Japan



EMBASSY OF THE REPUBLIC OF THE UNION OF MYANMAR
DHAKA

Dated: February 2015

Message

I am delighted to learn that the Centre for East Asian (Foundation) is going to bring out a quarterly magazine called “RISING Asia”. The twenty first century is already being projected by some international experts on global development dynamics as the Century of Asia. The East Asian lead in Asian growth over the second half of the last century is probably in the process of being overtaken by geographical shift of focus from Pacific Ocean to Indian Ocean region. Myanmar, like Bangladesh, is situated between two giant engines of Asian growth, China and India and, also shares the Bay of Bengal.

As an ASEAN member country, on the other hand, we are connected with the global order of development drive through various initiatives of multilateral institution-building that ASEAN has systematically sought to develop or be part of.

As a close neighbour of Bangladesh, it is of much interest to Myanmar to know about Bangladeshi perspectives on various aspects of Rising Asia that your magazine may cover. I wish you all the success in this new endeavour, and assure you of our goodwill and cooperation.

H.E. U Myo Myint Than
Ambassador

Embassy of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar
Dhaka, Bangladesh



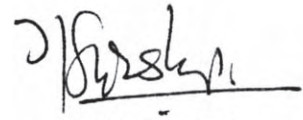
नेपाली राजदूतावास
Embassy of Nepal
Dhaka

Message

I am happy learn that the *Centre for East Asia Foundation* is going to publish a quarterly publication 'Rising Asia' from February 2015 with a focus on the Asia-Pacific region.

The Asia-Pacific region has 60% percent of the global population and contributes more than a quarter of the world's GDP. The region is renowned for its ancient civilization, rich arts and culture. The enlightened study and research on many facets of the reemergence of the region in the global stage, like the publication of the journal, deserves commendation and appreciation.

I wish 'Rising Asia' all success!



H.K. Shrestha



Message

Message from the Ambassador for Centre for East Asia (Foundation)

I am pleased to learn that Centre for East Asia (Foundation) is going to publish the first issue of its magazine “Rising Asia”. I appreciate Mr. Mahmud’s initiative to enhance and increase people to people contacts between Bangladesh and other countries.

Bangladesh has the privilege to be a bridge between South and South East Asia due to its geopolitical position capping the Bay of Bengal. It has been making a steady economic growth with an impressive decrease in the number of people living below the poverty line. The country offers good investment and trade opportunities to its foreign partners and is a market for more than 165 million people. The Netherlands was one of the first European nations to recognize Bangladesh and since its independence the Netherlands has been cooperating extensively in various fields, most notably in water resources management. The Netherlands have become not only a trading partner, but also has associated itself to advance values including democracy and respect for human rights in Bangladesh.

Our countries are similar in nature: both are densely populated and both are delta countries. These facts unite us and hence the Netherlands will continue to share relevant know-how and expertise and will also learn from experiences in Bangladesh in return. We are keen to continue working with Bangladesh and we hope that this will broaden our relationship even further. The Netherlands has a highly developed economy and we are known for our pragmatic ‘hands-on’ mentality. Dutch pioneers in international business are willing to think big and realize highly ambitious projects. These ambitions can become true in Bangladesh. I am convinced that both our countries can mutually learn and benefit from further economic cooperation.

I wish the Centre for East Asia (Foundation) all the best for their upcoming magazine “Rising Asia” in February. I trust that the journal will be able to enhance understanding and strengthen ties between the people and policymakers of Bangladesh with those of East Asian and south- East Asian countries.

Gerben de Jong

Ambassador

Embassy of the Kingdom of Netherlands in Bangladesh



Message

Pasuguan ng Pilipinas

Embassg of the Philippines

LPE/DA- 52-2015

DHAKA, BANGLADESH

29 January 2015

Dear **Mr. Mahmud**:

The Philippine Embassy acknowledges receipt of your letter of 22 January 2015 introducing **Rising Asia** magazine, first publication of the Centre for East Asia Foundation (CEAF) that features trends in Bangladesh international trade relations and the economic development programs in the Asian bloc.

I wish CEAF all the success in its future programs and activities.

Very truly yours,


VICENTE VIVENCIO T. BANDILLO
Ambassador



Message

Goodwill Message by Alexander A. Nikolaev, Ambassador of Russia to Bangladesh

It is a great pleasure for me to know that Centre for East Asia Foundation has launched its own quarterly magazine devoted to the Asia development issues. I highly appraise this endeavor and congratulate its editors on publishing its first issue.

Nowadays Asia is becoming a global locomotive. I believe it is necessary to pay as much attention as possible to the issues of Asian security cooperation, its economic development, exploring trade opportunities in this picturesque part of the world and deepening cultural ties. That is why the publication of the Rising Asia is very important.

I hope that the Rising Asia will also contribute to the cause of Bangladesh's development and will broaden the horizons of its entrepreneurs.

Russia is located in both Europe and Asia and has friendly relations with Bangladesh. Russia is a market-oriented economy with a strong capital and industrial base, great achievements in the field of science, technology and modern development. Moscow is cooperating with Dhaka in many sectors including nuclear, ICT, space, mining, education, etc. I am convinced your audience will be very interested to know more about Russia and its relations with Asian countries and look forward to active cooperation with your magazine.

I wish the Rising Asia to get a leading position among analytical periodicals in Bangladesh.

Kind regards, Alexander A. Nikolaev

H.E. Mr. Alexander A. Nikolaev
Ambassador of the Russian
Federation to Bangladesh



Hüseyin MÜFTÜOĞLU
Büyükelçi/Ambassador
Dakka Büyükelçiliği/Turkish Embassy in Dhaka

Message

“Centre for East Asia Foundation (CEAF), as a non-political, independent think tank has made significant contributions to the enhancement of understanding between the people of Bangladesh and those of other countries on various issues ranging from foreign policy, social development to climate change. Its aims and objectives are manifold. So far many seminars that were organized by the CEAF have brought together personalities, foreign and Bangladeshi alike, to discuss different subjects. I congratulate CEAF on its past achievements.

I learned with great pleasure that CEAF is now going into another journey by bringing out a quarterly publication. This is very exiting. As the Turkish Ambassador to Bangladesh I strongly support this new initiative of CEAF and look forward to reading the first issue very soon.”

Hüseyin Müftüoğlu
Ambassador
Turkish Embassy in Bangladesh



**AMBASSADOR
OF THE SOCIALIST REPUBLIC OF
VIETNAM**

Dhaka, 27 January 2015

Message

I highly welcome the publication of the quarterly magazine Rising Asia by the Centre for East Asia Foundation, which will not only address many international issues in Bangladesh and Asia but also between Asian and non-Asian powers with significant strategic presence in the region, particularly the regional trade and economic interface, development and security cooperation, temporal geopolitical status quo.

I greatly value this positive effort of CEAF. With the high and good prestige of CEAF, I am sure that the magazine will have great success, thus positively contributing to peace, stability, friendship, cooperation and durable development in the region.

Nguyen Quang Thuc



Secretariat
Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral
Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC)

11 February 2015

Message

I wish to congratulate the Center for East Asia Foundation (CEAF) on the occasion of the maiden publication of the “Rising Asia” magazine in February 2015.

I am pleased to learn about this effort made by the CEAF to furnish publications on events, deliberations and articles that are relevant to trade and development among Asian countries. I am hopeful that the broad outlook will meet the expectation and approval of readers in Bangladesh and beyond.

Resurgence of Asia has become a subject for contemporary discourse at any level. In this context, I trust that the “Rising Asia” could be a reliable platform for such discussions.

Bangladesh is not only a very important strategic partner to top Asian economies but also host to the Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC). Therefore, keeping in mind the objectives of BIMSTEC and having been a keen advocate for regional integration and cooperation myself, I look forward to reading “Rising Asia”.

My best wishes to the CEAF for a smooth launch of the magazine and for continued success thereafter.

Sumith Nakandala
Secretary General



Message

I am very happy to learn that the Centre for East Asia (Foundation) is bringing out a quarterly publication “Rising Asia” on regional trade and economic interface, security co-operation and other contemporary national and international issues of regional countries.

Today, the role of the state is vastly different from that which it played for most of the 20th century. New powerful actors have swept onto the international stage. Non-governmental organizations and civil society rightly demand their space on the global stage. In the dynamic international arena of our times, the key to growth and development is partnership within and between nations. CEAF provides an appropriate forum for consultation and networking as we build partnerships for the effective performance of our duties in a rapidly changing world.

Hereby, the Consulate of Seychelles in Bangladesh would like to avail itself the best regards and cordial greetings to the Centre for East Asia (Foundation) and wishes CEAF greater achievement as well as better contribution to development in Asia and the world.

I wish this initiative success.

Md. Amiruzzaman

Honorary Consul & Chief of Mission
Consulate of The Republic of Seychelles
Dhaka, Bangladesh

Sixty Seven Years of Post Colonial South Asia: The State of the Nations

Dr. Mizanur Rahman Shelley



India and Pakistan celebrated the 'Sixty Seven Years' of their independence in mid August in 2014. The midnight celebrations on the 14th August in Islamabad and on the 15th in Delhi and the colorful ceremonies in the following mornings were appropriate tributes to the blood-soaked saga of the sub continent's struggle for freedom from British Imperial and colonial rule. For the Indians and Pakistanis as much as for the world at large, especially for the West, it seemed that Bangladesh which was very much a part and parcel, indeed a veritable fortress of that struggle, deserved nothing more than a mention in the footnotes.

This is more than a pity. Bangalees of Bangladesh had contributed more than their quota to the struggle for freedom of both India and Pakistan. The emergence of Bangladesh in blood and fire in the wake of a titanic struggle for liberation from the shackles of internal colonialism in 1971 was the most remarkable political development in the postcolonial, post 1947 sub-continent. It showed that the politico economic factors which drove the masses of East Bengal to cast their lot with the new born state of Pakistan in 1947 were powerfully at work throughout the 24 years of pre-1971 Pakistan. Economic deprivation resulting from the policies and actions of the unjust and myopic ruling elite of the then Pakistan caused the Bangalees to demand their rightful share in the economy and polity.

The harsh and inhumane response manifest in the crackdown by the predominantly non Bangalee Pakistani armed forces on 25th March 1971 compelled peace loving Bangalees to rise in armed resistance. The result was the historic victory of the forces for liberation and the emergence of Bangladesh as a sovereign state mainly on the basis of cultural and territorial nationalism. Bangladesh thus proved that the partition of the sub-continent in 1947 on principally religious lines remained unable to realise its purpose: ensuring a better life for those who had chosen to separate because they were treated with injustice. It is unfortunate that historians and analysts of the sub-continent and the world while elaborately commenting on the defining events of 1947 neglected to underscore the implications of Bangladesh in nearly seven decades long chequered history of post colonial South Asia.

Can Bangladesh be so easily by passed? The answer must be, "No". This resilient nation of nearly 160 million is not only pivotal in South Asia but also has implications for a world still fighting tenaciously to alleviate poverty, eliminate hunger and reduce malnourishment and illiteracy, especially the poorer nations of the 'Global South'.

Bangladesh is a virtual frontline state in this continuing war against the ancient enemies of humankind. It is true that it has not been without allies in this struggle. Richer members of the international community have been extending help and assistance albeit on their own terms, to Bangladesh in a consistent manner for over four decades. Nevertheless, despite some remarkable stories of success in the fields of food grains (cereals) production, micro credit, immunization of infants, supply of safe drinking water to rural areas, reduction of the rate of growth of population to below 1.9% and greater enrolment and retention in the primary schools both formal and informal, there has been no desirable breakthrough in the vicious cycle of poverty, lack of investible resources, degradation of the quality of life and poverty again. Thus we see that over 97 per cent of its (Bangladesh's) population now have access to safe drinking water, a big "success story" for one of the world's poorest nations, but only 67 per cent have access to sanitation. Malnutrition is still wide spread in Bangladesh.

Bangladesh has succeeded in achieving an impressive reduction in infant mortality rate over the past 32

years. The rate of maternal mortality at child birth has also been brought down significantly.

There is no doubt that the story is one of mixed of though impressive success, in several fields continuing failure in several others. Successive Government have remained unable to realise the purpose of our freedom. The quality of life, in general, did not register the kind of improvement seen around us, especially in the Asian Countries to the East of the sub-continental frontiers. The world around us now reduced to a global village by fast expanding information and communication, super highways, avenues and alleyway, is moving forward with amazing speed. South Asia in general and Bangladesh in particular staggers behind. We have many endowments and promising possibilities but remain unable to achieve the critical pace of development which could effectively and quickly help us lift our masses from the morass of poverty and under development.

The reasons may not be difficult to find. Those may be soft in our deformed and distorted political and managerial cultures. Bangladesh has been a classic case of gigantic failures at high levels. Political leadership has not been able to come out of the colonial and feudal cage. Those who come to power tend to behave like masters and overlords. The order of the day, any day, for the extant establishment is to decry virtually every thing that has gone before. There are also attempts to negate whatever have been achieved in the past. One is confronted with a veritable ORWELLIAN scenario where history is perpetually mutable and with every change of the guards at the top, there is a recreation of history. "Double Speak" and "New Speak" become the dominant language of establishment politics. Thus our history has different ages at different times. Some times it is three and a half years old and sometimes six, at other times nine or six years old. However, much, the political leaders, catapulted into power by bullet or ballot, may revel in this kind of unrealistic exercise the people at large not only get confused but also suffer in penury, hunger, malnutrition and illiteracy. Cascades of words splash down their wretched daily life and cumulative development constantly eludes them.

Preoccupation with nuances of ideological differences in an increasingly realistic world, where sound business and good a life matters more than ideological device, tends to keel our political leaders in establishment away from their principal task of national management for a better human existence. The leaders outside establishment also suffer incorrigibly from the colonial syndrome: Opposition without a sense of direction and planning. If they had been in power earlier, they forget the past and start speaking the same belligerent language of impatience as did their predecessors now in the driving seat. This makes confusion worse confounded for the suffering multitudes.

That is not all. This sense, of directionless and overriding concern of the leadership, within power and without, with the superficial and often largely irrelevant, make it possible for those sections of the bureaucracy and technocracy which are corrupt to have uninterrupted heydays of plunder and loot for shortsighted self aggrandizement. Business and industry also tend to remain in a perpetual state of nonage. The political managers do not manage the business of the state effectively. Many bureaucrats and technocrats, lacking clear directions and vigilant monitoring and supervision, do not often perform even at average level of their efficiency. Even corruption tends to be inefficient and negative for those among them who choose to take the path of rent seeking. Unlike their counterparts in several growing and prosperous South East and East Asian societies, they do not share the wealth released by economic expansion and growth. On the contrary they seek to make money under the counter by delaying decision, holding up implementation and thus harassing business and common people making them and the nation suffer further loss and be consigned to a state of stasis featured by the hopeless misery of no movement forward in economic and social life. Obviously this cannot go on. The politico administrative managers of our nation must correct themselves when there is time and time is in short supply in an increasingly business-like and cruelly competitive world. They need to unlearn a lot and retune themselves to a world of computers, competition and consensus on the basic needs, objectives, strategies and programmes for

the all round development of the society. They must realize that elegies and dirges may help ventilate profound grief and relieve the saddened mind. But they can do little else. They cannot help redeem a poor and struggling nation from the shackles of poverty and squalor.

A new vision of realistic and rational business in a commercialized and combative contemporary world is a must. If our top managers do not succeed in acquiring such a vision and working programmatically to realise it, they would be outflanked by events and developments compelled by evolving circumstances. A new generation is coming of age in Bangladesh as elsewhere in the world who regards history as relevant and important only to the extent it serves the purposes of an active and meaningful present for a prosperous and satisfying future. It will not be long before old style politics and management in government and in business becomes a relic of the past. Whether the transition will be conscious, voluntary and gradual but speedy or not depends on the choice that the old guards make.

The author, founder Chairman of Centre for Development Research, Bangladesh (CDRB) and Editor quarterly 'ASIAN AFFAIRS' was a former teacher of Dhaka University and former member of the erstwhile Civil Service of Pakistan (CSP) and former non-partisan technocrat Cabinet Minister.

In house discussion topic, CEAF, April 2015
Rising Asia and the matrix of Bay of Bengal

Sadeq Khan



The twentyfirst century is now acknowledged to be a century of rising Asia. Even the neo-con proponents of American century who believe in the continuance of US supremacist world leadership through the century, and the continuance of US exceptionalism through much of the new millennium by virtue of starwar capacity, recognise that the focus of power balance in the world, both economic and military, has shifted from Atlantic to Pacific, coercion of ICBM-propelled nuclear holocaust having become redundant under MAD (mutually assured destruction) proliferation. In consequence, the US pivot to Asia has become a compelling strategy for the sole super power. Since 2012, however, there has been a further modification of US strategic thinking. Presumably with the realisation that China has been able to master stealth missile capacity to hit any floating war machine of US

fleets far off Chinese coasts in the Pacific, the-then US Defence Secretary recommended and the-then US Secretary of State negotiated with China a policy of “cooperation and competition” for stability and growth in the Asia Pacific belt.

That G-2 Asian policy did not sail smoothly. But through ups and downs, alignments, re-alignments and non-alignments, and driven by the dynamics of regional and global cooperation instruments, a big power consensus appears to have been arrived at by 2015 that “inclusive growth, stability and connectivity” through Asia extending to the rest of the world is imperative for propping up the troubled global order, along with an universally agreed roadmap for facing the challenge to human survival in shared earth from climate change and looming water crisis worldwide. That consensus is being echoed in various regional conferences and in bilateral communiqués, some of which I quote hereunder as a backdrop to the subject of this article.

Asia Pacific dream

Addressing the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) Summit, November 9, 2014 in Beijing, Chinese President Xi Jinping called for efforts to create and fulfill an Asia-Pacific dream saying China's economy will bring huge opportunities and benefits to the region and to the world. The Asia-Pacific has a strong impetus for development and a bright future, with a rising standing in the world, but the region now stands "at a crossroads", Xi said. He explained that *the dream* is about acting in the spirit of the Asia-Pacific community and out of a sense of shared destinies, following the trend of peace, development and mutually beneficial cooperation, and jointly working for the prosperity and progress of the region; that *the dream* is about staying ahead of global development and making greater contribution to the well-being of mankind; *the dream* is also about having more economic vibrancy, free trade and investment facilitation, better roads, and closer people-to-people exchanges. Moreover, *the dream* is about ensuring greater security and prosperity for the people and giving children a better environment to grow, work and live. To realize *the Asia-Pacific dream*, the region should redouble efforts to forge a partnership of mutual trust, *inclusiveness* and win-win *cooperation* and jointly build an *open economy*. In addition, the region's economies need to explore new drivers for growth and draw a blueprint for *comprehensive connectivity*.

US acquiescence

In response President of the United States, Barack Obama told the APEC summit: “In the 21st century, the pursuit of economic growth, job creation and trade is not a zero-sum game. One country's prosperity doesn't have to come at the expense of another. “The United States welcomes the rise of a prosperous,

peaceful and stable China. I want to repeat that. We welcome *the rise of a prosperous, peaceful and stable China*. In fact, over recent decades the United States has worked to help integrate China into the global economy -- not only because it's in China's best interest, but because it's in America's best interest, and the world's best interest. We want China to do well. We *compete* for business, but we also seek to *cooperate* on a broad range of shared challenges and shared opportunities. Whether it's stopping the spread of Ebola, or preventing nuclear proliferation, or deepening our clean energy partnership, combating climate change, a leadership role that, as the world's two largest economies and two largest carbon emitters, we have a special responsibility to embrace. *If China and the United States can work together, the world benefits.*"

The 2014 summit of Asia-Pacific leaders endorsed President Xi Jinping's concept for negotiating a vast free trade area in the region, and approved the roadmap for APEC to promote and realize the Free Trade Area of the Asia-Pacific (FTAAP). President Xi said that the support "symbolizes the official launch of the process towards the FTAAP, and called it a "historic" step reflecting the "confidence and commitment of APEC members to promote the integration of the regional economy".

US-India Joint Vision

On January 25, 2015 during US President Barack Obama's India visit on the invitation of Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi, a U.S.-India Joint Strategic Vision for the Asia-Pacific and Indian Ocean Region was issued, which inter alia read as follows:

"India and the United States are important drivers of regional and global growth. From Africa to East Asia, we will build on our partnership to *support sustainable, inclusive development, and increased regional connectivity by collaborating with other interested partners* to address poverty and support broad-based prosperity. To support regional economic integration, we will *promote accelerated infrastructure connectivity and economic development in a manner that links South, Southeast and Central Asia*, including by enhancing energy transmission and encouraging free trade and greater people-to-people linkages." On March 11, 2015 in Kolkata, India, at the "Building Pan-Asian Connectivity" Conference, US Ambassador to India Richard Verma elaborated on that US-India Joint Strategic Vision as briefly quoted below:

Financial inclusion

"In his recent visit here, President Obama commended Prime Minister Modi's *Jan Dhan* (people's capital) *Financial Inclusion* initiative. Prime Minister Modi noted that *financial untouchability* is a scourge on the poor, and that full participation in today's economy requires savings and access to loans and insurance. *Financial exclusion* in any form prevents us from reaching our full economic potential. For the farmer, financial inclusion enhances the ability to address cyclical risks. Inclusive policies can help the farmer address cyclical risks and can help urban migrants start or grow small businesses. At the institutional level, inclusive policies can directly affect economic growth rates and improve financial stability and institutional integrity.

"The Government of India and the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) are finalizing an agreement to establish a public private partnership with key U.S., Indian, and international organizations to support the Government of India's efforts to create an *inclusive digital economy*. Those of you from Kolkata will surely know the impressive work Bandhan Microfinance has done over the past 14 years to promote *financial inclusion based on models pioneered in neighboring Bangladesh*. Bandhan and the Government of India's efforts to bring financial services to those at the bottom of the pyramid not only increase financial inclusivity, they are also examples of the kind of good governance we'll need to consider to increase regional connectivity.

Political roadblocks

“For India, Bangladesh, and other countries in South Asia, domestic political sensitivities, corruption, and bilateral irritants all present roadblocks for better *regional connectivity*. *“Inclusive, open and transparent political systems, with a strong commitment for the rule of law and civic engagement, will help bolster connectivity.* As we talk about financial inclusion we cannot lose sight of the need for political inclusion and to hear from those who may feel excluded or alienated from the political process. Similarly, good economic governance, simpler and more transparent trade and economic policies are also key to expanding trade in the region. This is one of the reasons the U.S. was so supportive of the Trade Facilitation Agreement (TFA) at the WTO. The TFA can break down trade barriers to create new opportunities for developed and developing countries alike. It is estimated to reduce the cost of trade by 10% for developed countries and up to 14% for developing countries. “(Finally), South Asia will not only be one of the regions hit hardest by *climate change*, it will also have to confront significant *migration away from drought impacted regions, away from conflict zones and away from the disruptions caused by severe weather. Higher temperatures, rising sea levels, more intense and frequent cyclonic activity in the Bay of Bengal, coupled with high population density levels will create enormous challenges.* This intersection of climate change, human migration, and governance will present novel challenges for South Asia in the decades to come.”

Keynote: Inclusive growth

Thus, *inclusive growth* has become the keynote of development thinking in dimensions both vertical (by empowerment of the poor) and horizontal (by geographical extension of trade and traffic). Infrastructure building, both physical and institutional, has been going on for the former by various country models developed through the last three decades of the 20th century and accelerated under the impetus of UN millennium development goals. For the latter, China has now taken the lead by its One Belt One Road initiative, and specifically for Asia by founding Asia Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB). Bangladesh features in the vertical dimension of inclusive growth by its Grameen Bank model, and in the horizontal dimension physically by its participation in BCIM-EC route of One Belt One Road development and institutionally by its involvement as a founder-member of AIIB.

On 28 March 2015, the National Development and Reform Commission of China, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of China and the Ministry of Commerce of China jointly released the first edition of Vision and Actions on Jointly Building Silk Road Economic Belt and 21-st Century Maritime Silk Road, in short the One Belt One Road idea of President Xi Jinping as adopted by the Chinese government for Asia’s inclusive growth and connectivity. The Chinese “Vision and Actions” paper inter alia says:

The Belt & Road

“When Chinese President Xi Jinping visited Central Asia and Southeast Asia in September and October of 2013, he raised the initiative of jointly building the Silk Road Economic Belt and the 21st-Century Maritime Silk Road (hereinafter referred to as the Belt and Road), which have attracted close attention from all over the world. At the China-ASEAN Expo in 2013, Chinese Premier Li Keqiang emphasized the need to build the Maritime Silk Road oriented towards ASEAN, and to create strategic propellers for hinterland development. “The Belt and Road Initiative is a systematic project, which should be jointly built through consultation to meet the interests of all, and efforts should be made to integrate the development strategies of the countries along the Belt and Road.

“Complex and profound changes are taking place in the world. The underlying impact of the international financial crisis keeps emerging; the world economy is recovering slowly, and global development is uneven; the international trade and investment landscape and rules for multilateral trade and investment are undergoing major adjustments; and countries still face big challenges to their development. “The Belt and Road Initiative aims to promote the connectivity of Asian, European and African continents and their adjacent seas, establish and strengthen partnerships among the countries along the Belt and Road, set up

all-dimensional, multi-tiered and composite connectivity networks, and realize diversified, independent, balanced and sustainable development in these countries.

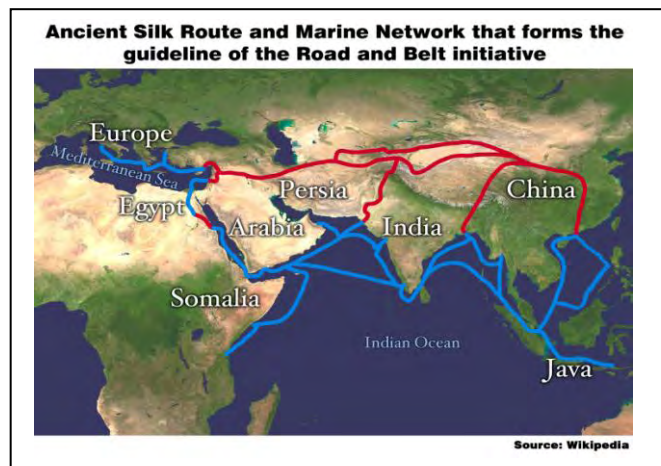
UN principles observed

“The Belt and Road Initiative is in line with the purposes and principles of the UN Charter. It upholds the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence: mutual respect for each other's sovereignty and territorial integrity, mutual non-aggression, mutual non-interference in each other's internal affairs, equality and mutual benefit, and peaceful coexistence. The Initiative is open for cooperation. It covers, but is not limited to, the area of the ancient Silk Road. **It is open to all countries, and international and regional organizations for engagement, so that the results of the concerted efforts will benefit wider areas.** The Initiative is *harmonious and inclusive*. It advocates tolerance among civilizations, respects the paths and modes of development chosen by different countries, and supports *dialogues among different civilizations* on the principles of seeking common ground while shelving differences and drawing on each other's strengths, so that all countries can coexist in peace for common prosperity.

“The Belt and Road Initiative is a way for win-win cooperation that promotes common development and prosperity and a road towards peace and friendship by enhancing mutual understanding and trust, and strengthening all-round exchanges. The Chinese government advocates peace and cooperation, openness and inclusiveness, mutual learning and mutual benefit. It promotes practical cooperation in all fields, and works to build a community of shared interests, destiny and responsibility featuring mutual political trust, economic integration and cultural inclusiveness.

Continents covered

The Belt and Road run through the continents of Asia, Europe and Africa, connecting the vibrant East Asia economic circle at one end and developed European economic circle at the other, and encompassing countries with huge potential for economic development. The Silk Road Economic Belt focuses on bringing together China, Central Asia, Russia and Europe (the Baltic); linking China with the Persian Gulf and the Mediterranean Sea through Central Asia and West Asia; and connecting China with Southeast Asia, South Asia and the Indian Ocean. The 21st-Century Maritime Silk Road is designed to go from China's coast to Europe through the South China Sea and the Indian Ocean in one route, and from China's coast through the South China Sea to the South Pacific in the other.



On land, the Initiative will focus on jointly building a new Eurasian Land Bridge and developing China-Mongolia-Russia, China-Central Asia-West Asia and China-Indochina Peninsula economic corridors by taking advantage of international transport routes, relying on core cities along the Belt and Road and using key economic industrial parks as cooperation platforms. At sea, the Initiative will focus on jointly building smooth, secure and efficient transport routes connecting major sea ports along the Belt and Road. The China-Pakistan Economic Corridor and the Bangladesh-China-India-Myanmar Economic Corridor are closely related to the Belt and Road Initiative, and therefore require closer cooperation and greater progress.

Financial integration

“Financial integration is an important underpinning for implementing the Belt and Road Initiative. We should deepen financial cooperation, and make more efforts in building a currency stability system,

investment and financing system and credit information system in Asia. We should expand the scope and scale of bilateral currency swap and settlement with other countries along the Belt and Road, open and develop the bond market in Asia, make joint efforts to establish the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) and BRICS New Development Bank, conduct negotiation among related parties on establishing Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) financing institution, and set up and put into operation the Silk Road Fund as early as possible.

“We should enhance the role of multilateral cooperation mechanisms, make full use of existing mechanisms such as the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), ASEAN Plus China (10+1), Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC), Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM), Asia Cooperation Dialogue (ACD), Conference on Interaction and Confidence-Building Measures in Asia (CICA), China-Arab States Cooperation Forum (CASC), China-Gulf Cooperation Council Strategic Dialogue, Greater Mekong Sub-region (GMS) Economic Cooperation, and Central Asia Regional Economic Cooperation (CAREC) to strengthen communication with relevant countries, and attract more countries and regions to participate in the Belt and Road Initiative.

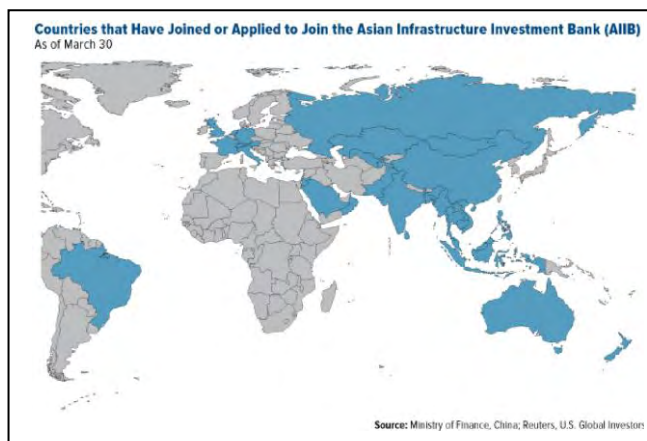
Equal-footed process

“Though proposed by China, the Belt and Road Initiative is a common aspiration of all countries along their routes. China is ready to conduct equal-footed consultation with all countries along the Belt and Road to seize the opportunity provided by the Initiative, promote opening-up, communication and integration among countries in a larger scope, with higher standards and at deeper levels, while giving consideration to the interests and aspirations of all parties. The development of **the Belt and Road is open and inclusive**. *“China will work with countries along the Belt and Road to steadily advance demonstration projects, jointly identify programs that accommodate bilateral and multilateral interests, and accelerate the launching of programs that are agreed upon by parties and ready for implementation, so as to ensure early harvest. “As long as all countries along the Belt and Road make concerted efforts to pursue our common goal, there will be bright prospects for the Silk Road Economic Belt and the 21st-Century Maritime Silk Road, and the people of countries along the Belt and Road can all benefit from this Initiative.”*

Apart from the Belt and Road physical infrastructure, for institutionalisation process China’s Boao Forum for Asia Annual Conference 2015 was held in Boao, Hainan Province of China from March 26 to 29 under the theme of Asia’s New Future: Towards a Community of Common Destiny. Over 70 official events in macro-economy, regional collaboration, industrial transformation, technical innovation, political security, people’s livelihood and other fields were on the agenda.

BFA 2015 conference

Chinese President Xi Jinping attended the opening ceremony of the BFA 2015 meet, and delivered a keynote speech. Armenian President Serzh Sargsyan, Austrian President Heinz Fischer, Indonesian President Joko Widodo, Nepalese President Ram Baran Yadav, Sri Lankan President Maithripala Sirisena, Ugandan President Yoweri Museveni, Zambian President Edgar Lungu, Governor General of Australia Peter Cosgrove, Kazakhstan’s Prime Minister Karim Massimov, Malaysian Prime Minister Najib Razak, Dutch Prime Minister Mark Rutte, Qatari Prime Minister Abdullah Bin Nasser Bin Khalifa Al-Thani, Swedish Prime Minister Stefan Löfven,



First Deputy Prime Minister of Russia Igor Shuvalov, Thai Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Tanasak Patimapragorn and other foreign leaders including former Minister Syed Abul Hossain from Bangladesh attended the annual conference upon invitation.

The conference steamed up enthusiasm for the building of the Silk Road Economic Belt and the 21st Century Maritime Silk Road to enhance Asian access to the rest of the world, and also dwelt on the construction of the Asian Infrastructure and Investment Bank as well as the BRICS Development Bank. Both are expected to be completed by the end of this year and both organizations are set to commence lending operations this year. The AIIB is designed to cooperate with existing international economic organizations such as the International Monetary Fund and the Asian Development Bank, and will not aspire to replace any of them.

Spillover growth & knowledge-base

The AIIB and Silk Road Fund are designed to bring China's development fruits to its neighboring countries and regions by creating a new cooperation agreement in the area. The "One Belt, One Road" initiatives have the same aim. This year the global economy is projected to face the most complicated and challenging situation since the 2008 global financial crisis, as the major economies have announced contrary monetary policies and the oil price is declining. Emerging markets will have more difficulties in economic development than before. The Belt and Road Initiative may seek to offset such adversities by trade regionalism of emerging markets.

For the horizontal plane of *inclusive growth*, Boao Forum for Asia released three reports, including Boao Forum for Asia Progress of Asian Economic Integration Annual Report 2015, Boao Forum for Asia Asian Competitiveness Annual Report 2015 and Boao Forum for Asia Development of Emerging Economies Annual Report 2015. Boao Review, the official magazine of Boao Forum for Asia, launched a sub-forum titled "*Inclusive Finance: New Models of Rural Banking*" on March 26. The Report on Rural Finance Development 2015 was released at the sub-forum. Moreover, the Report on Internet Finance 2015 was released at the sub-forum "Internet Banking: P2P Self-Discipline & Regulation", which was also held on March 26.

Parallel initiatives

Some parallel initiatives have been ongoing through the Cold War phase of post World War 2 order. The United Nations Economic and Social Commission for the Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) undertook the first initiative of pan-Asian connectivity. ESCAP undertook planning and negotiations for the Asian Highway network as a regional transport cooperation initiative aimed at enhancing the efficiency and development of the road infrastructure in Asia, supporting the development of Euro-Asia transport linkages and improving connectivity for landlocked countries, beginning in 1959. The Asian Highway Route Map covered a network of 141,000 kilometers of standardized roadways crisscrossing 32 Asian countries with linkages to Europe. During the first phase of the project (1960-1970) considerable progress was achieved, however, progress slowed down when financial assistance was suspended in 1975.



Entering into the 1980s and 1990s, regional political and economic changes spurred new momentum for the Asian Highway Project. It became one of the three pillars of Asian Land Transport Infrastructure Development (ALTID) project, endorsed by ESCAP Commission at its forty-eight session in 1992, comprising Asian Highway, Trans-Asian Railway and facilitation of land transport projects.

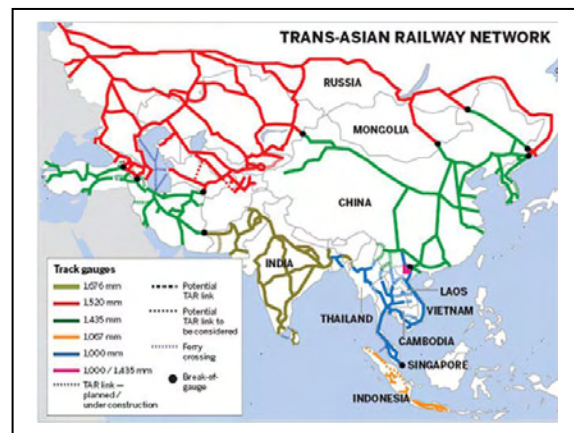
Asian Highway agreement

The Intergovernmental Agreement on the Asian Highway Network, adopted on 18 November 2003 by an intergovernmental meeting held in Bangkok, was open for signature in April 2004 in Shanghai and entered into force on 4 July 2005. A total of US\$26 billion has already been invested in the improvement and upgrading of the Asian Highway network. There is still a shortfall of US\$18 billion. UNESCAP secretariat is now working with its member countries to identify financial sources for the development of the network to improve their road transport capacity and efficiency. In January 21-22, 2015, the UNESCAP held a convention of the Asia-Pacific Forum on Public-Private Partnerships for Transport Infrastructure Development.

This regional meeting in Bangkok, Thailand addressed the issue of the substantial and growing demand for transport infrastructure, services and maintenance in the region that is constrained by limited budgets and borrowing capacity. It was designed to exchange information and share experiences on how to involve efficiently the private sector in the financing and development of transport infrastructure, services and maintenance.

Trans-Asian Railway

ESCAP has also simultaneously pursued planning and negotiations for a Trans-Asian Railway Network. THE intergovernmental agreement on Trans-Asian Railway (TAR) came into force on 11 June 2009. The agreement had come into effect ninety days after China has ratified the treaty as its eighth party in March, 2009. By the end of 2008, twenty two countries signed the agreement and seven have become parties namely, Cambodia, India, Mongolia, Republic of Korea, Russian Federation, Tajikistan and Thailand. Initiated in the '60s, the TAR comprises 114,000 km of rail routes of international importance for rail transport services for goods and passengers within the ESCAP region and between Asia and Europe. The plan has sometimes been called the "Iron Silk Road".



While many governments planned to invest in road construction to facilitate their growing cities and populations, the Asian Railways network would be a better mode of transportation which could help reduce the negative environmental impact of road vehicles and concern over energy-dependency during periods of oil price fluctuations. With the Inter-governmental Agreement on the Asian Highway Network already in place, the two accords are expected to help in realising an international integrated inter-state modal transport and logistics system for the region. The agreement also identifies stations of international importance most of which are located inland and have similar functions to that of seaports. These so-called "dry ports" will act as consolidation and distribution centers in the hinterland, creating new opportunities for growth and benefits of economic and social development to a wider population.

In May 2007, the Bangladesh caretaker government approved the proposal to join the Trans-Asian Railway Network (TAR), aiming to expand its rail communications with other Asian countries, and subsequently with Europe in not-to-distant future. In November of that year, Bangladesh signed the TAR.

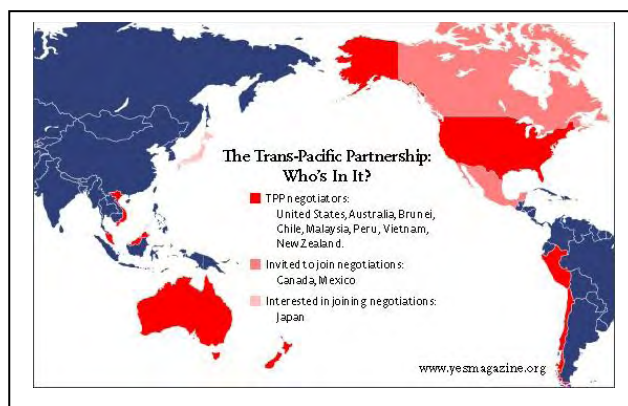
Post Cold War Initiatives

A post Cold War initiative by the United States was undertaken focusing on South Caucasus and Central Asia as energy hub and bridge between Asia and Europe. The Silk Road Strategic Act of 1999 passed by the US Congress amended the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961 to target assistance to support the economic and political independence of the countries of the South Caucasus and Central Asia. The term

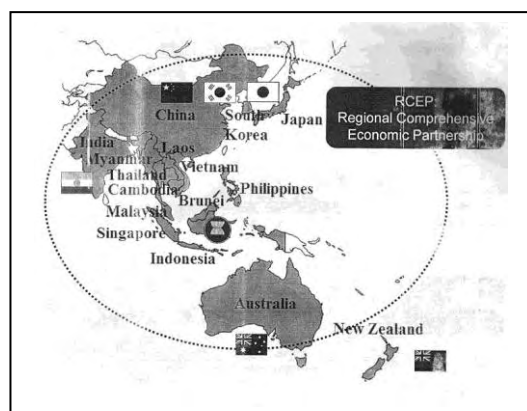
‘countries of the South Caucasus and Central Asia’ included Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan. The policy parameters for the strategy was essentially directed “to assist in the development of the infrastructure necessary for communications, transportation, education, health, and energy and trade on an East-West axis in order to build strong international relations and commerce between those countries and the stable, democratic, and market-oriented countries of the Euro-Atlantic Community”. Adversities in Ukraine after Georgia on one end and in Afghanistan on the other has largely frustrated that initiative. The Sanghai Cooperation Organisation filled up the gap of US default in the region.

Trans-Pacific Partnership

The focus of engagement of world powers gradually shifted from Central Asia to East Asia through the first decade of this century. The US also began to lean on its pivot to Asia more than its Euro-Atlantic moorings. In 2005, in the Asia-Pacific matrix, a Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) was floated as a proposed regional regulatory and investment treaty. As of 2014, twelve countries throughout the Asia-Pacific region participated in negotiations on the TPP: Australia, Brunei, Canada, Chile, Japan, Malaysia, Mexico, New Zealand, Peru, Singapore, the United States, and Vietnam.



The Trans-Pacific Strategic Partnership Agreement (TPSEP or P4) set the goal of wrapping up negotiations in 2012, but contentious issues such as agriculture, intellectual property, and services and investments could not be resolved, the last round meeting having been held in Ottawa in July 2014. Some global health professionals, internet freedom activists, environmentalists, organised labour, advocacy groups, and elected officials have criticised and protested the negotiations, in large part because of the proceedings' secrecy, and controversial clauses in drafts leaked. They denounced TPP negotiations as being about more than “free trade,” in reality “a stealthy, slow-motion corporate coup d’etat, formalizing and locking in corporate rule over most aspects of our lives.” The Obama administration, however, continues to pursue it as a primary goal of its trade agenda.



In East Asia, advanced national economies of China, Japan and South Korea evolved as and benefited by being giant trading partners, trade among the three totalling US\$ 690 billion by 2011. Negotiations for China-Japan-South Korea Free Trade Agreement began in 2012. Four round of talks took place upto March 2014. Meanwhile in ASEAN+3 summit in November, 2011, it was revealed that a joint proposal by China and Japan for trade regionalism to fend against the aftermath of global financial crisis, 2008-09, by an “initiative on Speeding up the Establishment of an East Asia Free Trade Area (EAFTA) and Comprehensive Economic Partnership in East Asia (CEPEA)” has been adopted. ASEAN expanded the last initiative further to

include Australia, New Zealand and India, and discuss economic integration under a mega economic treaty styled as Regional Comprehensive Economic Treaty (RCEP). RCEP was announced in November 2012 by ASEAN, and the 16 countries had several meetings. They plan to conclude the negotiation by 2015, and aim to make rules and regulations that is friendly to international supply chain by synchronizing procedures, including preferences to be accorded to less developed countries in the region.

Refocus on Bay of Bengal

It is in this positive context overriding fluidity in world order and regional centrifuge of historical conflicts as well as clashes of overlapping geopolitical and economic interests, that we may discuss the matrix of Bay of Bengal which offers the lifeline of peace and prosperity for Bangladesh people.

In the seventeenth century, European maritime powers fought naval battles in the Bay of Bengal for dominance and access to Suba Bangla, the richest province of Mughal India turned virtually independent tributary under the Nawabs of Murshidabad. The riches of these parts came not from gems and precious stones or metals, but from abundant agro-industrial production of tradable commodities, notably rice, milk, and cotton or silk muslin.

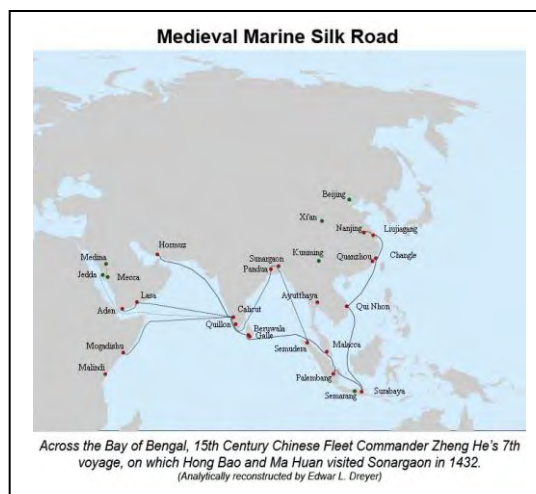
The foundation of such domestic production capacity was laid by three centuries, 14th to 16th, of deltaic expansion of settlement and cultivation under Sufi leadership through the independent Bengal Sultanate period and the succeeding Bhuiyans until Delhi's Mughal Emperor Akbar's conquest. After the British conquest in the eighteenth century, though progressively impoverished by colonial exploitation, Bengal continued to be the richest hub of production, trade and industry in South Asia.

After decolonisation and during the Cold War, Bay of Bengal trade was left far behind by shift of financial and political power towards the other side of the Indian Ocean close to the strategic sea-routes extending from the oil-hub of Arabian Sea to the East Asian focus of growth. By the end of the first decade of the twenty-first century, USA, the sole superpower leading the globalisation process and the attrition of global war on terror, began to come to terms, however reluctantly and waywardly, with the realities of multipolarity of new world order. Under the impetus of Asian growth and between two sub-regions of fast growth, eastern South Asia and western China plus north western belt of ASEAN, Bay of Bengal trade is coming into focus again, and so is independent Bangladesh, resource-poor but with abundance of manpower, at the apex of the Bay and along the footsteps of the Himalayas.

China relocation trade

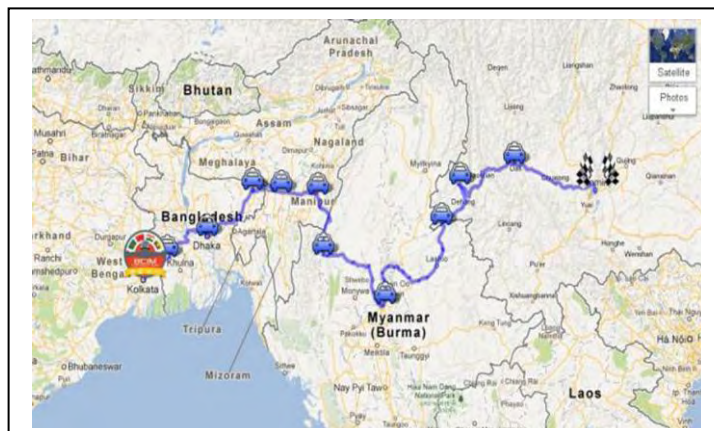
American Professor Gus Papanek noted in a speech in Dhaka in 2010 that: "Bangladesh has a unique opportunity within the next year and a half or two years because it has the possibility of taking over part of the world market that China is going to abandon." Former World Bank Chief Economist, Justin Li-fu Lin noted in several articles and speeches that "industrial upgrading has increased wages and is causing China to graduate from labour-intensive to more capital and technology-intensive industries. These industries will shed labour and create huge opportunities for lower wage countries to start a phase of labour-intensive industrialisation. This process, called the Leading Dragon Phenomenon, offers an unprecedented opportunity to ... (developing countries) ... where the industrial sector is underdeveloped and investment capital and entrepreneurial skills are leading constraints to manufacturing."

Analyst Ifty Islam explained in an article published in Dhaka Tribune on 10 December, 2014 that the China relocation trade will not be driven by China alone. Indeed, counter-intuitively, China may play a lesser role than countries such as Japan, South Korea and Taiwan. The reason for this is that companies from these three countries, and to a lesser extent those from the US and EU, have established lower cost factories in China in the past two decades. Their re-appraisal of the attractiveness of those destinations as a result of higher wages will drive both the movement of existing facilities from China as well as the re-direction of future FDI.



APEC roadmap & Bangladesh

Bangladesh has been brought directly under the orbit of the “One Belt and One Road” vision of President Xi Jinping and in consequence under the APEC roadmap by Yunnan China’s perseverance in pursuing since 1999 the revival of the ancient Southern Silk Road by way of sub-regional connectivity and Trade Cooperation between China, Myanmar, India and Bangladesh. It has now got fruition in the signing of the BCIM-EC agreement by all the four governments. In addition to the Kolkata (India) to Kunming (China) route of BCIM-EC crossing



Dhaka (Bangladesh), reentering India to cross Meghalaya, Assam and Manipur, and then crossing Myanmar to reach Yunnan China, Bangladesh has been pursuing a direct route from Chittagong to Kunming via Myanmar to Kunming, with connecting routes both to the Seven Sister States of Indian northeast and to West Bengal, Bhutan and Nepal, to link up sea-route access to Chittagong port and Cox’s Bazar deep sea ports under development process. Indeed the BCIM alternative route for Chittagong-Kunming connectivity is also included as a side route in Asian Highway network.

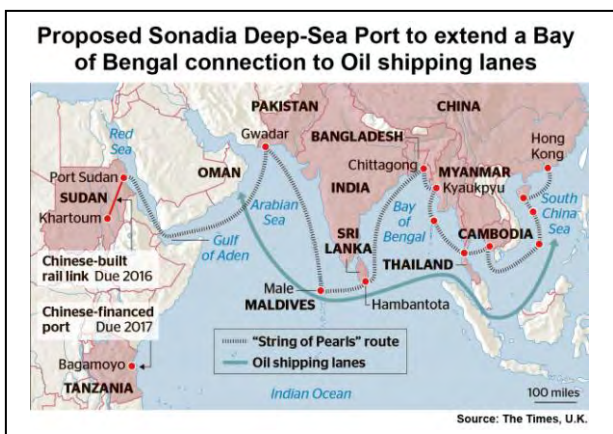
Japan’s Big-B idea



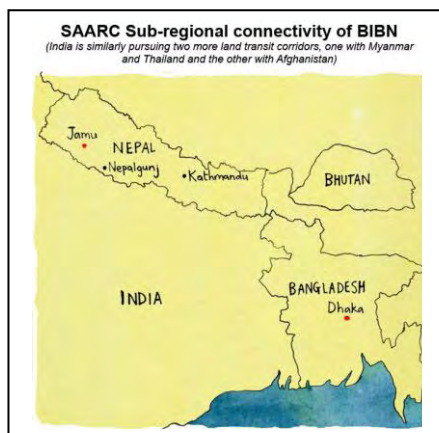
Japan is also focusing attention on the Bay of Bengal region by its concept and overseas aid allocation for proposed Bay of Bengal Industrial Growth Belt or “The Big-B” initiative. For Bangladesh, the most significant development design that Japan’s Prime Minister Abe has offered in May 2014, along with other possible projects and \$5 billion loan commitment over the years, is the Chittagong-Cox’s Bazar Area Development Comprehensive Support under Private-Public Partnership (PPP), to materialise an energy hub concept and a Further “Deep Sea Port Study in Matarbari Expansion and Sonadia Environment, around the proposed Coal Transshipment Terminal

at Matarbari, connectivity of which could fit into the Maritime Silk Road initiative led by China.

While Japan is following up the coal terminal plus deep sea port facilities in Matarbari, a parallel potent sea-route connectivity at the apex of the Bay of Bengal has been prospectively set by China’s offer, (frozen for the time being, according to the Chinese Ambassador in Bangladesh, to await Matarbari Deep Sea Port development capacity), to build Sonadia deep-sea port, which some Western strategists view as part of China’s safer oil shipping lane build-up scheme under a “String of Pearls” route.



India's BIBN Scheme



Likewise in New Delhi, a Joint Working Group (JWG) meeting in January 30-31 on Sub-Regional Cooperation between Bangladesh, Bhutan, India and Nepal (BBIN) agreed on the need for power trade and inter-grid connectivity between the four countries. It further agreed for joint efforts to explore harnessing of water resources including hydropower and also power from other sources available in the sub-region. It was also agreed to exchange lists of potential future hydropower and power projects to be undertaken jointly involving at least three countries on equitable basis, Bangladesh qualifying as a common factor. Early March, transport officials of the BBIN met to chalk out for a ministerial meeting to follow in April a scheme for 28 road projects with an estimated cost of \$8 billion for better connectivity, and for an interim arrangement between the four countries titled “Motor

Vehicles Agreement for the Regulation of Passenger, Personal, and Cargo Vehicular Traffic between Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, and Nepal (BBIN)” or the MVA agreement. In the eventuality that future SAARC conclaves fail to reach conclusive ends, BBIN countries would have already agreed to work on a draft framework agreement for inter-nation cooperation on roads and transportation. The land-connectivity of BIBN may be designed to seek shortest route of oceanic access through the Mangla port of Khulna district and proposed Baira port of Patuakhali district in Southwest Bangladesh.

Ideal hub for connectivity

On 10 March, 2015 at the “building Pan-Asian Connectivity Conference” in Kolkata, India, Neil Kromash, deputy director, Office of South Asian Regional Affairs, US State Department pointed out: “Close to Kolkata, Bangladesh – the world’s seventh most populous country – is sometimes overlooked in the discussion about regional connectivity but it shouldn’t be. Rich in natural resources and strategically situated at the intersection of China, South Asia, Southeast Asia, and the Indian Ocean, Bangladesh enjoys advantageous geography that makes it an ideal hub for connectivity. Despite ongoing political turmoil there, we continue to seek areas where we can strengthen our bilateral relationship with Bangladesh, and regional economic cooperation remains high on the list.”

The question remains, whether the civil society activists and political leaders of Bangladesh, Myanmar and northeast India may begin looking to the future setting aside troubling hangovers from the past, be able to overcome “domestic political sensitivities, corruption and bilateral irritants”, and adopt “inclusive, open and transparent political systems”, committed to rule of law and genuine accountability that will unleash productivity at all levels and help deliver goods and services to all people within and across borders, thereby securing peace, prosperity and well-being of the peoples of the region.

Senior journalist, socio-political activist and cultural veteran of state honour Ekushe Padak distinction.

CULTURAL RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN BANGLADESH-INDIA

Rezwana Choudhury Bannya



In the last several years the issue of Indo-Bangla relations has increasingly been part of our modern political discourse. This is an age-old and historical discussion that spans centuries and sometimes arises against the backdrop of certain geographical and political divisions, but continues to be relevant today because of the long standing and shared values, traditions, language, arts and culture between the two nations of Bangladesh and India, and of course especially between Bangladesh and West Bengal.

Following the end of the British Raj in 1947 and the creation of India and Pakistan, Bengal was split apart into West Bengal and Bangladesh (then East Pakistan). Both territories immediately became separate and distinct cultural enclaves within the boundaries of their two newly formed nation states, each existing as one part of a larger and more varied cultural tapestry. In the years following partition, Bangladesh suffered from political and cultural oppression, including the imposition of a non-native and inauthentic culture upon its people, facing repeated and deliberate attempts to stifle native Bangla arts, culture, and literature. These attempts were of course futile, as evidenced throughout the liberation war of 1971 and when Bangladesh finally rose as an independent nation, it was the shared art and culture that formed the strongest link in Bangladesh's relationship with India.

While West Bengal and Bangladesh share a common cultural bond and retain more cultural similarities than differences, the governments of both India and Bangladesh have been taking substantial efforts to create more cultural connections and bridges between the two nations. As an artist and musician, I have some opinions on this matter. The flow of shared art, culture, and literature between the two Bengals is almost instinctive and effortless.

However there exists a gap of knowledge and understanding of Bengali culture and art in the other states of India, which extends to their own West Bengal as well as Bangladesh. I believe the reason lies in lack of cultural exchange and exposure of Bangladeshi art, music, literature and craftsmanship.

The people of the subcontinent share the same societal values and norms, comparable food culture, and a history. In spite of such strong ties, political differences come in the way of communication and bonding at the individual level and keep people isolated from each other. Fostered and strengthened cultural relationships have the potential to become strong instruments that can prove valuable in times of geopolitical crisis.

To strengthen the cultural exchange and relationship between the two countries, there needs to be more social exchange and relationship building, and the effort should begin with children. There should be more educational exchange programs, study tours, field trips and pen pal friendship programs that will enable children and youth from both countries to learn about each other and about their similarities and shared history. Efforts like semesters abroad should be encouraged for university students so as to encourage cross-learning between our societies, economies, and cultures.

Art and culture can have some strong economic impact too. The equal exchange and flow of films, television, advertisements, sports, literature, and music can play a strong role in bolstering cultural relationships between the two countries that will eventually lead to better overall relationship. However, it is best to keep political interference to a minimum in the conversation of increased cultural relationship and interchange. Individual efforts should surpass political efforts for unbiased and enduring relationship building.

Professor and Chairperson, Department of Dance, University of Dhaka & Director and Principal, Shurer Dhara, Lalmatia, Dhaka.

Emerging Strategic Trends in East Asia

Prof. Ataur Rahman



There is little doubt that Asia – stretching from the Eurasian landmass to the maritime reaches of Australia and the South Pacific – is experiencing a major shift in the global balance of power. Expressions like the ‘Indo-Pacific’ and ‘Asia-Pacific’, contested they maybe, capture East Asia’s expanse and dynamism. The rise of China along with the increasing global footprint of US, Russia, India, and the ASEAN states’ soaring economies have made East Asia the powerhouse and centre of gravity in the current global order. Changes are happening not only in geo-political landscape but also in the mindset of the people who are pushing for development, reforms and accountability. The global power shifts being witnessed is also giving rise to confrontation as well as convergence as states compete. China is an important piece of the puzzle and its rise is a defining line of the changing

landscape. How will China define its national interest in the future vis-à-vis other powers? Will it pursue an assertive, even aggressive policy in Asia to back up its territorial claims? Or will China, assured of its great power status, practice moderation and restraint? Importantly, how should US, Japan and other key states respond to China’s continuous rise and influence – should the response be as a strategic competitor with a policy of confrontation or a containment approach through active cooperation?

Economic Shift

The global policy community sees East Asia as a prosperous and stable region, an engine of economic growth, and the locus of business opportunities. The region’s development began with Japan’s “economic miracle” of the 1960s and 1970s, which was followed by rapid growth in South Korea, Taiwan, Hong Kong, and Singapore in the 1980s, China in the 1990s, and India in the 2000s. Members of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), such as Indonesia, Malaysia, and the Philippines, have also recently been growing steadily. The latest business “frontier” in Southeast Asia—for developed economies like Japan, the United States, and the European Union—is Myanmar under President Thein Sein’s initiative for democratization and market reform. East Asia’s economies are increasingly vital to each other and to the world with both the US and Europe continuing to post low GDP growth.

The economic shift is shaping two different approaches to trade liberalization in Asia. One paved by the ASEAN-led Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) and the other by the US-led Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) and it has to be seen how these approaches will determine the economic choices in the coming years. While, at one level, certain investment and trade barriers will continue to hinder business in Asia, at another, poverty eradication will have to remain an essence of economic growth for Asian countries. The economies in Asia have to continuously grow fast along with being sustainable and inclusive. Other challenges that equally impact the economy are an increased number of natural disasters that interrupt the supply chain, security concerns emanating from terrorism and cyber security, where hacking, espionage and lack of privacy fuel concerns for companies as well as politicians and governments. Indeed, the whole of Asia is on the threshold of change led by East Asia notwithstanding the known and unknown; opportunities and uncertainties abound.

It is in the above context, the East Asia is said to be entering Geo-energy era in which questions of energy security (security of demand and security of supply) will condition both inter-state relations and may lead to re-configuration of world power hierarchy. Energy security will play decisive role in creating conflict and co-operation situations. The Country which holds paramount position in the Indian Ocean is likely to

control the flow of energy not only to the East Asia, the future center of the world economic power, but also to other regions.

Security anxieties

From a strategic grand view, the balance of power is uncertain in East Asia. A sizeable US military presence continues, and the Obama Administration policy involves strengthening US military alliance and strategic partnerships and simultaneously repositioning forces. China is far from assured that the ‘rebalancing’ is not directed towards it thus opening up the region to power play and rivalry in the East China Sea and South China Sea. A resultant increase in military expenditure and modernization and a thrust towards new technologies spur many countries. The numerous stress-lines and fault-lines expose East Asia to many potential flash-points. Unresolved territorial issues stand between India and China, Vietnam and China, China and Russia, Russia and Japan. North Korea and Taiwan may trigger-off unmanageable crises. The China-Japan rivalry reveals dangerous chauvinism. At the same time, the two largest populated countries – China and India with surging need for energy and raw materials for their 2.5 billion people creates new areas of resource friction.

Currently, USA, the world’s mightiest naval power is dominating the region while the regional states, especially China, is trying to balance US power in the region in order to protect its interests with regard to its growing economy and energy needs. The question why it is so important to dominate the Indian Ocean can also be answered by highlighting the fact that oil is shipped from the Persian Gulf to almost entire world via the Indian Ocean, and through the Straits of Malacca to China, Korea, and Japan. If another power holds the lifeline, oil-importing countries will suffer severe blows. Because the U.S. strategy is to hold sway over the oil route, the US has in recent years showered attentions on India, Vietnam, and Singapore, all of which lie on that route.

Based on the premise that preventing wars is as important as winning wars, this new U.S. strategy, they explain, embodies a historic reassessment of the international system and how the United States can best pursue its interests in cooperation with other nations. Despite recent turbulence in U.S.-China military relations, substantial shared interests could enable extensive U.S.-China maritime security cooperation, as they attempt to reach an understanding of "competitive coexistence." But for professionals to structure cooperation, they warn, Washington and Beijing must create sufficient political and institutional space. In 2009 Barack Obama began his presidency with the “audacity of hope” that China would become a responsible stakeholder, cooperating with the United States on various global issues from climate change to post-Lehman financial and economic crisis management through the framework of a US-China “Group of Two.” By the following year, though, China’s assertiveness on territorial issues in the South and East China Sea and the harsh reaction to US arms sales to Taiwan dampened US optimism regarding China as a global partner. Despite mounting frustration, the Obama administration patiently maintained close bilateral communication, such as through the US-China Strategic and Economic Dialogue, as part of its engagement policy toward China.

China’s Dreams and Ambitions

Chinese President Xi Jinping has vowed to achieve the “Chinese Dream” of great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation. This is a vague slogan with many connotations, and has invited myriad interpretations. Xi himself ascribes four meanings to the slogan: a strong China, a civilized China, a harmonious China, and a beautiful China. He has also vowed to achieve the “two 100s”: a moderately well-off society by 2020—the 100th anniversary of the Chinese Communist Party—and a fully developed nation by 2049—the 100th anniversary of the People’s Republic. Although the slogan does not contain any aggressive elements, countries embroiled in territorial disputes with China in the South China Sea are worried that they may be trampled upon as China forges ahead toward its dream.

For example, Vietnamese scholar Nguyen Hung Son points out that China’s neighbors are wondering whether Xi’s “Chinese Dream” can really coexist with their own. China has grown very assertive in

territorial disputes with its neighbors in the South China Sea. In addition, China does not respect many international rules, such as the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) and the Declaration of Conduct (DOC) over the South China Sea, although China is formally committed to them. Nguyen states that China pursued a moderate and cooperative approach to these issues in the past, but that its attitude has changed as a result, he believes, of the relative decline of US strength and Japanese economic power.

Japan, too, shares such worries, owing to tensions over the Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands in the East China Sea, as does the United States and the European Union. Chinese assertiveness is a concern not just for the regional order but for international rule-making in the East Asian region, where the West has extensive business and economic interests. In this context, the Obama administration's rebalance toward Asia is resisted by China and warmly welcomed by its worried neighbors. At the same time, Japan and other US allies and friends are aware of the United States' limited financial resources and political capital, and they grew concerned when Washington began seriously contemplating intervening militarily in Syria to oppose the Bashar al-Assad regime's use of chemical weapons. However, it would not be constructive for East Asian nations to restlessly fret over the fluctuating balance of power between the United States and China. It is not the US goal to antagonize China through containment or encirclement, nor would that be in the interest of Japan or the EU. On the other hand, US power is still regarded as an effective tool in inducing China to be a more cooperative player in regional rule-making and in hedging against China's arbitrary exercise of power against asymmetrically smaller neighbors.

Japan's New Approach

For Japan, stability in the South China Sea and the ASEAN region is critically important for its own security and prosperity. Japan is still heavily dependent on the sea lane from the Gulf region through the Strait of Malacca and the South China Sea to the East China Sea for imports of energy resources critical to its economic survival. In the past, Japan's vital interests were protected by the US military presence. Although this fact has not changed, Japan has gradually begun to cooperate more fully with US and regional efforts to stabilize the Southeast Asian region, which can be a choke point in the energy flow to Japan and where countries share Japan's interests in tempering China's territorial aggressiveness. Japan plans to provide capacity building to Southeast Asian countries suffering from a wide maritime capability gap with China, which has rapidly increased the number of patrol ships, surveillance vessels and aircraft, submarines, and fifth generation jet fighters.

In addition, Japan is helping to directly strengthen regional maritime security capabilities by providing patrol vessels to Southeast Asian countries. In December 2011, the Noda administration eased Japan's self-imposed restrictions on weapons exports. Japan is still committed to not exporting weapons to other countries, although exceptions have been made in the past for Japan's alliance partner, the United States. Now, exceptions are being made in cases that contribute to peace and advance international cooperation. Japan is planning to provide the Philippines with patrol vessels for its coast guard and maritime communication systems using its official development assistance (ODA) budget in the coming years. Contributing to ASEAN's capacity building in such a manner is a new approach for Japan. Importantly, Japan's new approach is coordinated with US policy in Asia. At the two-plus-two meeting in April 2012, Japanese and US foreign and defense ministers agreed on joint cooperation to assist other Asian countries' security efforts. Although China may be irritated by such cooperation, it is an important step toward creating a stable regional balance by enhancing the security capacity of the region's states.

The Challenge of Myanmar

The situation in Myanmar is important for developments that could influence regional rule making over the long term. Its political and economic structures are far from stable, however, and there is no guarantee that the process of democratization advanced by President Thein Sein will not be reversed. The initial challenge will be whether Myanmar can amend its constitution, under which the military is granted 25 percent of all parliamentary seats and three important ministers—the internal minister, border

management minister, and defense minister—are appointed by the supreme commander of the national military. Since a constitutional amendment requires the approval of a 75 percent-plus-one-seat majority in both houses of parliament, it remains a high hurdle. Opposition leader Aung San Suu Kyi is now cooperating with the Thein Sein government in seeking an amendment. One litmus test will be how steadily democratization proceeds in the next election, scheduled for late 2015. A critical task for the international community regarding Myanmar will be to share its notions about and technical knowledge of establishing a healthy civilian-military relationship through the process of democratization and economic development. The second challenge will be to address the ethnic conflict from which Myanmar is still suffering, even after 25 ethnic groups signed a ceasefire agreement with the military government in 2007. The Karen and Shan (Myanmar National Democratic Alliance Army) continue to fight the central government in the east of the country. Small armed ethnic Rohingya groups are active in the west. Ethnic conflicts are a grave matter that could derail Myanmar's economic and democratic development. Economic assistance, combined with reconciliation support, from the international community will be a critical facilitator.

Key Role of Leadership

The geopolitical future, at this critical time of change in East Asia, will depend on the capacity of leaders to address a range of highly interrelated global issues. This range runs the gamut from poverty reduction and economic growth and development on the potential upside to international crime, narcotics, and failed and failing states on the downside. As daunting as these elements are, perhaps the biggest challenge to national governments is to address them in a whole-of-government fashion. Because they are so interlocked, it follows that to be effective, governments must promote a high level of institutional cooperation across structures that in many cases are still segmented, stove-piped, and driven by parochial interests and objectives. In the face of sweeping geopolitical change, government leaders need to reconfigure their approaches to dealing with the formidable array of issues that currently exist and that will arise in the future. Increasingly, strategic leaders with genuine foresight and vision are embattled by organizations that are merely tactical in orientation. Many of the organizations they lead—ranging from governments to corporations to NGOs to academic groups—need to be geared more to the future than the present. There is an inevitable need for change in attitudes and practices, and new cultures of cooperation to be evolved that are deeply adaptable to change. The challenges to leaders of the region are compounded by the scope, scale, and speed of the profound transformational change at work across the world. Relevance and trust are both necessary pre-conditions of strategic leadership at this time of change in East Asia. Certainly, leaders must be relevant to be effective in addressing the strategic issues that confront them.

The writer is currently President of Bangladesh Political Science Association & Chairman, Initiative for Strategic & Maritime Studies.

Revisiting Atish Dipankar Srigana, the Greatest Scholar of the Millennium

Lt Gen Mahbubur Rahman (Retd)

Former Chief of Army Staff



In the posh diplomatic area at Baridhara of Dhaka City many important foreign embassies are located. Chinese Embassy, the China House in Bangladesh is also located here. The Embassy is indeed a magnificent building complex, adorned with traditional Chinese architecture. The Ambassador's residence is inside the large embassy complex. I had many opportunities to visit his Excellency, the Ambassador's elegant residence. As one enters the house he just cannot miss looking at a large picture nicely framed and hung on the wall against the entrance door. It is a portrait of a Buddhist monk wearing an ornamentally stitched saffron robe with his head covered down to the ear-lobes with a white cap. The monk is in deep

meditation solemnly sitting on his pulpit with eyes closed.

The portrait is of a man of great wisdom and divine learning, the most illuminating man of the millennium. He is Atish Dipankar Srigana, the son of ancient Bengal, historically known all over Asia as the Eye of the East. He is a symbol of Bangladesh-China relation who built the strong edifice of friendship of Himalayan height between the two countries and two peoples and remains ever immortal. Eternal glory to Atish.

Thirty six years ago on 23rd June, 1978 the holy relics, the sacred ashes of the mortal remains of ever immortal Atish Dipankar Srigana, was handed over by China to Bangladesh. Atish, as the name given by Tibetans more than a thousand years ago, meaning greatest scholar, man of supreme knowledge and wisdom, Atish Dipankar is indeed the loftiest preacher of love and happiness, purity and peace, kindness and humility, benevolence and humanity. People believed Atish to be Lord Buddha incarnated. He was most revered, most respected in the whole of the region of South Asia, Southeast Asia and China, may the whole of Asia.

We are proud Atish is the son of our soil, the son of Bengal. He was born beyond a millennium ago, during the tenth century in 980 A.D. at a village named Bojrojojini of Bikrampur (present Munshigonj) very near to Dhaka. Being a prince of a kingly family he, in pursuit of knowledge and religious wisdom, left home and accepted monkhood. He travelled to all the big religious universities (Bihars) of the region and also travelled as far as Subarana Dwip of Malaya and Indonesia. He travelled to Srilanka and Nepal. He was titled, the greatest scholar on Buddhism of the time. It was then the golden period of Pala dynasty of Bengal and Pala king Mohipala the First, made him the Chancellor of the greatest university, Mohabihar of Vickramshila. From there on repeated invitations from Tibet Lama King Chang Chub he travelled to Tibet.

Last and a long period of his life was spent in Tibet. He preached Buddhism, brought purity and morality to the Tibetan Society. He was taken as a symbol of God. The successive Lamas of Tibet claimed themselves the disciples and descendents of Dipankar. He earned hearts and souls of the Tibet people. He sacrificed everything for them. He wrote, translated, compiled more than 200 books in Tibetan language. His Sanskrit and Bengali writings are no more available. But his writings in Tibetan language are still well preserved. He lived 13 long years in Tibet and at the age of 73 died at a village named Lethan near Lasha in 1053 A.D.

Dr. Dinesh Chandra Sen, the 19th Century's renowned historian and writer Professor of Calcutta University about Atish Dipankar wrote, "here is a Bengali from East Bengal who at that time earned fame

and eminence beyond imagination. He became unparalleled in the territory of knowledge and wisdom and their practice and communication. The king of Nepal became his obedient disciple, the prince at the behest of the king took up monkhood and became his all time companion. The ruler of Tibet sent his envoys to bring him to Tibet. The King of Shubarna Dwip (Java and Sumatra) used to write him letters seeking solutions and advice of complicated religious and social issues. King Naipal, the ruler of Gourha was in regular letter communication with him. In short, Atish Dipankar during his life time was the most respected and revered person by all the kings, princes, rulers and emperors of whole Asia. Even the mightiest Chinese emperor used to stand up and pay respect at the very mention of his name”.

As we commemorate Atish today, and pay homage to him, we also do remember and pay our respect to the great ancient friendship bridge builders of China and Bangladesh. We pay respect to Fa Xien (Fa Hien), Xuan Zang (Huen Shang). We also recall the greatest voyager of the time Admiral Zhang. He who all travelled/sailed to Bangladesh in ancient time and contributed heavily to strengthen the ties of relationship of the two countries and two peoples. I may here mention that in modern period Premier Zhou Enlai, President Liu Shaoqi also visited Bangladesh, then East Pakistan and renewed the ancient ties of friendship.

In contemporary history, it is Ziaur Rahman, the great visionary, immediately after assumption of state office looked east and took initiative to open diplomatic ties with China. On 4th October 1975 our bilateral diplomatic relationship started. Chairman Mao Zedong and Premier Zhou Enlai were alive then. General Zia paid his first visit to China in January 1977. As a Lieutenant Colonel I was studying in Beijing Modern Languages Institute, now University. General Zia again visited China along with his wife, Begum Khalada Zia in July 1980. At that time I was Defence Attache in the Embassy. These were memorable great visits which paved the way for a lasting friendship and cooperation. China accepted Zia as a friend and a brother.

On 10th June 1978 a 6 member delegation headed by Mr. Asafoddowla, D.G. Bangladesh Shilpakala Academy, was sent by General Zia to China to receive the holy relics of Atish. The other members of the delegation were Venerable Vishuddha Nanda Mahathero, Venerable Suddha Nanda Mahathero, Mr. Ashok Ranjan Barua, Dr. M.S. Quraishi, Professor, Cultural Department, Rajshahi University, Professor Ranadhir Barua, Chairman Pali Department, Chittagong University. On 16th June, 1978 after performing all the religious rites, the entire holy relics were handed over to Venerable Vishuddha Nanda Mahathero who represented the Buddhist community of Bangladesh in the ceremony. The head of Buddhist community of China Venerable Chao Puchow in his speech said, the transfer of the holy relics of a great scholar to yet another scholar would further cement the traditional bonds of friendship between the two countries. It is worth mentioning that China throughout history has been a peaceful country, most harmoniously inhabited by all nationalities. China never colonized, never occupied any country outside her territory and always embraced all religious faiths.

On 23rd June 1978 the Daily Sangbad reported, while opening the casket of the holy relics Dr. Syed Ali Ahsan, the Honorable Minister of Culture said, in the realm of knowledge, vision and wisdom, Atish will be remembered throughout the whole world and for all the ages to come. His possession of excellence of knowledge and his communion and practice are unbelievably amazing stories of not only of those ancient days but also of modern days today.

Atish is symbol of Sino-Bangla relations. The example that Bengal born Atish set in dedication to Chinese people at their service sacrificing his own life will never be forgotten and will be ever remembered. Eternal glories to Atish. Eternal glories to Bangladesh-China friendship. The spirit of Atish like the waters of our common river the Brahmaputra and the Yarlong Zangpo will be flowing incessantly from eternity to eternity and so will the friendship of our two countries.

Atish shi heping ke reai de jingshen. Shi haoyi, aihao ke hexie de jingshen. Atish shi Meng Zhong yaoyi de xiangzheng, gen Yarlong zangpo jiang de shui bu duan de bu ting de yong yuan liu xia qu. Meng Zhong yaoyi wansui.

Need for equidistance policy of Bangladesh between India and China

Harun ur Rashid



The series of geopolitical developments in the Asia-Pacific region taking place all at once is certainly overwhelming: We live in an era of change due to the ongoing power shift and power diffusion.

Currently we live in a non-polar world and the balance of power is going through an evolution period. For example, recent Obama administration's policy towards Iran and Syria annoyed US close ally Saudi Arabia and other Arab States. Turkey's recent decision to buy Chinese weapons is seen as a new element in its security policy. Russia and Japan agreed to expand

defence ties in the context of geo-political necessity in the Asia Pacific region.

All these factors make it absolutely necessary for Bangladesh to maintain friendly and cooperative relations with both India and China which are both "giants" in Asia.

Strategic importance of Bangladesh:

Bangladesh is a nation of strategic importance not only to South Asian region but to the larger geopolitical dynamics of Asia as a whole.

Bangladesh is ideally located in a region which has assumed importance for India, China and the US. Bangladesh shares borders with India and reformist Myanmar and is a near neighbour to China, Nepal and Bhutan. Bangladesh is a physical conduit between South and South East Asia

In the proposed New Silk-Road/ Economic Corridor linking Central Asia, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Nepal, Bhutan, India, Myanmar and China, Bangladesh is an integral component of that interconnectivity. The pivotal reasoning behind the New Silk Road is that economic incentives will reinforce close political cooperation and long-term stabilization.

Furthermore the Bangladesh-China-India-Myanmar (BCIM) regional grouping reportedly agreed to start joint study to find ways to establish their dream "economic corridor" among the countries.

Bangladesh's access to the Indian Ocean through the Bay of Bengal is strategically and commercially important. Bangladesh in cooperation with the major naval powers is on the process of addressing non-military maritime threats, such as piracy, gun -running, drug and human trafficking, maritime oil spills and natural disasters.

In his "Monsoon" (2010) , US author Robert D. Kaplan argues that" we need fresh ways of seeing the world, Kaplan's goal is to provide his countrymen with just such a map, one centered on what he calls "the Greater Indian Ocean." Kaplan is at his best when he describes the "new Great Game" that is now unfolding across the Indian Ocean. As he notes, it is China that is primarily responsible for setting this game in motion.

Most important of all, it is in the Indian Ocean that the interests and influence of India, China and the United States are beginning to overlap and intersect. It is here, Kaplan says, that the 21st century's "global power dynamics will be revealed." Therefore the countries such as Pakistan, India, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Myanmar and Indonesia will play key role in determining the role of the Indian Ocean to global powers.

Bangladesh relations with India:

The “India factor” looms large in Bangladesh foreign policy as the country is surrounded by west, east and north by India, and on the south- east it shares border (only 271 kilometre on land and river) with Myanmar.

Bangladesh-India relations are complex, sensitive and multi-dimensional. The relationship is not restricted to only between governments but exists between peoples of the two countries independently of the policies of the governments because the ties of history and culture of the two countries are so pervasive from ancient days.

Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina’s landmark four-day visit on 10-13th January 2010 to India created an excellent environment of mutual trust that sought to lay the foundations to a much more mature, stable and fruitful relationship with India through a - 51-paragraph Joint Statement.

After the visit, the Hasina government has moved quickly to address Delhi’s concerns on cross-border terrorism (including expelling top ULFA insurgents to India) and connectivity to the North-East.

In 2011, Bangladesh has agreed to provide transit facility through Bangladesh’s Ashuganj port for transportation of heavy duty equipment consisting of the 96 consignments consisting of turbine and machineries for the ONGC Tripura Power Company (OTPC)’s 727 MW gas-based project, located at Palatana in Tripura.

In May 2014, the Bangladesh government agreed to transport 10,000 tonnes of food grains for Tripura through its territory. It is reported that Bangladesh has agreed to allow 100026 MW electricity generated from 429 dams in north eastern states through Bangladesh to West Bengal and to other places in India.

Cooperative efforts are continuing from both sides to implement many projects and programmes in economic, social and infrastructure, especially under the supplier’s credit of \$ 1(one) billion loan to Bangladesh by India (out of \$200 million was later converted into grant).

India granted duty-free, quota-free access to all items except 25 tariff lines consisting of tobacco and alcohol to Bangladesh with effect from 9 November 2011. Earlier, India granted duty-free, quota-free access to 46 textile tariff lines of greatest sensitivity to Bangladesh comprising Ready Made Garment (RMG)..

However tariff , para-tariff and non-tariff barriers of India impede the growth of Bangladesh’s exports to India. Furthermore Bangladeshi exporters often face a serious problem because of the non-acceptance of test certificates issued by Bangladesh Laboratory for certain products like soap, Jamdani saree, RMG and food products. In the absence of testing facilities in the locality, the samples are sent to far away laboratories (even to Chennai).

During the fiscal year 2012-13, Bangladesh officially imported goods worth \$4.58 billion while Bangladesh exported goods amounting to \$563.9 million from mere \$ one million a few years ago.

Three border haats (markets) have already opened along the borders of Bangladesh –Tripura and Meghalaya and seven more are in the process . The opening of border hats has boosted local trade , economy and people-to-people contact between the two countries.

India agreed to export 500MW to Bangladesh (India would get more than \$350 million annually) and started 250 megawatt (mw) electricity exports to Bangladesh from 5th October 2014 year and reached 500MW at the end-November 2014.. This could be a key link in establishing eventually a South Asia power grid with Bangladesh, Bhutan, Nepal and India.

Bangladesh and India are reportedly dredging common rivers to restore navigability and prevent flooding. Common Ichamati River has been dredged over a 20-km stretch for the last two years

The Maitreyi Express (*Friendship Express*) was launched to revive a railway link between Kolkata and Dhaka that had been shut for 43 years. The Kolkata-Dhaka Govt. bus is operational. The journey is 12.5 hours long, 80 km (50 miles) from India side and 300 km (186 miles) into Bangladesh. Dhaka-Agartala

bus service also started. Both countries are trying to simplify the travel documents including visas of various types so that people of the two countries can travel easily and in large numbers.

With most of the positive picture given above, the non-signing of Teesta Water Sharing agreement, non-ratification of the Land Boundary agreement and border killing of Bangladeshis has overshadowed the constructive gains among people. The continued senseless abduction, torture and killing of Bangladeshis by BSF at the border have led overwhelming section of people in Bangladesh to believe that India does not care the loss of lives of Bangladeshis.

Hopefully, under the Modi government the land Boundary agreement will be ratified and exchange of enclaves will take place. About the conclusion of Teesta Water Sharing Agreement, there is a report that it may not occur soon because the election of the West Bengal state will take place in 2016 and both the BJP and the ruling party Trinamool Congress are expected to contest the election and many analysts think that politically it may not be desirable to conclude the Teesta agreement with Bangladesh before the election.

The relations between Bangladesh and India during the last six years has changed so much qualitatively that they cannot be changed so easily irrespective of the parties in power in Bangladesh in future because the relations have brought dividends for people of Bangladesh in many sectors.

However the benefits could have more if India would have addressed some of the needs of people of Bangladesh within a time bound framework pursuant to the 2011 Framework Agreement on Cooperation and Development in which India has agreed cooperation on sub-regional and regional level on areas such as, water, energy, physical connectivity and environmental degradation among Bangladesh, Bhutan, India and Nepal.

Bangladesh relations with China:

Relations with China are rooted in history. During the 4th century Chinese travelers Fa-hien and in 7th century Hue-an tsung visited the territory, now Bangladesh. . A Buddhist monk from Bangladesh named Atish Dipankar, traveled to China in the 11th century and preached Buddhism there for 17 years.

The heads of government of Bangladesh, irrespective of their political affiliations, invariably visited China and met with Chinese leaders to strengthen relations in every possible sector.

China has assisted the country, among others, in infrastructure, roads, bridges, power including hydro-power, coal mine, industrial plants, telecommunications, flood control, disaster prevention, river training, irrigation and water resources utilisation.

Over the past few years, China has replaced India as Bangladesh's biggest import destination with bilateral trade between the two nations as of 2010-11 standing at US\$7 billion , though heavily skewed in favour of Beijing.. Bangladesh's exports to China stood at \$406 million as of 2010-2011.

Since 2009, the Hasina government in Bangladesh has become closer with China. Bangladesh Prime Minister visited China in June 2014 and received a commitment of about \$6 billion for various infrastructure projects in Bangladesh. Meanwhile, China has been awarded to construct the Padma Bridge.

The visit of the Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi from December 27 to 29 , 2014 to Bangladesh illustrates the importance of further consolidation of bilateral relations for mutual benefit. It is reported that the foreign minister of China welcomed Bangladesh's proposal of creating a specialised zone for investment of Chinese companies in Bangladesh. The governments and the people of both countries interact closely in the case of investment and the relationship with the investor country is deep and lasting.

China has shown keen interest to build a deep-sea port at Sonadia. The deep-sea port is hugely important for Bangladesh because it can provide a gateway to the Bay of Bengal for the South Asian hinterlands comprising Bhutan, Nepal and India's seven northeastern states with a population of more than 70 million. This means Bangladesh can be a "hub" of regional economy and will be able to play a vital role as an inter-regional connecting- point between South Asia and South East Asia

China and Bangladesh are interested in building an economic corridor through land territory connecting Bangladesh, China, India and Myanmar (BCIM). The route, which is about 2,800 km long, is a part of the historic Silk Route and will cost about \$22 billion. The second meeting of officials of Joint Study Group of all four countries was held in Cox's Bazar on December 17-18, 2014 and it is reported that it will submit a combined report within six month to the governments of the four countries. The next meeting is expected to be held in India.

The more investment Bangladesh receives from China, the quicker the country will reach its goal of becoming a middle income country by 2021. For infrastructure construction in Asia, China has established the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank, with an estimated approved capital of \$100 billion. Bangladesh, India and Nepal have joined as founding-members of the Bank. The Bank will be complementing the work of other entities, like the Asian Development Bank and the World Bank.

Concluding remarks:

Bangladesh does not need to choose between India and China. Bangladesh can have friendly relations with both. It is desirable that Bangladesh would not align itself to one country as a way to antagonise another and the relations must be rightly balanced between the two nations.

It can be argued that greater engagement with China would augment Bangladesh's negotiating strength with India.

Not willing to place all its eggs in either basket, and in an effort integrate into the global economy, Bangladesh under the Hasina government is pursuing a pragmatic foreign policy of what some analysts label "more friends, fewer enemies."

Harun ur Rashid, *Barrister-at-Law* served as Ambassador of Bangladesh for twelve years in different countries with a further seven countries as concurrent accreditations. He retired as Ambassador/Permanent Representative of Bangladesh to the UN in Europe in Geneva with concurrent accreditation to the UN Office in Vienna, UNIDO, and IAEA.

After retirement, Ambassador Rashid has addressed seminars in many universities and think-tanks around the world. He has been a prolific writer on issues of regional and international affairs and contributes regularly as a columnist to the newspapers and magazines in the country and abroad.

His published books include *International Relations & Bangladesh (revised edition forthcoming)*, *Current Affairs* (2013), *Bangladesh Foreign Policy* (2012), *Peace and Conflict Studies* (2012) *Indo-Bangladesh Relations*, (2010), *International Law* (2004) and *Refugee Law* (2002).

South Asia: A Pluralistic Culture

Dr. Anwarullah Chowdhury



South Asia – a major culture region of the world- includes the countries of Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka. "South Asia is synonymous with a rich cultural fabric, woven by colorful threads of different religions, culture, language and ethnic background, each blending to form a perfect amalgamation. It is the land of the orient, mystical yet vibrant, vivid yet full of life."¹

It is ethnically diverse, with more than 2,000 ethnic entities with populations ranging from hundreds of millions to small ethnic groups. South Asia has been invaded and settled by many ethnic groups over the centuries - including various Dravidian, Indo-Iranian, Tibeto-Burman, and Austroasiatic groups. The amalgamation of these various groups has produced composite cultures with many common traditions and beliefs. But, the traditions of different ethnic groups in South Asia have diverged throughout earlier times, sometimes giving rise to strong local traditions such as the distinct South Indian and Bengali cultures.

Buddhism, Hinduism, Islam, Jainism and Sikhism, Confucianism and Christianity are the major religions of South Asia. These religions have significant region-specific histories. About 80% of Indians are Hindus; Nepal is a Hindu-majority State, while Sri Lanka and Bhutan have a majority of Buddhists. Islam is the major religion of Bangladesh and Pakistan.

South Asian culture is rich and varied. The nations share an ethnic background and most of the territorial divisions have come up only in the recent past. These similar cultures were basically separated due to varying religious compositions. The culture springs from the rich Indus Valley civilization that saw the influx and mix of the Aryan and Dravidian races. The populace component of South Asia eventually mingled to form a unique common culture.

The traditional cultural divisions were based on religion. However, commonalities are seen to have common interests in sports, shared history, geographical conditions, occupations, lifestyles, food, and dress. The culture of South Asia includes commonalities in celebrations and festivals. Dance is a ritual associated with harvest and the onset of spring and winter. People dance to the beat of a drum, even as they sing. There are slight variations in style. There are courtly dances, dances of celebration and dance dramas. The indigenous knowledge of age-old cultures handed down from the ages also have a lot of shaping influences over South Asian culture.

South Asia displays great linguistic diversity, the components being a number of language families and isolated regional dialects. Most of the South Asian countries have more than one language natively spoken.

In South Asia, rice is the staple food. The region is not only a major rice consumer area but also the world's granary of rice. The use of exotic spices that grow on the land and extensive consumption of fish along the coastlines is another common feature. Years of colonization and interactions with other cultures and nations, the cuisine has also inherited flavors that are distinctly Latin and American. These are incorporated within the people's local blends.

South Asia is basically an agrarian society. Agriculture is the main economy of this region. South Asian economy is adapted to both the blessings and vicissitudes of monsoon agriculture, grounded on an endlessly fertile terrain, but forever buffeted by a fickle climate, bearing storms one year, drought the next. The region has traditionally had three rice crop seasons, one of them, the monsoon less winter, relatively unproductive until the recent advent of mechanized irrigation. Rice, in myriad varieties, is the staple food, served at every meal, supplemented by vegetables, spices, and fish when available. Muslims also eat fowl, goat meat (mutton), and beef when they can afford it. Bengali cultivators also grow jute throughout much of the region, in addition to other cash crops, such as sugar-cane, betel nut, and betel leaf. The peasant economy is also served by a variety of artisan craftsmen, most of whom, even in Muslim-majority areas, are members of the relevant Hindu caste groups.

As mentioned earlier, it has a diverse culture. The beliefs, rituals and ceremonies are associated mainly with religions. But many of them are also associated with agricultural production system. South Asian society is highly stratified. It is very much hierarchical. The society is divided hierarchically on the basis of class, caste and power. Therefore, it can be concluded that South Asia is a class society as well as a caste society and it is based on the unequal distribution of power.

Former Vice-Chancellor, University of Dhaka and former Ambassador of Bangladesh.

Diplomacy for Peace and Development

S M Rashed Ahmed



In the broader context of foreign policy and diplomacy the objectives are security and development; security not only physical or military; non- military security involving, among others, water, food, energy, ecology, climate change, natural and man-made disasters are crucially important. The formidable challenges of ensuring comprehensive security and development; of poverty eradication, hunger, malnutrition, health, disease, education and unemployment, among others, are essential prerequisites for **PEACE**; having peace within and without; out-break of war and conflict is, therefore, said to be the vanishing point of diplomacy.

For Bangladesh, the major challenge is to graduate from the current status of one of the least developed countries to a middle income and developed economy. To achieve the goal would call for a balanced and constructive foreign policy through adroit diplomacy; to be able to reconcile our national interest with the national interests of other countries particularly with India, other neighboring countries of SAARC, China, Japan, Korea, the Asean, USA, EC, the OIC and Russia etc. Confrontation or getting embroiled in the dispute amongst or between countries would be seriously detrimental to our national interest; to eschew all manner of confrontations, conflicts and seek peaceful negotiated settlement of outstanding issues is clearly in our vital national interest; Foreign policy and diplomacy are, therefore, said to be our first line of defense.

This larger vision of Bangladesh can only be achieved on the bedrock of a peaceful, strong, stable and democratic Bangladesh. To realize this, our immediate priority is to be able to achieve a durable modality, acceptable to all the political parties, for holding of a free, fair and inclusive elections. In this context, there is an urgency, among others, for electoral reforms and strengthening of the ELECTION COMMISSION headed by and composed of nonpartisan persons of proven integrity and competence. The Indian model of Election Commission, which Hilary Clinton is said to have compared it with gold bullion, is something we should try to seriously emulate.

The primacy is to end the bleeding of the nation in the grip of unprecedented political crisis; the battle of the survival of the nation and its soul; to translate the power of the people as the source of legitimacy of any democratically elected government and governance, thereby, giving concrete shape and reality to the ideals of our freedom struggle and the liberation war.

Election alone, do not make a Democracy. It is imperative to ensure good governance based on, among others, the rule of law, democratic ideals of freedom of speech, expression, right of dissent, independence of the Media, the Judiciary, neutrality of the civil service and the police, zero tolerance for corruption and depolitisation of the vital institutions of the state and the government.

To achieve the goal of meaningful development, progress and modernization there is need for reappraisal of the current direction of our foreign policy and diplomacy. There is need for a proactive foreign policy reflecting the current global, regional realities and compulsions; this would mean not only government to government relationships but crucially people to people contacts and exchanges. This is essential in an age of public diplomacy to foster interactions at different levels; to promote comprehensive economic, trade, investment, cultural and intellectual exchanges.

Our vision should be one of a borderless region with no visa restrictions with free movements of people, goods and services; irrational security concerns should not stand in the way. It should not be difficult for terrorists, extremists and militants to enter into any of the countries of the region as the borders are porous. It is the common people who are suffering due to visa restrictions. Stable, enlightened and prosperous societies are the best bulwark against terrorists and terrorism and their manifestations in different forms.

Bangladesh and its people have to commit themselves to genuine peace and development; to building a truly tolerant, multi-religious and multi-cultural society where all citizens would be treated with equality and dignity without discrimination irrespective of their religious or any others orientations; a society in which the rights of the minorities and the indigenous (Adivasis) would be protected by the majority community and not by the army or police.

This would be the fulfillment of the vision and ideals of our liberation war; moving from rhetorics to concrete reality.

The need of the hour is for all of us to collectively work for evolving an all inclusive functional democracy combined with an all inclusive economic system which would embrace all citizens particularly the poor.

The nation owes a debt of gratitude to our Noble laureate Professor Yunus for his innovative concept of Micro Credit symbolized by the Grameen Bank which has contributed significantly for the empowerment of women and replicated globally.

Professor Yunus has followed it up with another innovative concept of Social Business as an answer to the inadequacies of the capitalist system. The Social Business concept is now being increasingly embraced around the globe as a positive contribution to the solution of major global challenges including economic, ecological, huge unemployment particularly of the youths to the problem of deforestation as in Haiti.

Together with an innovative polity, functional democracy and good governance with an inclusive Economic System with a vibrant private sector fully backed by the government should enable Bangladesh to leapfrog from the status of a LDC to a middle income and developed economy.

A purposeful and proactive diplomacy has become all the more imperative in the context of global and regional economic developments. While Europe is gradually coming out of economic slow down, the economic outlook in the USA seem relatively more promising. It is, however, Asia, which serious scholars believe, has the most promising growth prospect for a number of reasons; most importantly perhaps the unprecedented emergence of three reform minded leaders in the three most populous Asian countries namely China's XI Jinping, India's Narendra Modi and Indonesia's Joko Widodo.

All these leaders are committed to the process of development and modernization.

The recent successful visit of President Obama to India with positive outcome involving, among others, signing of India-US civilian nuclear agreement with emphasis on clean and renewable energy particularly the solar energy; the participation of US Companies for manufacturing products including pharmaceuticals and modern agricultural equipments to cite some of the positive outcomes should significantly boost not only India-US Economic, scientific, trade and Investment co-operation but also benefit Bangladesh and other countries.

In the context of the Asian century both India and China are taking positive initiatives for peace and development through significant domestic reforms and farsighted diplomatic moves.

A strong and stable modern India on the bedrock of a truly secular multi-religious and multi-ethnic tolerant democratic society would have a positive impact on Bangladesh and for regional, global peace and stability. Following China's achievements, India's success in modernization and progress is of paramount importance; our hope is that China and India, the two Asian giants and India and Pakistan would resolve their conflicts bilaterally and would co-exist peacefully. This would enable us to reap the huge dividends of PEACE pulling millions within these and the neighboring countries from the clutches of poverty to development and modernization.

For Bangladesh to be able to seize the opportunity of the Asian Century of development, there is an agonizing need for reappraisal of its economic diplomacy including the tool of its implementation.

The Foreign Ministry and Missions abroad, as it is constituted at present, would have to be fully reorganized to achieve the objective.

We would need to recruit the best candidates on the basis of merit and trained these officers to be the finest professional diplomats for the implementation of Economic Diplomacy. This is an age of specialization; jack of all trades and master of none is no longer relevant to meet the complex bilateral and multinational economic, diplomatic and global challenges facing us. To successfully negotiate, our Diplomats have to have in-depth knowledge and expertise; they would then be able to ensure a win win outcome of intricate negotiations instead of making unilateral concessions detrimental to our national interest due to inept handling of the negotiations.

A crucial element of our economic diplomacy, which is often neglected, is utilizing the expertise, assistance and resources of the Non Resident Bangladeshis (NRB). The NRB's are not only source of remittance but one of our best Ambassadors tool for projecting a positive image of Bangladesh through business, trade, cultural and intellectual engagements with the local people; a largely untapped source of investments for development of Bangladesh. Currently most of the Non-Resident Bangladeshis (NRB) largely invests in the real Estate or unproductive sectors for lack of special incentives for them to invest in Bangladesh. Priority attention should be given to evolve a special incentive package to attract the investment of the NRBs in vital sectors of the Economy. They can contribute significantly to the development process of Bangladesh.

The current policy of exporting unskilled or semiskilled manpower and females including drivers, domestic maids and other essential manpower need to be reviewed in keeping with our goals of modernization and development to attract FDI. We need a pool of trained and efficient workforce at home for the factories and firms; to work in the multinational organizations and foreign companies; training should include good knowledge of English language, proficiency in IT and other essential skills. We also need trained drivers and domestic helps for the foreign investors to live in relative comfort with amenities.

The largely unskilled or semi-skilled manpower export particularly female workers is not in the interest of the country; they are often subjected to all forms of exploitation, maltreatment, and even sexual exploitation; this is something akin to modern slavery to say the least. This is based on the personal experience of the writer during postings abroad; this has also been a regularly and widely reported by the Human Rights groups and the media. Surely this is unbecoming of the dignity of an independent country. It is unacceptable to send large number of female workers and maids only and not men as insisted by certain countries. This is against our Social cultural values and should be seriously reexamined and linked with overall manpower export, both men and women.

We have to begin a new to realize the larger vision of peace, modernization and development with a revamped polity, functional democracy with an all inclusive economic system which would significantly reduce inequality and help overcome the challenges of poverty.

Bangladesh diplomacy would then need to focus with renewed vigour on the following key areas including water diplomacy: as there is shortage of water in India itself we would need to adopt a comprehensive approach involving bilateral, sub-regional approach namely India, Nepal, Bhutan plus China. Through a collective approach we should be able to harness the huge water resources to ensure food security, hydro electricity, boost agricultural production and overcome the challenges of development.

To meet the growing critical energy crisis exploring domestic reserves would not be enough, there is need to adopt a comprehensive bilateral, regional and global approach. Apart from the conventional non-renewable sources of energy, special emphasis would have to be placed on renewable energy particularly solar, biogas, wind and clean nuclear technology; this is vital for us in the context of threat of climate change. We would have to seek assistance for green technology from developed countries to preserve our ecology in the context of our drive for modernization and development.

To meet the challenges of Defense, natural and human disasters, to deal with threats of terrorism we need a first class professional Defense Force equipped with latest technology. Since, we can not effort this we have to adopt proactive diplomacy to persuade developed countries to help us. This needs to be backed by

the doctrine of the TOTAL Mobilization of the people.

A new dimension has been added with the initiative taken by the government to explore and exploit the 'Blue Economy'; the potentials for huge oil, gas, minerals and other resources under the Bay of Bengal. For this purpose we need modern expertise, equipments technology and training with the assistance of our development partners.

Bangladesh diplomacy has rightly placed connectivity as central to the success of regional integration. At the 18th SAARC Summit in Kathmandu in November, 2014, Bangladesh played a key role for signing Agreements on Regional Transport Connectivity by lobbying hard for the signing of the Regional Motor Vehicles Agreement, the Regional Railways Agreement and the SAARC Framework Agreement for Energy Cooperation (Electricity). The signing of the first two Agreements were delayed as reportedly one of the SAARC members could not complete its "internet process"; it was, therefore, agreed to hold a meeting of the Transport Ministers of SAARC within three months in order to finalize these Agreements for approval. However, the Agreement for Energy Cooperation was signed due to efforts of Bangladesh. It would be important for us to keep up the momentum so that these Agreements on enhanced connectivity are finalized within a reasonable time frame. This would help translate the vision of South Asian Regional Integration which would give significant impetus to the process of regional peace and development. Concurrently, Bangladesh would need to continue in its efforts to concretize the decisions of the Bay of Bengal initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC) to promote broader economic integration.

Another historic opportunity for peace and development is the Bangladesh, China, India and Myanmar (BCIM-EC) which embraces not only physical connectivity but also economic corridor; the BCIM project is an important part of the objectives of Beijing and Delhi to open up their landlocked regions to the neighboring countries of Bangladesh and Myanmar. As is known the Yunan province of China is a landlocked region. BCIM-EC, through its economic corridor and connectivity would facilitated China to give access to the sea to its south west province. Similarly, India's landlocked north east region has lagged behind compared to other parts of the country. Integration of the north east region with the neighboring countries of Bangladesh, Myanmar and China through border trade and connectivity would foster greater economic development and other benefits to the region.

Connectivity is peace and development; no country can live in isolation; this is a truism which has now become an inescapable reality of the present century.

GDP growth alone will not ensure inclusive growth to benefit the poor and the marginalized; special stress have to be given to ensure compulsory primary and universal education, safe drinking water, sanitation, health, disease prevention, research on new pharmaceuticals and drugs etc. Human development and enhanced social investments would have to be given priority to achieve sustainable economic development.

In the ultimate analysis the success of our Foreign Policy and Diplomacy, would largely depend on our collective efforts at reordering our domestic polity to ensure a strong, stable, genuinely democratic government based on good governance and rearranging of our priorities since diplomacy is said to be an extension of domestic policy and structure.

The writer is a former UN Regional Administrator in Kosovo and former Bangladesh Ambassador to Japan.

Delimitation of Maritime Boundary With India And Myanmar

Rear Admiral M. Khurshed Alam, ndc, psc BN (retd)
Secretary, Maritime Affairs Unit, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Bangladesh.



Oceans, seas and coasts play a pivotal role in the solutions to many of the present and future challenges of world's resource, climate and environmental challenges. After all, 72% of the world's surface is covered by oceans, connected to each other and these vast spaces are yet largely unexplored. All countries of the world whether coastal or land locked relies heavily on international trade, secure global navigation, and unhindered legitimate commerce. Most of the world's maritime domain is not subject to the sovereignty or jurisdiction of any single State, and many States do not have the capability or capacity to protect commercial shipping on the high seas, or even within their own territorial seas. The oceans of the world have gained greater and greater prominence with the vast growth in global seaborne trade and requirement of national jurisdiction over maritime domains covered by the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS). Today no nation can afford to turn away from the sea and that's why it is now called the unexplored Frontier or the last Frontier as the Sea only can now provide the alternative to land resources.

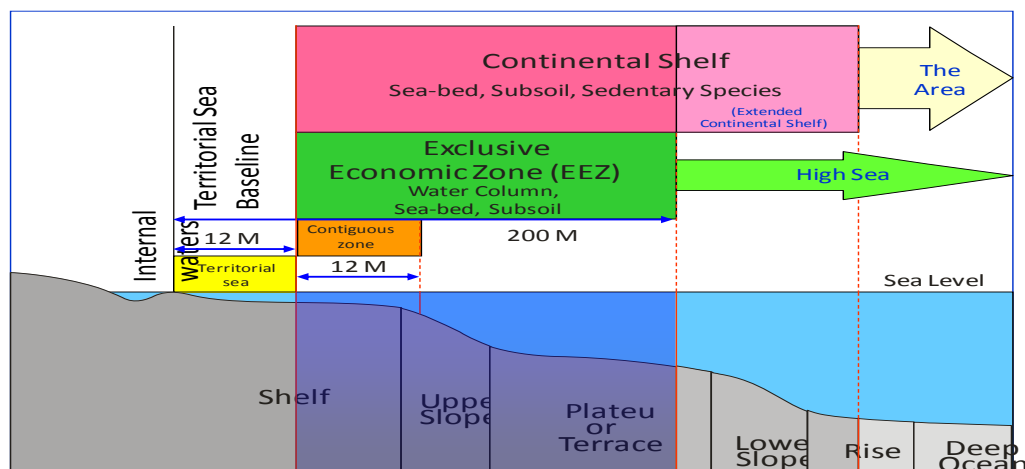
Maritime security is understood as a state of affairs of the global/regional maritime domain, in which international and national laws are enforced, freedom of navigation/trade and commerce is guaranteed and maritime transportation, environment and marine resources are protected. Littoral countries of the Bay of Bengal/Indian Ocean Rim should engage to secure its maritime security interests in a cross sectoral, comprehensive, coherent and cost effective way in conformity with existing treaties, national and international laws in particular the UNCLOS and other relevant conventions and instruments. The first UN Conference on the Law of the Sea held in Geneva in February - April 1958 passed four conventions i.e. Convention on the Territorial Sea and the Contiguous zone (10 September 1964), Convention on the High Seas (30 September 1962), Convention on Fishing and Convention of the Living Resources of the High Seas (20 March 1966) and Convention on the Continental Shelf (10 June 1964).

Third United Nations Conference on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS, 1982)

It was adopted as the Third United Nations Convention of the Law of the Sea. On 10 December 82, UNCLOS-III or Law of the sea was opened for signature in Jamaica and Bangladesh along with some 119 states & entities signed the convention on the same day. It took a further 12 years, mainly for technical and legal reasons, for the required 60 instruments of ratification to be deposited at the UN and the Convention came into force on 16 November 1994. The territorial sea and all other maritime zones are measured from baselines. In order to calculate the seaward reach of claimed maritime zones, it is first necessary to draw a) **normal baselines** or b) **Straight Baselines**.

Maritime Zones

Under UNCLOS-III (1982) sea areas can be divided into seven distinct maritime zones depending on maritime baseline: Internal Waters, Territorial Sea (TS), Contiguous Zone (CZ), Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ), Continental Shelf (CS), High Seas and the Area.



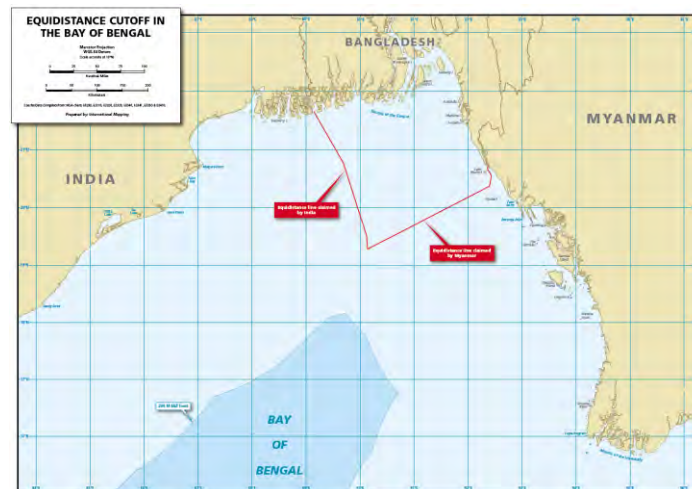
Maritime Boundary dispute of Bangladesh with India and Myanmar

The history of negotiations for delimitation of maritime boundary with India and Myanmar dates back to 1974. The negotiations continued almost for 04 (four) decades. The only success achieved through this long negotiation was an agreement in the form of 'agreed minutes' for delimitation of 12 nautical miles (nm) territorial seas from the mouth of the Naaf River signed on 23 November 1974. Although never converted into a treaty, both the countries respected the 'agreed minutes' and under its terms, vessels of Myanmar have enjoyed, till date, free and unimpeded navigation for trade and commerce through Bangladesh's waters to and from the Naaf River. However, apart from this, all subsequent attempts for delimitation of exclusive economic zone and continental shelf failed to bear any result.

Bangladesh is tucked between Myanmar and India in the concave north coast of the Bay of Bengal. Added to that is the concavity of Bangladesh's own coast. Thus, the equidistant lines with Myanmar in the eastern side and with India in the western side practically cut-off Bangladesh's maritime area within 100 nm as against Bangladesh's claim for 200 nm EEZ and 350 nm continental shelf. Bangladesh legally augured with its neighbours to agree to an alternative formula so that the "cut-off" could be avoided (Map 1). Unfortunately, Myanmar and India never considered any other alternative formula and continued its adherence to strict equidistance, for which, an agreement for equitable delimitation of maritime zones between the countries was never reached (shown in red lines). The government of Bangladesh declared 28 oil/gas blocks in the Bay of Bengal without settling the maritime boundary. By 2009, Myanmar and India claimed 17 and 10 blocks respectively out of our declared 28 gas blocks in the Bay.

The judgment of the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea (ITLOS) (declared on 14 March 2012) and that of the Arbitral Tribunal in the Hague, delivered on 07 July, 14 have finally delimited the maritime boundary among Bangladesh, India and Myanmar that remained unresolved for the last 40 years causing severe obstacles to exploration and exploitation of natural resources by all the Countries in the oil and gas rich Bay. It also affected deep sea fishing by the fishermen of Bangladesh, who, very often, got, arrested for crossing over to the disputed areas due to overlapping claims. Even the Bangladesh Navy and the Coast Guard experienced severe problems in exercising sovereign rights in the maritime areas claimed by Bangladesh and in safeguarding our resources like fishes from being plundered by others due to the absence of maritime boundary. Hundreds of fishing boats along with the crew were impounded by all sides for not having clearly defined maritime boundary. But the plights of our fishing community living in the coastal belt and the personnel of the maritime law enforcement agencies remained mostly unheard and unattended in the metropolis in Dhaka.

Having failed to resolve the issue of delimiting the maritime boundary bilaterally through negotiations, the government of Bangladesh took a bold, timely and pragmatic decision for settlement of this issue through compulsory dispute settlement procedures under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), 1982. On 08 October 2009, Notice of arbitration was issued to both India and Myanmar for delimitation of Territorial Sea (TS), the Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) and the Continental Shelf (CS) in accordance with International law. It was not an easy choice for the Government given the unpredictability of the compulsory decision of a neutral adjudicating body, i.e. the Tribunal.



Map 1: showing cut off or EEZ locked at 100 nm due to equidistant lines drawn by India and Myanmar

Delimitation of the Land boundary Terminus (LBT) and Territorial Sea

In case of Myanmar the LBT was decided in 1966 when the Naaf river boundary upto its mouth was fixed between the two countries. Bangladesh placed two alternative proposals for delimitation of 12nm territorial sea. The Tribunal agreed with Bangladesh that “St. Martin’s Island is a significant maritime feature” entitled to a full 12nm territorial sea. It also rejected Myanmar’s argument that the island should be limited to a territorial sea of as little as 6nm. Finally it delimited the maritime boundary around St Martin’s island based on the equidistance under art 15 of the UNCLOS, which was the same agreed boundary of 1974.

Regarding LBT with India, Bangladesh argued for the midstream of the border river Hariabhanga on the basis of the 1931 printing of BA Chart 859 by drawing a closing line in the Raimangal estuary based on the facts that the Hariabhanga River (and its ‘main channel’), and the estuary and the coast, have changed significantly in the intervening seven decades and modern evidence cannot serve as a snapshot of the course of the river channel as it was on August 15, 1947.

On the other hand India argued that the main channel indicated on the Radcliffe Map is the conjoined channel of the Hariabhanga and Raimangal and flows to the east of New Moore Island /South Talpatty and if the Tribunal concludes that the western channel is the main channel and accepts Bangladesh’s proposed LBT, the internal sector of this part of India will be effectively land-locked, in as much as the western channel is not navigable south of Bangladesh’s proposed land boundary terminus. Simultaneously, the eastern channel will be closed to India, as it will have become Bangladesh’s internal waters through which no right of innocent passage avails. In contrast, if the Tribunal confirms that the eastern channel is the main channel as suggested by India and accepts India’s proposed land boundary terminus, both India and Bangladesh will have fluvial access to and egress from the Bay of Bengal.

Bangladesh will also have access to the eastern channel because its midstream will be the boundary between the two States

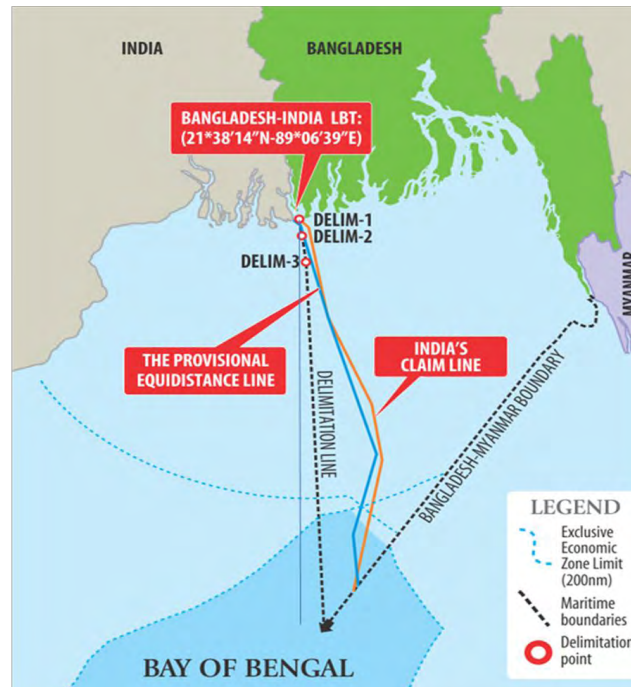
Since the main stream of any river is changeable, the tribunal decided the LBT based on the red line of the Radcliffe Award of 1947. For the delimitation of maritime boundary of the TS, India argued that the New Moore /South Talpatty has demonstrated stability over the years and, having been an island from 1970 onwards, is now a low-tide elevation according to satellite images and hence India placed two base points on this low tide elevation to deflect the equidistance line well inside Bangladesh waters and also to ensure navigational entry of Raimangal river lies with India as well. Bangladesh challenges the existence of South Talpatty/New Moore Island as an island and argued that the island disappeared permanently below the surface in the early 1990s and is absent on any satellite images after 1989 and nothing more than breakers was seen during the site visit, despite multiple trips to the area and hence inappropriate for a base point proposed by India. Therefore the tribunal drew equidistance line in the territorial sea as per Art 15 of the UNCLOS 1982 and continued along the geodetic line from the LBT decided earlier based on 1947 Radcliffe Map until it reaches the territorial sea limits of Bangladesh and India. This line avoids any sudden crossing of the area of access to the Border Rivers. This delimitation line allows Bangladesh full access to the deeper river Raimangal and Jamuna yet the submerged area of South Talpatty fell on the side of India. India however got access to the much shallower river Hariabhanga.

Delimitation of Exclusive Economic Zone and Continental shelf

In case of delimitation of EEZ and CS, Bangladesh maintained its old position and argued that, the equidistance method does not ensure an equitable result, as required by Article 74 and 83 of UNCLOS. It considered all options available under the law and jurisprudence so far developed to reach to 200 nm and beyond removing cut off effect at 100 nm produced by applying strict equidistance lines drawn by India and Myanmar. Bangladesh calculated the coastal facade of Bangladesh and Myanmar and proposed an Angle bisector having produced an angle of 215° from the mouth of Naaf River as the delimitation line up to and beyond 200nm.

In case of India, Bangladesh also proposed angle bisector of 180 degrees from the LBT for delimitation of EEZ and CS within and beyond 200nm. This was the only way to maximize our claim based on law and international jurisprudence. These proposals in fact allow the maximum reach of Bangladesh's 200 nm of EEZ and Continental Shelf beyond 200nm. The Tribunal rejected both India and Myanmar's argument that the strict equidistance line was equitable even though it prevented Bangladesh from reaching out to 200nm. The Tribunal agreed with Bangladesh that the concave shape of its coast was a relevant circumstance necessitating an adjustment to the equidistance line. The Tribunal therefore substantially adjusted the equidistance line in order to alleviate the effects of the concavity on Bangladesh and enable it to reach 200 nm across a large area and opening of Bangladesh to the Continental Shelf beyond 200nm. The Tribunal arrived at almost exactly the same *result* as that proposed by Bangladesh; *i.e.*, a 215° line in case of Myanmar.

In case of India, the tribunal also disagreed with India about the application of strict equidistance lines and agreed with Bangladesh about its concave coastline. The tribunal finally adjusted India's equidistance line from a minimum of 156 degrees to 177.30 degrees (Bangladesh's request was 180 degrees), thus giving Bangladesh 19,467 sq km of disputed area out of total of 25,602 sq km. The tribunal also allowed the 177.30 degree line to continue southwards towards the Continental shelf till it intersected with the Bangladesh and Myanmar maritime boundary line of 215 degree awarded by the ITLOS. The result is fully consistent with the "equitable solution" international law requires. Bangladesh now has access to a full 200 nm across a broad area. It also has broad access to its rights in the outer continental shelf beyond 200 nm.



Never once either in negotiations -- or even before the Tribunal -- did India and Myanmar recognize Bangladesh's rights beyond 100 nm. Now, as a result of the Judgment, Bangladesh will enjoy sovereign rights over a sizable portion of outer continental shelf. It has, not only, recognized Bangladesh's claim over outer continental shelf, but also, in order to ensure Bangladesh's access to that area, curtailed India and Myanmar's right in its 200 nm EEZ. In the 'grey area', the Tribunal gave India and Myanmar the right to use the water column whereas the right of seabed, within the EEZ of India and Myanmar, was granted to Bangladesh. This is also an unprecedented victory for Bangladesh.

In conclusion it can be said that Germany went to the court in 1967 against strict application of equidistance line by Denmark and Netherlands and restricting Germany within an area of approx 16,000 sq km. But the court finally allowed equitable solution by giving another 12,000 sq km sea area to Germany. Bangladesh having a maritime area of approximately 40,000 sq km within the cut-off, went to the court and got the maritime area increased to 1,18,813 sq km in the Bay of Bengal. The delimitation of Bangladesh's maritime boundary has certainly cleared number of obstacles which stood on our development for last 40 years. The principles of equitable solution which have got established for Bangladesh through this case are more significant than what our neighbours have achieved through this case.

The implication of this verdict for all the littoral countries of the Bay of Bengal is phenomenal. By entering into this legal process, Bangladesh has demonstrated its adherence to its firm constitutional commitment to respect for international law and peaceful settlement international disputes. In fact Bangladesh has set the first example in Asia in settling maritime disputes peacefully and ensuring harmonious bilateral relationship with its neighbor and all these countries can now play a major role in planning medium and long term energy security interests and taking immediate as well as well planned measures for exploration of living and non living resources in the Bay of Bengal in the 21st century and beyond leaving past irritations behind.

Sri Lanka Reviving Democracy

Professor Selina Mohsin



Arrogant and brash, Rajapaksha of United People's Freedom Alliance (UPFA) became the president and commander-in-chief of Sri Lanka in 2005 by a narrow victory against Rani Wickramasinghe of United National Party (UNP). It was later alleged that Tamils of the north and Muslims in the east were hampered from voting which led to the success of Rajapaksha.

In 2009 Rajapaksha brutally crushed the long Tamil Tiger rebellion, with heavy losses of civilian lives. This ruthless victory, plus vibrant economic growth, increased his popularity amongst the Sinhalese and he won a second term as President in 2010 against General Forsena. In 2011, the UN published a report estimating that as many as 40,000 people were killed in the final weeks of the war between Tamil Tigers and the government forces. Reports and films of targeted shelling of civilians, executions, rapes, abuse and murder were denied by the government. It ignored a UNHCR resolution along with condemnation from the International Commission of Jurists, the Commonwealth Lawyers Association, and the UN Human Rights Commission.

In such a scenario, it was surprising that Colombo was selected as the venue of the Commonwealth Heads of Governments Meeting (CHOGM) in 2013. A host of controversies arose and leaders of India, Canada and Mauritius boycotted the CHOGM. Rajapaksha was bullish in his defense of his actions.

After winning his first election, Rajapaksha turned to Chinese loans and Chinese companies for large scale infrastructure projects. Although much corruption was suspected, Sri Lanka continued rapid economic growth. It is to be noted that Beijing placed no conditions in terms of structural adjustment, policy reforms or transparency on its loans. This suited Rajapaksha admirably. China views Sri Lanka as a 'hub' in its proclaimed 'maritime silk route', including a new Hambantota port and a new container terminal at Colombo. China has also invested in Mauritius, Seychelles, Pakistan and Maldives, giving it a strong presence in the Indian Ocean. New Delhi has become increasingly uneasy at these developments and Prime Minister Modi has given early priority to fostering India's bilateral ties to these neighbours.

Rajapaksha became increasingly autocratic. His government became almost a family concern, with his three brothers and other relatives occupying senior positions. The president had the power to appoint senior judges, police chiefs, election commissioners, the Attorney General and the Human Rights Commission. It has been estimated that Rajapaksha and his brothers controlled 70% of the state budget. This eventually led to tension and resentment among the civil society. One prime example was his sacking and impeachment of the Chief Justice after her adverse ruling of a case had displeased him. There was a significant 21% drop in support of his UPFA party in local elections. Yet he still succeeded in using his two thirds parliamentary majority to lift the constitutional ban on Presidents serving a third term and called for a snap election 2 years before the end of his tenure. This proved a miscalculation.

Sri Lanka's civil society was alert. Despite its internal strife and suppressive regime, Sri Lanka had performed best among the SAARC countries in achieving the MDG goals. Its civil society was well informed, better educated and more conscious of the value of good governance than many other developing countries.

At the announcement of the election, the UPFA party split. Several ministers resigned and one, Rajapaksa's former Health Minister, Sirisena stood as rival presidential candidate. He pledged 100 days of reform including changing the constitution from an Executive Presidency with supreme **power**, which Rajapaksha was widely seen to have abused, to a parliamentary democracy headed by a Prime Minister. On 8 January 2015, Srisena gained enough Sinhalese support, combined with the Tamil and Muslim third

of the electorate, to win 51.28% of the vote. Rajapaksha conceded defeat only after the army and police refused to support him in a coup d'état or to declare a state of emergency.

Sirisena's victory was widely acclaimed as a peaceful restoration of Sri Lanka's democracy and also as providing a better prospect of ethical and religious reconciliation. This included implementation of provincial autonomy promised by the 1987 India -Sri Lanka Accord and the 13th amendment of the constitution. Sirisena has started well. Rani Wickramasinghe, the interim Prime Minister, is competent and well respected. A Tamil has been appointed as Chief Justice and a civilian has replaced the military Governor of the Northern (Tamil) province. The UN report into the massive civilian deaths in the final stage of the war has been postponed for six months to allow an "impartial" domestic inquiry in collaboration with the UN. The Cabinet has agreed on a draft amendment of the Constitution retaining direct election of the President but cutting the presidential term to 5 years, with a maximum of two terms. The President would lose the right to dissolve Parliament, would act on the advice of the Prime Minister and be subject to the final jurisdiction of the Supreme Court. The interim Parliament will dissolve on 23rd of April, to be followed by a general election and an "inclusive government".

The new Sirisena government was particularly welcomed by India. Relations with Sri Lanka under the Rajapaksha regime had been impeded by Tamil Nadu's strong sympathies with the Tamils and by frequent disputes over Indian fishing in Sri Lankan waters.

Sri Lanka earlier had turned strongly towards China for investment and aid. Part of Rajapaksha's fall in popularity had involved suspicion of corruption regarding over US\$ 5 billion of Chinese projects, including Hambantota port in Rajapaksha's own constituency. The new government has made a point of correcting course. It quickly announced a review of projects, particularly the US\$ 1.5 billion Colombo City extension on reclaimed land next to the new Chinese built container port.

President Sirisena visited New Delhi in February 2015 and Prime Minister Modi made a return visit to Sri Lanka in March, including a visit to Jaffna, where India is providing some 50,000 houses for the devastated Tamil Northern Province. China does not appear pleased. Its 'Global Times' has reported comment by the Shanghai Institute of International Affairs that the Jaffna visit constituted 'interference' in internal affairs of Sri Lanka and commented that it was sufficient to need Beijing's attention. President Sirisena is now visiting Beijing. He realizes Sri Lanka needs good relations with both India and China.

The atmosphere in Sri Lanka is visibly changing. People are more optimistic and hopeful although there remain strong Sinhalese movements concerned at any concessions made to the Tamils and Muslims. It now depends on Sirisena and his colleagues to steer the country and exact positive results out of the greatest obstacles.

Professor Selina Mohsin, Former Ambassador of Bangladesh.

Asian Art Biennale Bangladesh: A Great Cultural Festival

Professor Nazrul Islam



The Asian Art Biennale Bangladesh is a major international art event today. It is a significant achievement of the Bangladesh Shilpakala (Fine Arts) Academy, an autonomous institution of the Ministry of Cultural Affairs of the Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh. The first Biennale was organized during 31 January-28 February, 1981. It was participated by 14 countries of Asia. Works of such legendary artists as M F Husain of India, Affandi and Muchtar Apin of Indonesia, and Safiuddin Ahmed, Qumrul Hasan and SM Sultan of Bangladesh set a very high standard of art of the region from the very beginning of the Biennale. The pioneer organizers of the event stated the purpose of Biennale as a festival to bring together the lively and popular art fully into the ambit of fruitful Asian collaboration. They had also hoped that it would give a new direction to the artists of Bangladesh as they would be exposed to varied kinds of art forms in the evidence of interesting sensibilities. They further hoped that the biennale would strengthen our friendly ties with the rest of Asia. We feel that all these expectations of the initial organizers of the Biennales have largely been fulfilled. It is surprising that despite political rough times the Shilpakala Academy has been able to hold the Biennale regularly without interruption. During the last 33 years, the latest, the 16th Biennale was organized successfully throughout December 2014. Both the number of participants and the qualitative standard of art works have shown remarkable progress. The latest Biennale had 32 countries from all over the Asian continent with hundreds of artists exhibiting their latest works of creatively. The exhibits used to be shown in several locations in the city until 2012, since which time all works could be accommodated in a single location, the modern National Art Gallery in the Shilpakala Academy complex at Segunbaghicha in the capital.

The Asian Art Biennale is not only a massive exposition of art works, but also an event where artists, art writers and art connoisseurs can meet together, interact and exchange their views and ideas on art. This is a wonderful event for enriching cultural understanding. There have been seminars and social events in the Biennale. That the forms and philosophies of contemporary art in Asia have experienced dynamic transformation have become evident from the Biennales over the last three decades. The statements that the artists have made range from noncommittal personal views to radical political and social opinions. The stylistic identities have also been changing from modern to post-modern and beyond. The mediums of art expressions have evolved with time, with more inclination towards video installation and the performing art.

Asia is a huge continent with countries of diverse political, social and economic identities and yet the artists of the continent have things in common, they value the beauty of nature and the significance of the human being. The Asian Art Biennale Bangladesh like other major international art exhibitions is indeed a great cultural festival of Asian artists. It has helped in strengthening international fellow feeling to a significant extent.

Art Writer and Former Chairman, University Grants Commission of Bangladesh
8 February 2015

Bangladesh- Soviet Relations and Opening the New Era

Mst Sunjida Perven



Soviet Union was a strong supporter in the liberation war of Bangladesh in 1971. Among the great powers, the soviet union which first responded officially to the army action in East Pakistan on march 1971. Within a week of the army's drive against the elected representatives and the people, The prompt Soviet reaction to the crisis was expressed in Podgorny's letter to Yahya Khan on 2 April 1971 . He wrote to Yahya Khan expressing "great alarm" at the turn of events in East Pakistan. He urged Yahya to take "the most urgent measures to stop the bloodshed and repression against the population in East Pakistan and for turning to methods of a peaceful political settlement".This would be in the interest of Pakistan and in" the interest of preserving peace in the area". Anxious to avoid

being seen as interfering in the internal affairs of Pakistan.Podgorny added that he was guided by "the generally recognized humanitarian principles recorded in the universal declaration of human rights".This response had been helped to recovery world support. Not only that but also Soviet initially contributed considerable relief and rehabilitation aid to the new nation. Whereas, China and the United States supported Pakistan due to their different strategic reasons.They took it as a interfering in the internal affairs of Pakistan. But in this circumstances, had there be no vetoes at the security council by the Soviet Union, Bangladesh would not have independence so soon.

Though before July-August Soviet accepted the policy of neutrality, after time being Soviet changed her policy. Influx of refugee was increasing day by day. Threaten by China to India above all,Indian government was in pressure to provide food, medical assistance and shelter to those destitute and frightened people. The cost which is estimated at more than \$ 10 million a week, is being assumed by India at a time when its economic assistance from the world bank and the consortium (the United states, Britain, France, Italy, Japan & Canada) has been sharply reduced and more than & 500 million in principal & interest on past debts is scheduled to be repaid this year alone. India became anxious. Indian government requested to Soviet to help in this context. That's why Soviet sent airplane with aid for the refuse's on 15 June 1971. Soviet alarmed India again and again in which India would not recognition of the independence of Bangladesh. The Soviet effort to avoid an India-Pakistan war by urging Islamabad to use peaceful means to solve the international political problems in Pakistan.

After July, Soviet changed her policy which paved the way to reach the goal. Soviet and India expressed their views that Pakistan government have to create such a condition in which refugee can return their home with safety. At last on 9th August 1971, the foreign ministers of India and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics(USSR) signed a treaty of "Peace, Friendship and Co-operation" valid for twenty years. The treaty was signed at the height of the crisis in South Asia. Article IX, of the treaty stated, "In the event of either party being subjected to an attack or a threat there of, the high contracting parties shall immediately enter mutual consultations in order to remove threat and to take appropriate effective measures to ensure peace and the security of their countries". Kissinger took it as **"Moscow threw a lighted match into a powder keg"**. From Moscow's stand point, the main aim of the treaty was to secure a special relationship with India and ensure that India stood with the Soviet Union in the latter's escalating rivalry with China.

In mid-September 1971 Prime Minister Indira Gandhi visited Washington, various European countries for gathering support. On her way back to Delhi, she stopped over in Moscow on September 29, for a final talking on East Pakistan. She got a warm reception. After prolonged discussion with Brezhnev and Kosygin, they agreed that Bangle problem could only be settled by war with Pakistan and that the Soviet Union would provide India all-out support issued on East Pakistan. During that period Soviet provided

considerable supplies of weapons of all kinds. Soviet also continuously launched satellites for detailed high resolution monitoring of both Pakistan and Chinese military force movements. They also supplied their frontline Antonov-126 airborne. Most important perhaps was the human and electronic intelligence. They supplied to concerned agencies of the government of India practically in real time. All these support gave a great advantage in the question of the independence of Bangladesh.

On December 3, Pakistan attacked, bombing on all important air fields near the border with West Pakistan in Jammu & Kashmir and others. Then India recognized Bangladesh as an independent country on December 6. In this time Kissinger persuaded Nixon to protect their ally. Washington forced to Chinese to mass troops on the Indian border. Most importantly, warned the Soviets not to intervene on India's behalf. Even USA urged Iran and Jordan to transfer US-supplied combat aircraft to Pakistan. Not only that, It sent its most formidable aircraft carrier, the USS Enterprise into the Bay of Bengal. During this vital period, Soviet sent an armada from Vladivostok but it was sailing four days behind the US armada. The purpose of the Soviet armada was to fly the flag in East Pakistan's support. When the US armada's troop ships were barely 16 hours from their Chittagong landing, Leonid Brezhnev rang up Nixon on their "hot line" and told him in no uncertain terms that if the US Marines landed "it would be the third world war". Besides, Soviet put all its strategic missiles on maximum alert for an attack on the USA. And then on December 15, US armada turned around and went back down to the bay. In the meantime, USA and its allies were tried to break war by showing a "War Breaking Proposal" at the security council of United Nations. Even when the independence of Bangladesh is near about, on 13 December they proposed again. And it also failed because of Soviet and Poland's veto. Ratio was 11:2. So had there be no vetoes at the Security Council by the Soviet Union (permanent member), Bangladesh would not have independence so quickly. Bangladesh Government grateful to Soviet Union and this gratefulness have been encouraged to open the new door of friendship. Soviet Union recognized Bangladesh as an independent country on 24 January 1972.

Soon after independence of Bangladesh, in first march 1972 the Prime Minister Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman visited Moscow which was his first formal overseas trip to express deep appreciation for the role of the USSR played in 1971. After assassination of Sheikh Mujib in 1975, the relations with Soviet Union received a jolt and felt betrayed and annoyed with Bangladesh for a long period of time. Soviet Union disappeared & the Russian Federation came in its place. Under the changed situation both Bangladesh and Russia have renewed their relation to strengthen in various sectors. Gradually, a new trend of co-operation has been started between the two countries. We can say it has been started already. It is increasing day by day. The Prime minister Sheikh Hasina visited 14th to 16th January to Russia in 2013. During the period, Bangladesh inked its biggest arms contract worth \$ 1 billion with Russia, which also announced a \$ 500 million dollar to Dhaka for the construction of the country's first nuclear power plant. Prime Minister on 16th January underscored the need for formation of the Bangladesh- Russia parliamentary friendship group to further strengthen the co-operation between the two countries in Socio-economic, educational, agricultural, energy and cultural fields. Hopefully, it will be continued.

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The Philippines- Past and Present

Munir Zaman



The history of the Philippines suggests its uniqueness in more than one ways. It is the first South Asian country colonized by the west before it had the time to develop as a centrally governed State or a nation. The people, almost wholly made up of settlers from Indonesia and Malay Peninsula lived in extended kinship groups lead by chieftains (Datus) which suggested presence of a simple form of social organization. The various tribal groups were engaged in agriculture, fisheries, or hunting. It seems that the agriculture and allied activities not merely supported the living of the people but also yielded an exportable surplus of agriculture produce. From the 15th century onwards Arab merchants, already active in Indonesia and Malaya began a phase of close

trading relations with the Islands of the Southern Philippines. They also brought in with them the message of Islam to these Islands.

However, the progress in the spread of Islam was halted in 16th century with the arrival of the Spanish who, fired by the catholic spirit of counter- revolution, sought to make good the loss of adherents to Protestantism in north Europe through conversion of the natives in the Americas and the Pacific. Another motive of their arrival was consistent with the mercantilist practices of the time, that is acquisition of wealth (gold and silver) through trade carried on with royal support or outright plunder when possible. By the end of the sixteen century most of the coastal and flat lands from Luzon to northern areas of Mindanao were in the Spanish hands. It was only in Mindanao and Sulu Islands that the Spanish met with significant resistance and their hold was uncertain. Subjugation of these areas was a task that was left for the Americans to be achieved centuries later.

The long Spanish rule introduced catholic Christianity which became the faith of the overwhelming majority of the people. They also gave the country a name (after King Phillip, the 2nd and by extension to the nation- the Filipinos).A most remarkable change was in the area of land ownership. The Spanish abolished communal ownership of land and created large agricultural estates, i.e haciendas –owned mostly by Spanish settlers and catholic churchmen. The large estates almost by definition precluded intensive farming and agriculture suffered. Although, more than one fourth of the land was arable, the country had not attained even in the later part of the last century agricultural self-sufficiency. (Encyclo Britannica 1994).

Another feature of the Spanish rule was widespread corruption at high places. The governor- general and the high officials had the privilege of engaging in commerce for profit. They route to rapid private wealth creation was not restricted only to the secular officials. Catholic bishops and members of the religious orders acquired great wealth mostly in land obtained by liberal royal grants.

The brief U.S.-Spanish War of 1898 brought to an end to the 400 year Spanish rule. However, the hope of the Filipinos for immediate independence did not materialize as the American setup their own rule. Freedom had to wait for nearly half a century. The transition to full independence would have come about earlier had it not been interfered by the Second World War and a short period of Japanese occupation.

The U.S. rule could be credited with a few well-conceived policies that would immensely benefit the Philippines. First was the priority given to education. In the 1920s, education accounted for one half of

the governmental expenditures. Literacy rate increased to 50 percent from a low 20 percent at the end of the Spanish rule. As the medium of an instruction was largely English the people also acquired a common language and a 'linguistic key' to western technology and culture. No less important were the steps taken under the U.S. administration towards preparing the Philippines for self-government. In 1933, during the period of great depression, the U.S. congress passed an act which set a date for independence. This was followed by the framing of a constitution which bore strong resemblance to the U.S. model and an interim period during which the country would be prepared for democratic governance. The process had to be postponed due to Japanese occupation during the Second World War. Independence did come as the war ended. Interestingly, one of the earliest acts of the independent Philippines was extension of amnesty to all collaborators with Japan, whose number was fairly substantial.

The U.S. rule in the Philippines was however, not an unmixed blessing. In fact, at least two of their policies led to unwholesome conditions for the future of the country. First, was the deliberate policy of encouraging migration of the Christian population from the north to the Muslim areas of the south, escalating in mid 1930s. This gave rise to a conflict which presently has little prospect of a durable solution despite some modest steps. The second problem was the failure to reform the Spanish legacy of supporting large agricultural estates owned by a class of rich people with peasant-farmers losing out their land. The problem explodes from time to time and is usually labeled as communist insurgency.

The four century long Spanish rule and a much shorter U.S. rule have both shaped in a large measure the cultural mores as well as social and political systems of the Philippines. The legacy of the Spanish ruling class to treat the public offices as sources of private gains has some how survived as evident from the conduct of a fair number of the members of the ruling elite. After the exit of President Marcos from power, evidence emerged that the ex-president, his family and close associates 'had looted the Philippines economy of billions of dollars through embezzlement and other corrupt practices.' President Marcos created a dictatorial rule, made a farce of the electoral process and was suspected of complicity in murderous acts (global.Britannica.com). One of his successors, President Estrada was impeached from corruption.

The Philippines had to pay a heavy price for unbridled corruption of its ruling elites. For decades, in 1980s, 1990s and even in the first decade of the 21st century the economy frequently experienced negative or near negative growth. However, in recent years the situation has begun to change in remarkable way, perhaps due to widespread and eloquent public rejection of corruption and absolute refusal to come to terms with it.

Former Ambassador and Secretary to the Government of Bangladesh.

Urbanization in Bangladesh: Challenges and Lessons

Dr. Salehuddin Ahmed



Introduction

The urban population of Bangladesh has grown at a yearly average rate of six per cent since independence, at a time when the national population growth was 2.2 per cent. As a result, urban population has grown six-fold, compared with a 70 per cent increase in rural population. As per recent estimate, about 40 million people (25% of total population) currently live in urban areas, which is projected to cross 80 million by the year 2030. Urban growth in Bangladesh is considerably higher than its South Asian neighbors- India and Pakistan have grown at about 3 per cent annually. Urbanization has been more concentrated in the largest cities. More than half of the urban population lives in the four largest cities.

One significant feature of urbanization in Bangladesh is that urban population is increasing at different rates in different urban centers. A considerable proportion of urban population lives in district towns and Pourashava areas. According to population census report of 2001, there were 332 urban centers with population below 25,000. Populations of many towns were more or less stable and there were depopulation in 15 districts during the decade 1991 and 2001. So there is ample scope for the development of new small satellite towns and expansion of small existing intermediate towns or urban centers around the big cities or in prospective regions to reduce excessive urbanization pressure on large cities. There are 9 City Corporations and 309 Pourashvas in the country. *Pourashvas* or Municipalities are classified according to financial strength. In addition, there are also some urban centers that are under Cantonment Boards.

In the case of Bangladesh the rural to urban migration has contributed to more than 40 percent of the change in urban population. The lure of employment opportunities existing in these cities is another reason for urban migration. Most of the industrial establishments and businesses as well as business services are concentrated in the largest cities. Dhaka alone accounts for 80 percent of the garments industry-the mainstay of manufacturing in Bangladesh. The domination of business services, particularly finance and real estate services is considerably higher in the four major cities relative to the rest of the country.

The *Pourshavas* (municipalities) and City Corporations constitute the two types of urban local governments in Bangladesh. Their functions are basically similar with some distinction being made for compulsory and optional functions. They are supposed to provide a wide range of local public goods (LPG) and services including garbage collection, maintenance of streets and street lighting, water supply and drainage, traffic management, maintenance of educational institutions, public libraries, and parks and gardens. As in other South Asian countries, however, acute shortage of funds is a *hindrance* for urban local bodies in Bangladesh. Thus, their key LPG functions are mainly restricted to garbage collection, street lighting, water supply and parks and gardens. An additional function that *Pourshavas* and City Corporations have been carrying out (either through own funds as in Dhaka or through external funding) is slum improvement.

Urban local bodies (ULBs) in Bangladesh large and small, are subject to strong control from higher levels of government, specially the central government. For instance, the size and boundaries of ULBs and their power to make regulations and conduct their affairs are all subject to central government approval. This control is particularly pernicious when it comes to urban finances. In general, the political, administrative and fiscal autonomy of municipalities and corporations in Bangladesh leaves much to be desired

At the local Level, Pourashava is the basic planning and development authority. Through the Pourashava Bill 2009, the Pourashava authorities were empowered to prepare Master Plan, implement development schemes and exercise building control. A Pourashava consists of a Mayor, Councilors whose number is fixed by the government and women Councilors of reserved seats. The Chairman and Councilors of a Pourashava are elected by direct election on the basis of adult franchise. The Pourashava (Municipal) Act, 2009 has given the Pourashavas wide responsibilities, but the administrative, financial and technical capabilities of the Pourashava are not adequate to meet the challenges associated with rapid urbanization in the country.

Challenges and Lessons

Emerging Challenges for Urban Services

Drastic changes in the physical, economic and social structure in the urban areas resulting from rapid urbanization has been posing serious challenges for sustainable urban development in Bangladesh. Urban areas are now afflicted with innumerable problems ranging from law and order situation to deteriorating environmental conditions. Although majority of the urban centers face such challenges, severity of the problems vary depending on the size of the centers. The environmental problems of urban areas have direct and immediate implications for human health and safety, especially for the poor, and for business productivity. Urban environmental problems are of central concern for policy makers since adverse environmental conditions resulting from inadequate waste management, poor drainage, air pollution, lack of access to safe water and sanitation, exposure to excessive noise level; traffic congestion as well as inadequate health services exact a heavy toll on the quality of life.

The impact of urbanization is felt more intensely in major cities of the country. In Dhaka, for example, the quantity of solid waste generated at present varies between 3000 to 3500 tons per day. DCC is capable of collecting only 50% of this waste, leaving the remaining half unattended. A part of this waste either remains in the streets or on nearly open ground. Some of the waste flows to the open drains and blocks the normal drainage flow. As a result, water logging sometimes disrupts the normal city life for days during monsoon. The serious health hazard posed by this situation is of major concern. The situation with respect to water supply is also quite unsatisfactory. The Dhaka Water and Sewerage Authority (DWASA) was capable of supplying only 1500 million liters of water in 2004 (75% of demand) per day for the population of about 13 million while the demand of the consumers was 2000 million liters per day. Only a limited segment of the population is enjoying adequate supply of water while for the rest of the population the water supply is quite inadequate. The situation in low income communities is much worse. The supply of piped water at the Pourashava level is also extremely unsatisfactory. Only about 35% of the Pourashavas have some facility for supply of piped water and that is also in a very limited area in each of these Pourashavas. In 2005 only 28.8% of the households in urban areas had connection to piped water supply.

Extreme traffic congestion on urban roads is a major challenge for big as well as intermediate urban centers in Bangladesh. Rapid urbanization in Bangladesh during the last few decades increased transport demand quite significantly leading to manifold increase in the number of motorized and non-motorized vehicles on the streets. The increase in the number of vehicles without concomitant expansion of road facilities has led to severe congestion on roads and deterioration in urban environment.

The situation further deteriorated due to insufficient public transport facilities and weak management of traffic. Non-existence of transport planning and inefficient traffic engineering result in low quality traffic management. Mass transit facilities are poorly organized and dominated by slower forms of vehicles such as rickshaws. Buses are in short supply and there is inadequate metro or rail system to handle day-to-day commuter traffic in big cities. One of the major problems that the urban residents are facing is the lack of access to serviced land which is posing as an obstacle to their meaningful participation in the urban economy. The urban land market which directly affects the urban environment and quality of urban life suffers from many distortions due to lack of proper land development and management policies including

lack of planning and slow provision of infrastructure and services, thus leading to unplanned or ribbon development of land in the urban periphery.

Ever increasing land price has also contributed to the deterioration of housing situation in urban areas. Housing deficit in urban areas was estimated to be about 0.95 million units in 1991 which increased to about 1.13 million units estimated in 2001. The dismal housing scenario has also been a major factor contributing to significant homelessness in urban areas.

Apart from the existing huge shortage in housing stock, the majority of the dwelling units is structurally very poor, lack services and utilities, and built without proper planning. According to BBS (2007) only 24.24 percent of the houses in urban areas in 2005 were made of brick/cement compared to 71.68 percent houses made of corrugated iron sheet/wood and 4.08 percent made of straw/hay/bamboo etc. Rapid growth of urban population and consequent demand for land and housing has made the situation even worse, particularly in big cities. Very few households have access to land and credit facilities. The situation is particularly worse for the lower income group and the poor who live on marginal settlements built by small land developers or by the occupants themselves without any security of tenure. Due to lack of tenure, the poor cannot meet the need for guarantees of loan repayment. This puts most conventional sources of credit for housing construction out of the reach of the poor resulting in lower level of housing investment. This led to overcrowding, lower quality of housing units and the proliferation of slums and squatter settlements.

Lessons so far Learnt

In Bangladesh, unlike India and Pakistan, local government reform has focused on rural governments. Also, in terms of services provided by different tiers of urban local governments (and in terms of sources of finance), there is hardly any difference between City Corporations (CCs) and *Pourashavas*. Thus, sanitation, solid waste disposal, roads, streetlights, traffic maintenance, urban poverty and slum improvement are in the jurisdiction of CCs and the *Pourashavas*. For the major cities of Dhaka and Chittagong, however, a parastatal agency the Water and Sewerage Authority (WASA) manages water supply and waste collection. There is the Capital Development Authority (RAJUK in Bangla) in Dhaka and the Chittagong Development Authority (CDA) in Chittagong. Major development projects in these cities are undertaken by these parastatals like Delhi Development Agency (DDA) in Delhi. Property taxes, user charges for public utilities, fees, fines, rental income, government grants and funds are the sources of revenue. An interesting feature *vis-à-vis* urban local finance in Bangladesh is the important role of international donors due to poor cost recovery of user charges at the municipal level. Donor funds are only channeled through the governments. According to the budget of the Dhaka City Council for the 2001-02 the main sources of revenue are taxes (48%) and rent (21%). With regard to expenditure for the same period, salaries constituted a massive 44% of total expenses (World Bank, 2005).

There is a mismatch between revenue and expenditure. This mismatch has been exacerbated by the increased responsibility and functions that urban local bodies in are being asked to shoulder like many other South Asian Cities. There is considerable scope for implementing conventional solutions such as increasing the efficiency of tax administration especially of property taxes, cost recovery of services and improving the quality of expenditure.

Municipalities in Bangladesh have witnessed nearly two decades of urban infrastructure initiatives with STIDP-I and II, MSP and the on-going UGIIP-1 since 2003. The MSP and its successor institution, Bangladesh Municipal Development Fund, presented a model of supporting decentralization especially by opening up access to infrastructure funding based on objective financial and institutional criteria outside the government 'sinter governmental fiscal transfer frame. UGIIP-1 made a radical departure from earlier initiatives in linking performance of Municipalities in achieving action based governance improvements to access infrastructure funding in phases.

Focusing on governance improvements and a performance based approach urban infrastructure improvements have proved very successful; (i) it addresses a wide range of areas simultaneously from improved participation of various stakeholder groups in service delivery to increased financial

accountability and improved administrative procedures; (ii) local governments feel full ownership in improving governance reforms, considering these reforms as an opportunity to improve their financial and administrative shortcomings. They have been able to adapt to the new governance practices within a short period of time. The following lessons learned: (i) The performance of the Municipalities has been particularly good in areas where the identified governance indicators are concise and output oriented; (ii) municipalities took greater ownership and interests in areas where their legitimacy and performance in the local public eye improved immediately and turned out to be credible; (iii) adopting governance improvements require substantive and timely capacity building inputs.

Based on an extensive review of previous projects focusing on governance improvement and a performance based approach, the following opportunities for improving this approach have been identified; (i) ensure that mechanisms are in place to deepen participatory planning ensuring prioritization of the needs of the poor; (ii) refine the governance improvement action plan to include more qualitative achievements and ensure that the achievements will sustain beyond project implementation; (iii) inculcating the practice of responsible financial decisions and discipline through financing and repayment mechanisms; (iv) strengthening citizen's interface and accountability of the municipalities; (v) greater focus on capacity building of institutions at the municipality level in particular and (vi) improvements in O&M management.

One of the most significant lessons is the criticality of national level support to municipalities in terms of sector wide policy support, legislative and executive actions to enable more effective functioning of municipalities and supportive measures to improve their finance and financial management. In this regard the parliament has recently passed the Pourashava Bill 2009 and City Corporations Bill 2009.

The urban local governments face what we call "fiscal gap"- the gap between the needs for service and financial resources to provide them (Bahl & Finn, 1992). This can be reduced by a) reducing responsibilities that require local public expenditure; b) increasing local revenue mobilization; c) increasing the amount of revenues transferred from the central government; d) involving public-private partnership in providing urban services.

The 'fiscal gap' can be attributed, among other factors, to demand for large number of high quality services which are beyond the financing capacity of an urban local government. A careful assessment of the resource constraints of an urban government and a realistic formulation of the services to be provided by an urban local government unit are necessary to address the issue.

The central policy makers in Bangladesh have to solve the fiscal problems of the urban local government units instead of resorting to the stance of resisting the need for strengthening local governments (LGs).

The Way Forward

The dependence of local government bodies including urban ones on central government, for finance must be reduced. The present ad-hoc and discretionary practices of central government in allocating resources should be abandoned to achieve fiscal decentralization. The best way to achieve fiscal decentralization in the true spirit of overall decentralization is to set a permanent Local Government Finance Commission (LGFC) in Bangladesh. In India State Finance Commission (SFC) consisting of experts in public finance and public administration is formed by each state government at regular intervals of 5 years under an article of the Indian Constitution to assess and revise the financial positions of Panchayat raj and urban local governments. In India the state governments enjoy substantial administrative and financial autonomy, and so SFCs are formed at regular intervals. But in Bangladesh a highly centralized unitary government exists, therefore a permanent LGFC will be more effective than one set up at regular intervals.

The Local Government Finance Commission in Bangladesh may be entrusted with the following responsibilities:

- Formulate appropriate principles and procedures for resource mobilization by different tiers of local government bodies;
- Identify the sources of taxes, cess, toll, fee and facilitate its collection;
- Assist in assessment of properties, income and other assets for imposing taxes;
- Allocate transfers and grants in-aid from the central government to the local government bodies;
- Allocate fund from the central government budget (Revenue and Development budgets) to the local government bodies;
- Set up the targets for revenue collection for different tiers of local government and recommend for matching grants from the central government;
- Resolve any conflict in the financial matters arising between a local government unit and a unit of the central government;
- Financial supervision and monitoring of local government expenditures and receipts;
- Frame financial rules for the local government bodies.

The commission members (including the Chairman) should be selected carefully and the commission should be given full “autonomy” and should not be under any ministry and should only be answerable to the national parliament.

A question may arise; does financial decentralization jeopardize macroeconomic stability? There is little evidence of an incompatibility of decentralization and successful macro-stabilization policy (e.g. Canada, Germany, Switzerland, USA, European countries). Roy Bahl (1999) recognized the importance of tying both political and fiscal decentralization together. Bahl (1999) notes that in order to capture the efficiency gains of local government, it would be necessary for the local government to have “a significant set of expenditure responsibilities and a significant amount of taxing powers”.

The local government, especially City Corporations may also consider to issue municipal bonds to raise fund. However, this is a complex process which, among other things, requires legal reforms or issuing bonds. The roles of Ministry of Finance, Bangladesh Bank, Security and Exchange Commission have to be re-examined and revised for bond. Another important aspect is that the city corporations’ performances must be improved in order to have good credit ratings of the bodies, before issuing bonds. Since Bangladesh has already received good sovereign credit ratings from Moody and S&P, the process should be initiated right now for sovereign bonds and municipal bonds. City Corporations like Dhaka and Chittagong may explore raising fund from the market for some good income/ fee raising projects. A study by Daniels and Vijayakumar (2002) has shown that during the last decade of the 20th century more than 400 local and state entities in 29 countries other than USA issued municipal bonds to the amount of \$ 270 billion.

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THE GREAT CHINESE PILGRIM VEN. XUAN ZANG AND HIS TEACHER VEN. SILABHADRA OF BANGLADESH AT THE NALANDA MAHAVIHARA

Professor Dr. Sukomal Barua



Ven. Xuan Zang (A.D. 600-664), the great Chinese Pilgrim was a native of both Chenliu at Modern Kaifeng in Honan Province and Koushih in the South of the modern Yenshih Country also in Honan Province. He was ordained with the special permission of the Imperial Envoy, Cheng Shan-Kuo, Lord of Justice, and was able to discern other people's talents. Being asked by whom Venerable Xuan Zang said: "I wish to continue the task of the Tathagata and to glorify His bequeathed teachings." The Imperial Envoy observed his perfect manners, praised his ambition and granted him special permission to become a monk. Strangely enough, in the years which followed the words of the Imperial Envoy were to prove evidently true.

After Xuan Zang became a Buddhist monk, he stayed with his second elder brother, Chang-Chieh, at a Monastery to study the Mahaparinirvana-Sutra and the Mahayana-Samgraha. He used to complete reading the Buddhist texts, especially the second one, in one sitting. After the second reading, he could memorise all of it. Being astonished at his extraordinary talent, the people requested him to mount the pulpit and to repeat a sermon what the teacher had preached when he was only thirteen years old Xuan Zang gave an exposition with full analysis in complete concordance with what the teacher had taught. Thus, his fame spread far and wide.

There was a great turmoil in the country at that time. Although he was still young, he could at once realize the seriousness of the situation and asked his elder brother to leave the place at once and so both of them reached Changan in A.D. 618.

But Xuan Zang was not satisfied with the Buddhist environment there. So he requested his elder brother to go to the Szechuan with him, a prosperous Buddhist centre of learning, where they may study. Hence they began to travel again.

Having passed through the Tzu Wu Valley, an important passage-way among the Chinling Mountains between Shensi and Szechuan, they arrived at Hanchuan identified with modern Nancheng country in Shensi Province. Thereafter, Ven. Xuan Zang and his elder brother again proceeded towards Chengtu, a centre with a wide range of the Gospels of Buddha. During that period, the whole Chinese Empire was suffering from starvation and disorder, except Szechuan, where food was abundant and people lived in peace. As Xuan Zang's intelligence and talent surpassed all the monks who lived there, the people respected and honoured him for his learning.

At the age of twenty years Xuan Zang took his full ordination in A.D. 622 at Chengtu, where he observed the Rainy Season Retreat and studied the Vinaya-Pitaka. After the completion of his studies in Szechuan, he desired to visit the capital for the advancement of his knowledge. But his elder brother did not wish him to go. So he could not immediately carry out his intention. Still later without the consent of his elder brother he went away in the company of some traders and sailed down the River Yangtse. He passed the Three Gorges and reached the Tien Huang Monastery at Chingchow identified with modern Kiangling country in Hupeh province, from where he travelled northward in search of learned teachers and stopped at Hsiangchow identified with modern Anyang country in Honan Province. Then he went to Chao-Chow which is modern Chao Country in Hopei Province and ultimately reached Changan where he stayed in the Great Enlightenment Monastery.

However, he was bewildered with various interpretations of Buddha's doctrines by the Buddhist teachers. So Xuan Zang made up his mind to travel to the West in order to clear his doubts. Together with some

companions, he submitted a petition to the Imperial Government asking permission to go to India which was refused. The companions gave up the idea, but Xuan Zang was firm with his intention.

As he had to travel alone and the roads to the West leading to India were perilous, he tried himself with all sorts of physical pains in order to test his endurance and prepare himself for the hardships of the journey. Thereafter he entered a Buddhist temple to make up his mind in the presence of Buddha's image and pray to all the saints to protect him with their divine influences so that he might go and return safely.

Ven. Xuan Zang in the eighth month of the third year of Chen Kuan, i.e. A.D. 629 was about to commence his journey secretly at the age of twenty years only. From Changan he passed through Chinchow in modern Tienshui Country in Kansu Province, Lanchow which was the capital of Kansu Province, and Liang-Chow identified with modern Wuwei Country also in Kansu Province also the capital of Hohsi bordering on the West Regions of China.

Thereafter crossing the western border of China, Xuan Zang left the old country of Kau-Chang of the Turks and passed through Karashan, Kucha, Baluka or Aksu, Nujkend, Chaj, Sutrishna, Samarkand, Bokhara, Khwarazm, Kesh, Termez on the north bank of Amu-Darya, and Kunduz on the eastern bank of the Surkh-ab. At Kunduz in Central Asia, he met with the eldest son of the Khan of Turks. The prince married the sister of the King of Kao-Chang, from whom Hiuen Tsiang (Xuan Zang) had letters of recommendation. After some delay the pilgrim proceeded in the company of some priests from Balkh, to that city (Po-ho). Here he remained examining the sacred relics of his religion for some days. From here he departed southwards along the Balkh river to Dara-gaz, and entering the mountains, he proceeded southwards to Bamiyan. So all the countries named betwixt the Oxus and the Hindu Kush, Hiuen Tsiang only visited Hwo (Kunduz), Po-ho (Balkh), Kie-chi (Gaz) and Fan-yen-na (Bamiyan).” Having crossed Kapisa he entered India and passed through Lamghan along the northern bank of the Kabul River, Nagarhara which was the ancient capital of Jalalabad District, Gandhara Udyana lying to the north of Peshawar on the Swat River, Balti or Baltistan, Takshasila, Simhapura, Urasa or Uruga, Kashmir, Punach, Rajapuri or Rajauri lying south of Kashmir and South-east of Punach, Takkadesa, Chinapati or Chinagari lying eleven miles north of Amritsar, Jalandhara, Kuluta or Kulu, Satadru, Paryatra, Mathura, Sthanesvara, Srughana, Matipura, Brahmapura, Govisana, Ahichchatra, Virasana, Kapitha, Kanyakulja or Kanauj, Ayodhya, Hayamukha probably lying 104 miles north west of Allahabad, Prayaga, Kausambi, Visakha or probably Saketa, Sravasti, Kapilavastu, Ramagrama, Kusinagara, Varanasi, Ghazipur, Vaisali, Country of Vrijis or Samvrijis, Nepal, Pataliputra, Bodh-Gaya with the Bodhi Tree and other surrounding areas and at last reached Nalanda where situated the Great Nalanda Mahavihara, the premier seat of Buddhistic and Secular Studies was started. According to Vincent A. Smith Ven. Zuan Zang stayed at Nalanda in Bihar for some times in A. D. 637. *Life*, p.113; returned, *ibid.*, p.121. Counting his subsequent visit at the end of A.D. 642, his total residence at Nalanda amounted to about two years.

Being a former student of Ven. Silabhadra of Nalanda Mahavihara, Ven. Xuan Zang visited a Monastery named after that great teacher in the south-west of convent of Gunamati about 20 Li to the solitary hill near the Mount Gaya. This was the Monastery whrich Ven. Silabhadra, Master of the *Sastras* after his victory build out of the fund of a village which where given up. It was established by the side of the single sharp crag like a *Stupa* which contained some sacred relics of Buddha. During that period Ven. Silabhadra was the master of the *Sastras* and a great teacher belonged to the family of king of Samatata (San-mo-ta-ch'a) in present Bangladesh, and belongs to the Brahmana caste. Ven. Xuan Zang had heard: Ven. Silabhadra “loved learning and had gained a wide reputation. Travelling through the Indies to examine and seek after religious truth, he came to this Kingdom (of Magadha), and in the Sangharama of Nalanda (Na-lan-t'o) he encountered Dharmapala Bodhisttava (Hu-fa-pu-sa). Hearing him explain the law, his understanding was made clear, and he requested to become a disciple (i.e. to assume the soiled or coloured robes of a mendicant). He inquired into the most subtle questions, and investigated the way of deliverance to its conclusion; and thus having reached the highest point of intelligence, he established his fame over men of his time, even to distant countries. There was a heretic of South India who... hearing of Dharmapala's fame, the pride of self rose against him, and moved by profound envy, ... said, ‘I am a man

of Southern India. It is reported that in the King's country there is a great master of Sastras (i.e. Dharmapala); I am but ignorant, yet I would wish to discuss with him,' 'It is true, as you affirm', the King said; and forthwith he sent a messenger to ask Dharmapala thus: 'There is a heretic of Southern India who has come from a long distance here, and desires to discuss with you. Will you be convinced to come to the hall of assembly and discuss with him?' Dharmapala having heard the tidings, gathered up his garments and went, whilst Silabhadra and the inferior disciples surrounded him as he advanced. Then Silabhadra (the chief disciple) addressed him thus: 'Wither goest thou so quickly?' Dharmapala answered, 'Since the sun of wisdom went down, and only the lamp of the inherited doctrine burns quietly, the heretics like clouds of ants and bees have risen; therefore I am now going to crush that one in discussion'. Silabhadra said, 'As I have myself attended at various discussions, let me destroy this heretic.' Dharmapala, knowing his history, allowed him to have his way. At this time Silabhadra was just thirty years old. The assembly, despising his youth, feared that it would be difficult for him alone to undertake the discussion. Dharmapala knowing that the mind of his followers is disturbed, hastened to relieve them and said, 'In honouring the conspicuous talent of a person we do not say, 'He has cut his teeth count his years according to his teeth. As I see the case before us now, I feel sure that he will defeat the heretic; he is strong enough.' On the day of discussion (assembly of discussion) the people came together from far and near; both old and young in numbers assembled. Then the heretical teacher on his part laid open his case with great emphasis, and penetrated to the utmost the abstruse points (of his arguments). Silabhadra followed his arguments (principles), and refuted them by profound and subtle allegations. The heretic, his words being exhausted, was covered with shame and retired. The King, to reward the virtue (of Silabhadra), gave him the revenues of this town as a bequest. The master of Sastras (i.e. Silabhadra), declining the offer, said, 'A master who wears the garments of religion (dyed garments) knows how to be counted with little and to keep himself pure. What would he do with a town?' The King in reply said, 'The King of Law has passed into obscure (abode), and the vessel of wisdom has been engulfed in the stream.' If there are no distinctions now made (between the learned and ignorant), then no encouragement is given to the scholar to press forward in the attainment of religion. Pray, of your pity, accept my offering.' The doctor (i.e. Silabhadra), not persisting in his refusal, accepted the town and built this Sangharama, vast and magnificent and endowed it with the revenues of the town, as a means of providing it with the offerings necessary for religious service.

Ven. Xuan Zang's first visit to Nalanda was really colourful. After having worshipped the Bodhi Tree and the image of Buddha at Bodh-Gaya, he was invited by the people of the celebrated Nalanda Mahavihara. On his arrival, he was welcomed with banners, umbrellas, flowers and incense. As he reached the Monastery, all the monks there assembled to meet him, and a special seat was prepared for him by the side of the Abbot Ven. Silabhadra, the senior most monk from Bengal now in Bangladesh. When the monks had seated themselves, the Director of Duties, beating a bell announced that Ven. Xuan Zang was to dwell in the Monastery and that he might use all the utensils and implements of the Monastery with the other monks. Thereafter some twenty monks of Nalanda who were well versed in the Tripitaka and of good manners, accompanied Ven. Xuan Zang to see Ven. Silabhadra who was called throughout India the 'Right Dharma Keeper' out of deep reverence. His first meeting with Ven. Silabhadra had been described by monk Hui-li as follows: "The Master (i.e. Ven. Xuan Zang) went with the monks to see him, and having seen him, worshipped him as a teacher with utmost respect. He crawled on his knees and prostrated himself in accordance with their rites, and worshipped him at his feet when he had worshipped and praised the teacher, the Right Dharma Keeper (Silabhadra) ordered seats to be prepared for the Master and other monks. After they had seated themselves, he asked the Master: 'Where do you come from?'"

In reply, the master said, 'I came from China to learn the Yogacarya-bhumi Sastra from the teacher.'

On hearing this, the Right Dharma Keeper shed tears and called his disciple Buddhahadra, who was his nephew, more than seventy years old, thoroughly learned in the Tripitaka and eloquent in discussion. He said to him: 'You may tell the monks how I suffered from illness three years ago.' Having heard of the narrative relating to severe illness of Silabhadra, Ven. Xuan Zang said: 'Since the case has been said, I

will study with utmost effort. May you be kind enough to accept me as a pupil.’ The Right Dharma Keeper asked again: ‘How many years did you spend on the way? Three years,’ replied the Master. Since the time coincided with his dream, the teacher said many pleasant things to please the Master (Ven. Xuan Zang) in order to show his affection as a teacher to a pupil. After the interview the Master took his leave... Always present (at the Nalanda Mahavihara) were there 10,000 monks, including hosts and guests, who studied both the Mahayana teachings and the doctrines of the eighteen Hinayana Schools, as well as the worldly books, Such as Vedas, and the other classics. They also studied Logic, Grammar, Medicine and Mathematics... Venerable Silabhadra alone was well learned in all the books and being an old scholar of great virtue, he was the teacher of all the monks.... When the Master had been properly lodged in the Nalanda Monastery, he went to the city of Rajagrhā to worship the holy traces.... After returning to the Nalanda Monastery, the Master (Ven. Xuan Zang) requested the Venerable Silabhadra to expound the Yogacarya – bhumi Sastra for him, and several thousand men attended the lectures”.

The king Siladitya while staying at Oda once wrote a letter requesting Ven. Silabhadra to send from the Nalanda Mahavihara four virtuous monks to debate on a treatise. On receiving this letter Ven. Silabhadra assembled the monks to select the competent persons, and he appointed Sagarajana, Prajnaprabha, Simhaprabha and Xuan Zang. The decision revealed that Ven. Silabhadra had great faith on his pupil, Ven. Xuan Zang.

After about 15 years of stay in India Ven. Xuan Zang decided to go back to China, his home country. He expressed his desire to his fellow monks who did not agree with him and requested him to go with them to see Venerable Silabhadra who inquired of Xuan Zang: “What is your decision?” Ven. Xuan Zang replied: “Now I wish to return home to translate the books that I have learned into Chinese, so that those who have the good chance may also study them.” In this way I wish to repay the kindness of my teacher (Ven. Silabhadra), and that is why I do not wish to linger here any longer.” Ven. Silabhadra was quite pleased to hear this and said: “This is indeed the wish of a Bodhisattva and it is also what I expect of you. Let him make the necessary arrangements and you people need not try to detain him any more.” After that Ven. Xuan Zang returned to his chamber. Two days later the envoy of King Kumara of East India (i.e. Bhaskaravarman of Kamarupa) arrived with a letter for Ven. Silabhadra in which he requested the visit of Xuan Zang to his Country. But Ven. Silabhadra did not agree since Ven. Xuan Zang was preparing to go back to China. The King requested Ven. Silabhadra thrice to send Ven. Xuan Zang to his country and in the third letter he politely threatened Ven. Silabhadra to destroy Nalanda Mahavihara if his request was not complied. Hence on receiving the third letter Ven. Silabhadra allowed Ven. Xuan Zang to go with the King’s envoy. In the meantime, having returned from his campaign King Siladitya (i.e. Harsavardhana of Kanyakubja) sent an envoy to King Kumara asking him to send the Chinese monk immediately. At the first insistence King Kumara did not agree. Then king Siladitya sent another envoy to reprimand King Kumara, who, therefore, at last arranged to send Ven. Xuan Zang to king Siladitya with great honour. As Ven. Xuan Zang had already taken leave of the virtuous monks of the Nalanda Mahavihara and collected his scriptures and images of Buddha, he desired to take leave of King Siladitya and return home on the nineteenth day when the meeting was over. Thus on his return journey starting from the country Prayaga, he travelled towards the south-west for China.

As a teacher, Ven. Silabhadra of ancient Bengal, now in Bangladesh, had a soft corner for his pupil Ven. Xuan Zang of China. On the other hand, this Chinese pilgrim had also cultivated deep veneration and personal feelings for his teacher of the Nalanda Mahavihara. That is why Ven. Xuan Zang in A.D. 654 in a letter wrote to Jnanaprabha of India these following words: “I learnt from an ambassador who recently came back from India that the great teacher Silabhadra is no more in this world. On getting this news I was overwhelmed with sorrow that knew no bounds. Alas! the boat of this sea of suffering has foundered: the eye of men and gods has closed. How to express the sorrow that his disappearance causes ?”

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The Treasures of Asia and its Potentials

Engr. Rashed Maksud Khan



Asia is the world's largest continent encompassing an area of 17,177,000 sq miles (44,500,000 sq km) which is 29.8% of the world the largest land area. Population-wise too Asia is one of the largest, having nearly 4.3 billion people. 60% of the world population live in Asia of which China alone bear 1.33 billion people. China is one of the most ancient countries of the world having rich cultural heritage and possessing enormous mineral resources and wealth. Among the other countries of Asia, Indian sub continent and eastern Russia, the Arabian Peninsula and the Far Eastern countries are prominent. Asia can be divided into five regions: the Middle East, South Asia, Central Asia, the Far East and Southeast Asia.

Southeast Asia is geographically situated on the east of the Indian subcontinent, south of China and north of Australia between the Indian Ocean on the west and the Pacific Ocean on the east. The Southeast Asia region comprises of Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar, Thailand, Vietnam, Malaysia, Peninsula (west Malaysia), Brunei, Saba, (east Malaysia), all Islands of Indonesia, the Philippines, Singapore and Timor.

Among the other countries in Asia, the Empire of Japan had been the most fierceful and dominating. Since 1937 it was at war with the Republic of China and by forming alliance with Germany and Italy it had occupied some territories of Russia, Poland and Finland. In December 1941 Japan attacked the United States and the European territories in the Pacific Ocean. In retaliation of Japan's attack of the Port Harbor in America, the United States dropped Atomic Bombs on the Japanese Cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki on the 6th of August and 9th of August respectably. The Japanese then surrendered and it was the end of the World War II.

Subsequently, with direct investment and free flow of technology from the USA, Japan soon recovered their economy through industrialization. From a developing country status, Japan transformed itself into a developed country, and has become one of the five most powerful nations of the world.

Asia, particularly Indian sub-continent and the East Asia countries were looked upon by the western world as having World's large reservoirs of food grains, minerals and other resources. This is why the European Countries used to invade Asia, and they occupied many of the Asian countries for a long time. It was after War II, they withdrew from Asian countries.

It was only after establishing the World Trade Organization (WTO) in the year 1995, and adoption of the globalization policies for free trade, the countries in Asia were able to have access to technology, knowledge and skills, and Developed countries opened up their markets for trade.

Over the past thirty years the countries of Asia specially China and India developed quite rapidly and steadily. In the same pattern the countries of the South-East Asia and South Asia are also striving hard to develop their economies through expansion of education, training, adoption of technology and skills on one hand, and improving health care, sanitation and population control on the other hand.

Some countries of the Southeast Asia have flourished quite well as observed from a study of WIKIPEDIA in the year 2013 / 2014.

The economics of a number of countries of South East Asia are stated below:

SEA Economy at a Glance

| Country | GDP | | Per Capita USD | FE Reserves Billion USD |
|-------------|-------|-------------|-------------------|----------------------------|
| | Rate | Billion USD | | |
| Thailand | 2.9% | 990.93 | 14,442.00 | 168.20 |
| Malaysia | 6.0% | 800.169 | 25,833.204 | 139.651 |
| Indonesia | 5.78% | 870.00 | 5,477.00 | 110.30 |
| Philippines | 6.1% | 330.259 | 2,913.344 | 85.761 |
| Vietnam | 5.98% | 187.848 | 2,073.00 | 26,112.85 mln |
| Myanmar | 8.5% | 65.291 | 1,269.77 | - |

The countries of Southeast Asia which adopted the WTO Rules and availed the **Free Market Economy** have been the ones who progressed rapidly

With recent changes in the policies and approach towards democracy, by the Governments of the Myanmar, Cambodia and Vietnam, they have opened up for liberal trade and investment in their countries. Their natural resources and wealth have drawn attention of the World Business Leaders to rush to these places for availing the opportunities.

On the contrary, the developed countries in Europe and the USA have been confronted with stiff competition, shortage of manpower, high cost of energy which compelled them to divert their attention to the Asian Countries, through relocation of their businesses and sources of supplies. In the changed circumstances, the Southeast Asia has a bright future, only if governance and administration are carried out with sincerity and devotion. The Countries of the region have to complement each other and work together through regional co-operation for making the best use of their resources and manpower.

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Challenges and potential for increasing agricultural productivity in the Asian mega-deltas: Bangladesh an example



Paul Fox



Humnath Bhandari



Bangladesh's rice production more than tripled over the last four decades (Figure 1). The spectacular transition from famine in 1974 to self-sufficiency in rice production underpinned the nation's recent strong economic performance (the benefits of which are not yet evenly enjoyed by the population at large) and also strengthened world food security. IRRI's continuing, hands-on commitment to Bangladesh covers plant breeding, agronomy and Information and Communication Technology-based decision support, post-harvest and grain quality research, and the economics and social sciences that will revitalize the rice value chain.

To date, Bangladesh's notable success in rice genetics largely stems from judicious selection of widely-adapted foreign germplasm. Now, to increase the rate of genetic gains to keep pace with population, a more specific focus on characterization of the complex Bangladeshi environment is required along with DNA-based technology for rapid mainstreaming of desirable combinations of traits (for example those conferring high yield, insect and disease resistance, and desirable cooking and eating quality). Increasingly, Bangladesh will use DNA markers to deploy specific genes (rather than rice germplasm or genetic stocks) sourced in partnership with international initiatives in gene discovery. National average paddy rice yields, today 4.4 tons per hectare (t/ha), required for self-sufficiency when the population stabilizes between 2050 and 2060 are projected to be 7.7 t/ha.

Rising scarcity and cost of rural labour through industrialization and urbanization will further drive the pace of mechanization, with key changes in management of land holdings required. More than 80% of farms in Bangladesh are less than 1 ha and the average farm size is declining (Figure 2). Small farms limit the exploitation of economies of scale through mechanization. Yet, at the same time, increased renting of farm land (Figure 3) can facilitate consolidation of fields into larger operational areas for mechanization and for this reason a well-functioning tenancy market will be pivotal in increased agricultural productivity. Weed control and rational water and input use are also central issues to be tackled. IRRI will continue to facilitate critical technology transfer and help build capacity. By building on global rice expertise and its specific commitment to Bangladesh, IRRI is positioned to support the key strategic partnerships now required to intensify and diversify rice-based production systems in Bangladesh and couple these systems to a more equitable distribution of benefits and to environmental sustainability.

Effective community water management will be required to realize the largely untapped potential of diverse rice-based systems in the coastal zone. Early monsoon or aman rice and appropriately irrigated winter or rabi crops are fundamental to intensification of the production systems. Issues common to many of the world's Mega-Deltas include over-population and the associated pressure on agricultural resources,

upstream appropriation of water and intrusion of seawater causing salinization of land and water resources. The physical geography of the coastal area of Bangladesh is both diverse and rapidly evolving, requiring relatively small-scale interventions for land and water management and with increased land and river degradation inevitable. Agricultural production depends principally on monsoonal rain and on water from the river system. Further interception of upstream water flow will exacerbate the increased saline incursion from the Bay of Bengal to the Ganges Delta expected directly from sea level rise alone.

The coastal region largely missed the benefit of the Green Revolution (with rice production still dominated by traditional tall, late-maturing photo-sensitive varieties) but enjoys an under-utilized supply of surface water and a significantly higher water table than northern Bangladesh. In fact, inundation and poor drainage -- symptoms of excess water -- still continue to mitigate against the widespread uptake of semi-dwarf, high-yielding varieties that are more restricted by high water levels than the traditional taller varieties. In this relatively flat deltaic environment, minor topographic differences can be significant impediments to the intensification of rotations within the agricultural production systems that include cropping and aquaculture. For example, the benefits of earlier maturing rice varieties in enabling more flexible and intensive systems may be negated by a lack of drainage capacity as rice fields remain too wet too long to mesh with new more intensive cropping options, irrespective of the maturity of the rice crop. Polders, or man-made embankments, enclose 1.2 million hectares of land in the coastal zone and present additional challenges and opportunities for rice-based production. The dominant land use is one crop per year of a tall, late-maturing traditional rice variety, but the huge potential to take more advantage of under-utilized water resources and increase production through more intensive rotations has been repeatedly demonstrated within polders (Tuong *et al.*, 2014, Mondal *et al.*, 2014). The large tidal rise and fall of coastal rivers can be a boon to both irrigation and drainage, through operation of sluice gates in polder embankments in response to the tides. The realization of this potential is limited by run-down polder infrastructure as well as a dearth of effective systems of community water management so that sluice gates can be operated to serve a synchronized schedule of agricultural operations agreed to by the small communities of farmers operating within individual polders. Reducing the disadvantages of topographical differences within polders are often considered under the topic of "sub-polderization" whereby more uniform hydrological land units can be formed for enhanced water management, often through minor embankments or simple culverts in roads within polders.

IRRI has local networks, knowledge and a strong track record of collaboration in coastal Bangladesh. In recognition of these strengths, the International Water Management Institute (IWMI), based in Sri Lanka awarded IRRI a pilot project that commenced in January 2015 and targets community water management for enhanced rural livelihoods in Polder 30. IRRI's direct formal partners in the project are:

- The Bangladesh Rice Research Institute
- BRAC
- Shushilan
- The Institute of Water Modelling
- Blue Gold
- WorldFish and
- IWMI.

A broader network of collaboration and synergy with other projects and institutions (often through IRRI's new research partner, Blue Gold -- one of the largest development programs implementing infrastructure improvements in coastal Bangladesh) will further underpin the project. These relationships extend to the Department of Agricultural Extension with its farmer field schools initiative, the Bangladesh Water Development Board, the Local Government Engineering Department, the Soil Resources Development Institute and national universities.

Bangladesh must balance where it should be a "tool user" and where it can become a pivotal regional leader and "tool maker", based on a track record of innovative leadership. It is the most highly mechanized country in South Asia with respect to land preparation and the first country to commercialize

a transgenic food crop. Bangladesh is also the first country in the world to release rice varieties with an enhanced concentration of zinc -- for human nutrition -- achieved through conventional genetics and breeding.

Bangladesh has the potential to become a cutting-edge international laboratory and world leader in managing salinity in rice-based systems in monsoonal deltas. Bangladeshi research can impact all Asian mega-deltas and further underpin global food security. On the other side of the coin, as a tool user, Bangladesh can astutely maximize research resources through the Global Rice Science Partnership, under the stewardship of IRRI, to deploy third-party technology developed off-shore -- such as modified photosynthetic pathways in rice -- when mature. Partnerships with the private sector that are congruent with IRRI's mandate will also be pursued to increase IRRI's reach in Bangladesh.

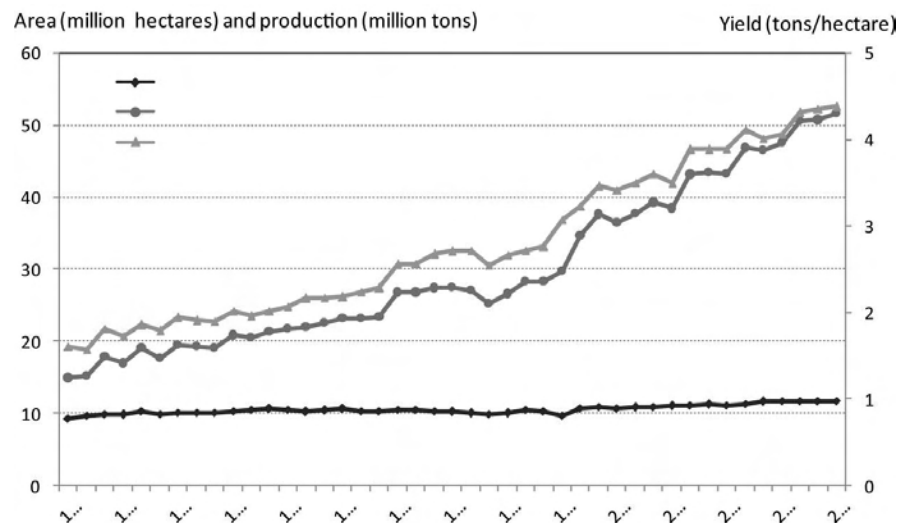


Figure 1. Trends in area, production, and yield of paddy rice in Bangladesh, 1971-2013.

Data source: FAOSTAT, 2015.

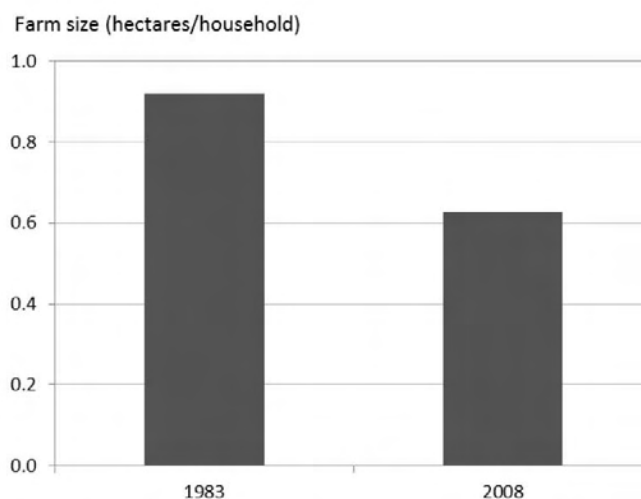


Figure 2. Trend in average farm size in Bangladesh.

Data source: BBS, 2010.

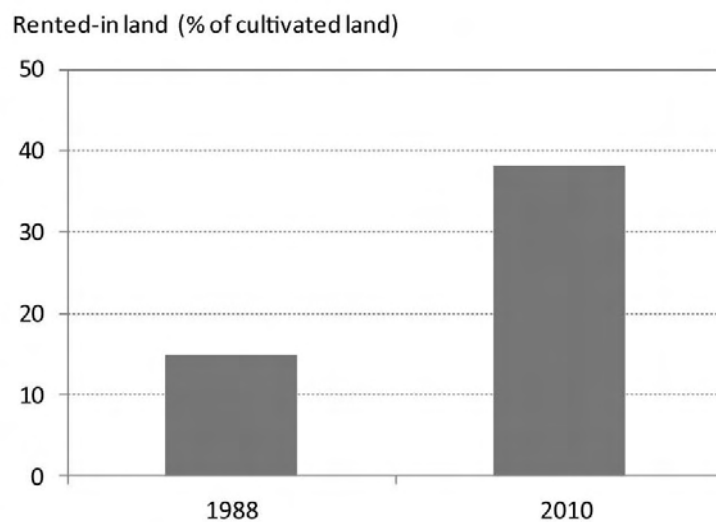


Figure 3. Trend in tenant cultivation among households sampled in Bangladesh.

Data source: VDSA Database, 2014.

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One Belt One Road, New Diplomacy and Public Diplomacy

Ai Ping

[The writer is currently the member of CPPCC National Committee and Vice President, Executive Council of Chinese Association for International Understanding (CAIU). He was the Former Vice-Minister of the International Department of the CPC Central Committee, China]

President Xi Jinping put forward the term Silk Road Economic Belt¹ on September 7th, 2013 in Kazakhstan when he proposed in his speech to forge closer economic ties, deepen cooperation and expand development space in the Eurasian region, we should take an innovative approach and jointly build an economic belt along the Silk Road². He then suggested enhancing policy communication, road connectivity, unimpeded trade, monetary circulation, and understanding between our people³. When he addressed the Indonesian Parliament on the 3rd in the following month, he proposed that China is willing to build the 21st Century Maritime Silk Road together with ASEAN countries.

The initiative triggered varied responses. At home, it was written into the decision of the 3rd plenary session of CPC 18th Central Committee and upgraded to be a national strategy. But at abroad, the initiative is preceded by the so-called New Silk Road program of the United States. Russia was concerned about the possibility of diverting its railway development project, while Indian media begin hyping the myth of String of Pearls.



As the initiative of One Belt One Road moves to the stage of all-round implementation and pragmatic cooperation, President Xi took the opportunity of visiting Central Asia, South Asia and Mongolia to promote it. During the APEC Beijing summit, China invited leaders of Pakistan, Bangladesh, Myanmar, Laos, Cambodia, Mongolia, and Tajikistan to participate in the Dialogue on Strengthening Connectivity Partnership. The Chinese leader Xi Jinping explained the profound vision in a simple way by likening One Belt One Road to a pair of wings and connectivity to blood veins for the rise of Asia. He proposed to build connectivity in three dimensions, namely infrastructure, institutional improvements, and people-to-people exchanges, and to advance connectivity in five different areas side by side. He added that a number of projects involving construction of infrastructure, power plants, roads, ports and shipping centers will be implemented, and measures will be taken to address financing bottleneck, e.g. investing 40 billion U.S. dollars to establish a Silk Road Foundation and signing inter-governmental MOUs to prepare for the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank. He outlined a route map focusing on Asia, supported by economic corridor, transportation infrastructure, financing platforms and people-to-people exchanges.

I think the One Belt One Road Initiative is a typical example of New Diplomacy. First, the Initiative is the crystallization of China successful diplomatic experience in the new period. One piece of experience for China's diplomacy in the new period is to consider both political and economic interests with the aim to serve the core mission and overall situation of national development. On the one hand, diplomatic work

can create favorable external environment for China's modernization, as economic development is accelerated by opening up wider to the outside world; on the other hand, growing trade and various forms of cooperation enables China to benefit its neighbors and other countries with fruits of its economic development, hence economic relations and trade have become powerful tools of China's diplomacy and stabilizer of bilateral relations. It is the same whether we are dealing with developed countries or developing countries. Both sides have to meet their fundamental needs and give full play to their respective advantages so as to realize mutual benefit and win-win results. Both political and economic interests need to be taken into consideration. The advantages of our institutions and road must be highlighted to enrich diplomatic resources. Second, the One Belt One Road Initiative, especially connectivity in five areas is new development of China's neighboring diplomatic strategy and measures. Since CPC's 18th National Congress, China has strengthened top-level design and diplomatic planning while maintaining the continuity and stability of its major diplomatic policies. A series of important actions are carried out and strategic thinking about foreign relations are put forward to create new situation and atmosphere. The important role of neighboring area in our development and overall diplomatic program is highlighted with disputes properly settled, exchanges and cooperation increasing and common interests expanding. The concept of amity, sincerity, mutual benefit and inclusiveness is applied to guide neighboring diplomacy and a correct view to balance morality and interests is emphasized. Third, bilateral and multilateral measures are closely coordinated with activities both at home and abroad to promote the initiative like a set of combination blows.

I was Deputy Minister of the International Department of the CPC Central Committee in charge of relations with political parties in South and Southeast Asia when President Xi Jinping put forward the initiative, and this year I was transferred to the post of the Vice-President of the Chinese Association for International Understanding which mainly deals with people-to-people diplomacy. Both party-to-party and people-to-people diplomacy are parts of public diplomacy. I would like to share four observations about the One Belt One Road Initiative in the perspective of a participant in public diplomacy.

First, One Belt One Road is an important initiative of common construction. The term Silk Road was coined by a German traveler Ferdinand von Richthofen. As a term frequently heard and easy to accept, it shall be made to work for us. Needless to say, the initiative meets the demands and needs of China to deepen reform, develop economy and open up wider. In particular, it is an important opportunity for western and border provinces. The focus of the initiative is laid on common construction as can be seen from the occasion when it was proposed and the objects it is targeting. It is not only targeting governments and leaders, but also parliamentarians, students, business and the general public. Therefore it suits realities of globalization, enriches the content of diplomacy, shows China's noble and magnanimous style as a major country and highlights the role and significance of public diplomacy. It demonstrates that China cares for other involved parties and understands their fundamental interests and needs. When further elaborating the initiative, the Chinese leader emphasizes top-level design and voluntarily matches our projects with the other party's development strategies to support its priorities. Specific measures are taken to provide what is needed most by tackling financing difficulties. If both sides are to give full play to their advantages and cooperate for mutual benefit and win-win results, the initiative can never be a rush for quick results by simply launching one project after another. Since we are engaged in cooperation, we have to consult each other. We need to understand the other side's consideration, ideas and intentions by increasing communication, and even make compromise or trade-offs if necessary. Understanding and trust can be strengthened by cooperation.

Second, One Belt One Road is an important initiative to further develop and exert China's advantages under the condition of deepening globalization. Although we are nearer to the center of world stage than ever before, in a sense we are not fully prepared. One example is our insufficient recognition of the subjective and objective influence of our behavior. Our objective advantages include more cost-efficient labor and huge potential in consumption market, while subjective advantages include our road and institutions, which enables us to concentrate resources to accomplish major undertakings. The biggest traditional advantage of the United States is its military strength, and the western countries tend to impose

their institutions and values on others. China, on the contrary, treats others as equals, accelerates its development by relying on itself and joining the global value-added chain, therefore forming its unique advantages such as infrastructure construction, medium-level talents of science, technology and education as well as successful development practice. Connectivity in five different areas can not only give full play to our advantages, but also meet urgent needs of our partners. In fact, public diplomacy itself is an example of our institutional advantage as it demonstrates how China pools resources to handle major undertakings.

Third, the key to promote One Belt One Road is to enhance awareness of cooperation and research so as to increase mutual understanding, exploit strength and avoid weaknesses to achieve mutual-benefit and win-win results. In the process of promoting the initiative, we must carefully study each country's characteristics, history, culture, development stage, strategies and bottlenecks, rather than simply follow our own wishful thinking. Take the selection of investment projects as an example, Chinese usually say roads bring wealth to people, but if roads are built too early, the great passageway would be the great empty way and it would take a long time to recover the investments. The invested country may rather need a power plant, in which case investments are more likely to be recouped. The difficulty lies in establishment of necessary transnational institutions and mechanisms, since sufficient fund alone cannot guarantee success. Institutions, policies, procedures, and standards are needed as well. Successful experience of international institutions like IMF can be drawn to innovate relevant institutions and mechanisms.

Lastly, 'One Belt One Road' brings about an important opportunity to push forward public diplomacy. The rising status and role of public diplomacy is an inevitable result of in-depth development of globalization. The objective foundation for globalization is that convenience of transportation and telecommunication triggered by advancement of science and technology created conditions for trade, including supply, industry and value chain to distribute across the globe, and easier international exchanges in fields of education, training, academics and people, and on such basis, increasingly frequent and extensive social and public relations activities as well as public diplomacy. Awareness about public diplomacy must be enhanced. Compared with international exchanges and cooperation in a certain field (between governments, political parties, parliaments, militaries, businesses, schools and research institutes), public diplomacy requires wider vision international and global vision. One must care about his partners, the society and the mass base behind the decisionmakers as well as the general public. One needs to have broader interest in the systems, institutions, cultures and histories of his partners. One must keep pace with the times and be innovative. Those engaging in diplomacy or other types of international exchanges must have economic consciousness. They should put themselves in others shoes to win their heart, trust and friendship by helping them to speed up development. Those working in the field of economy or culture must be good at promoting their own cause through exchanges and cooperation. One must have a bigger picture in mind while doing his own job well, with an aim to serve the overall diplomacy, and, in the final analysis, to subject to and serve the two Centenary Goals i.e. to complete the building of a moderately prosperous society in all respects when the Communist Party of China celebrates its centenary and turns China into a modern socialist country that is prosperous, strong, democratic, culturally advanced and harmonious when the People's Republic of China marks its centennial.

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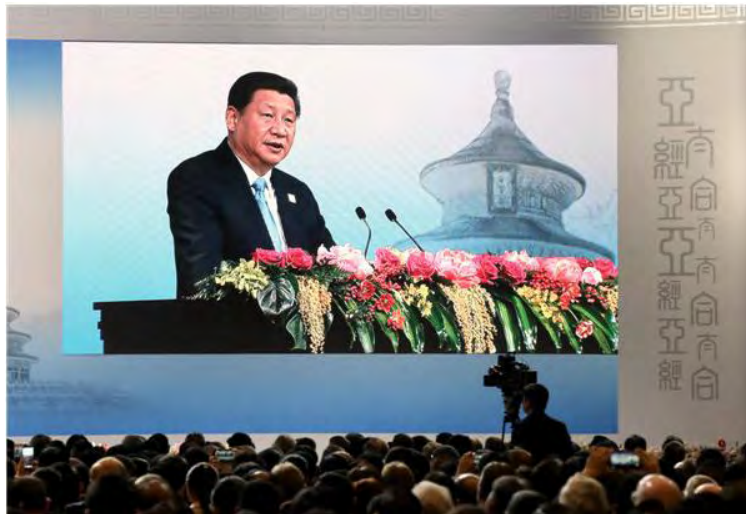
Shaping the Future through Asia-Pacific Partnership

Opening Remarks by H.E. Xi Jinping
President of the People's Republic of China
at the 22nd APEC Economic Leaders' Meeting
November 9, 2014
Beijing, China

Each year, flocks of swan geese fly here and stay at the lake in spring and autumn, hence Yanqi Lake means the lake of swan geese. We 21 member economies of APEC are just like 21 swan geese. A line from an ancient Chinese poem reads: "The wind breaks waves into thousands of flowers on the sea; flocks of swan geese fly across the blue sky with their wings spread." We are meeting here at Yanqi Lake to enhance cooperation and embark on a new flight to shape a new vision for the development of the Asia-Pacific region.

This year marks the 25th anniversary of APEC. The past 25 years of APEC's growth have also witnessed the development and prosperity of the Asia-Pacific region. APEC has witnessed the historic achievements of the Asia-Pacific's development, which, in turn, has given APEC a new mission.

The world economic recovery still faces many unpredictable and destabilizing factors. The Asia-Pacific region has entered a new stage of development, facing both opportunities and challenges. How to tackle the risks of fragmentation of regional economic cooperation? How to create new growth momentum in the post-financial crisis period? How to remove the financing bottlenecks hindering connectivity? These are issues we need to consider and actively address.



President Xi Jinping speaks to open the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) CEO Summit in Beijing, China.

In the face of new conditions, we need to intensify regional economic integration and foster an open environment that is conducive to long-term development. APEC should play a leading and coordinating role in breaking various shackles and unleash a new round of greater openness, exchange and integration at a higher level, in more areas and involving deeper structural adjustment. We need to open the closed doors within the Asia-Pacific region and open our region fully to the rest of the world. While continuing to advance the Bogor Goals, we should vigorously promote the development of the FTAAP by identifying targets and laying out directions and roadmaps. This will help realize, at an early date, the vision of completing a highly open integration arrangement that spans across the two sides of the Pacific Ocean.

In the face of new conditions, we need to vigorously promote reform and innovation, create new growth areas and driving forces, and ensure strong and sustainable growth. Where does growth momentum come from in the post-crisis period? Undoubtedly, it can only come from reform, innovation and readjustment. We need to be innovative in development approaches, pursue development through innovation and reform instead of driving it the usual way by relying on factors of production and export, and generate internal growth momentum through structural adjustment. We need to change the model of market regulations, allow the market to play a decisive role in resources allocation, and better play the role of the government. We need to advance scientific and technological innovation to facilitate energy and consumption revolution, and make the Asia-Pacific region a global leader in achieving new technological revolution. This year, we have promoted cooperation in Internet economy, urbanization and blue economy and discussed ways of leaping over the middle income trap, and a good beginning has been made in addressing all these major and urgent issues in the global economy.

In the face of new conditions, we need to speed up efforts to upgrade infrastructure and build comprehensive connectivity. Connectivity is about connecting physical structures. Our cooperation should extend to wherever roads, railways, air routes and the Internet take us. Connectivity is about connecting rules and regulations. When coordination and cooperation are enhanced and regulatory obstacles are reduced, logistics will become smoother and exchanges more convenient. Connectivity is also about connecting the hearts of people. With enhanced mutual understanding, we can achieve better communication and be more successful in our endeavors. In short, to achieve comprehensive connectivity in the Asia-Pacific, we should bring together all member economies on both sides of the Pacific by connecting physical structures, rules and regulations, and hearts of people. We should eliminate bottlenecks in accessing affordable financing, strengthen public-private partnerships, and achieve interconnected development.

We are all members of the APEC community. It meets the common interests of us all to foster an open economy in the Asia-Pacific featuring innovative development, interconnected growth and converging interests. To achieve this goal, all the economies in the region need to work together to build an Asia-Pacific partnership of mutual trust, inclusiveness, cooperation and win-win progress, and this will inject new energy into the economic development of both the Asia-Pacific and the world.

First, we should jointly chart the course for future development. The future development of the Asia-Pacific is vital to the interests of every APEC member. Having reached important consensus on launching the process of FTAAP, promoting connectivity and pursuing innovative growth, what we should do now is to translate the consensus into action. We should draw the blueprint for development in the next five, ten or even 25 years and implement it step by step.

Second, we should jointly meet global challenges. In the post-financial crisis period, we need to focus on the core task of sustaining growth and enhance macro policy coordination. We should also effectively address global issues such as epidemics, food security and energy security. We should share information to understand each other better, exchange experience to share best practices, facilitate collective actions through consultation and coordination, and boost regional cooperation through mutual assistance.

Third, we should jointly build cooperation platforms. Partnership means pitching in for common goals and big initiatives. We should build APEC into an institutional platform for promoting integration, a policy platform based on experience sharing, an open platform against trade protectionism, a development platform to intensify economic and technical cooperation and a platform for boosting connectivity. A stronger and more dynamic APEC is possible only with support from all its members.

I wish to announce here that China will donate 10 million US dollars to support APEC institutional and capacity building and its practical cooperation in various fields.

Fourth, we should jointly pursue interconnected development. Partnership also means win-win cooperation and mutual learning. Some developing economies in the Asia-Pacific region now face difficulties. If they cannot achieve development, development of the whole Asia-Pacific region will not be sustainable. We need to increase financial and technical support to developing members, give full rein to

the strength of diversity among the Asia-Pacific economies, draw on each other's strength, better leverage the amplifying effects and achieve common development.

In the coming three years, the Chinese government will provide 1,500 training opportunities to APEC developing members in support of capacity-building projects in trade, investment and other fields.

Under the theme of Shaping the Future through Asia-Pacific Partnership, we will discuss three important topics, namely, advancing regional economic integration, promoting innovative development, economic reform and growth, and strengthening comprehensive development in infrastructure and connectivity. I am confident that our meeting today will inject new vitality into the long-term development of the Asia-Pacific region.

A single flower does not herald spring; a lone goose cannot make a formation. Let us take Yanqi Lake as the new starting point, and lead the flying swan geese of the global economy in soaring higher in the vast and blue sky.

World Leaders in APEC Summit, Beijing, China-2014





Address by Prime Minister Shinzo Abe at the Symposium of the 70th anniversary of the United Nations “What the United Nations means for Japan”



Years for action and Japan's resolve

This year and the next constitute an extremely important time for the United Nations, and indeed, for Japan as well.

As for the U.N., this year marks the 70th anniversary of its founding. For Japan, next year we'll be commemorating 60 years since our accession to the U.N. We have decided that we will make these two years as "years for taking concrete actions."

Time and again, the issues we face are ones that extend beyond the framework of individual nations, whether the issue be extremism, terrorism, the threat of nuclear proliferation, climate change, or terrible infectious diseases.

However, the situation teaches us one thing, and one thing alone: we must not be divided. The nations must stand even more united.

This year, for the Security Council elections, Japan stands, aiming to secure a seat for the 11th time. We are resolved to lead discussions both within the U.N. and beyond, regarding any and

all issues, in any and every aspect.

I wish to urge the U.N. community to incorporate into the new development agenda the concept of achieving "human security" that Japan has been promoting.

Above all else, as for reforming the Security Council, it is no longer time to discuss. Now it is time for us to produce concrete results.

With pride quietly in mind at having built up a record of one achievement after another, Japan stands ready to take on the role of a permanent member of the Security Council. This is how Japan has been until now, and how it will continue to be into the future.

Take a look, for instance, one of the new areas where you could expect more of Japan's unique contributions.

That is what we call the "smart platinum society." You might not have heard of it, in which case please make room in your lexicon for the new "Japanglish" phrase.

A "smart platinum society" is one that enables the platinum generation, i.e., the elderly, to live vibrant lives through the use of ICT, robots, and other such technologies.

Now as the U.N. is dedicating efforts to address the challenges of aging, Japan, which leads the world in "platinumization," intends to tackle the challenges by making full use of its technological prowess.

Embracing our pledge of 60 years ago in the present day

This year and the next will be a time for us in Japan to look back on the journey we have walked together with the U.N. and renew our determination towards the future.

While feeling deep remorse regarding the war, we have dedicated our post-war development to building a country liberal and democratic, which upholds human rights and the rule of law.

Our goal has always been to grow as a country that is able to contribute to the peace, growth and the prosperity of the Asia-Pacific region and of the world.

That was exactly an aim what our fathers and mothers, and grandparents embraced. How overjoyed and thankful they must have been as Japan was again welcomed into the United Nations! This is something that we in later generations should try to imagine from time to time.

The day Japan was admitted to the United Nations, then-Foreign Minister Mamoru Shigemitsu delivered an address at the U.N., stating that "...Japan ...accepts the obligations contained in the Charter of the United Nations, and undertakes to honour them, by all means at its disposal."

Nobusuke Kishi, my grandfather, who succeeded Shigemitsu as Foreign Minister, also emphasised in one of the speeches he gave to the Diet of Japan that "Japan must always stand ready to make as much contributions as would be necessary to strengthen the authority of the United Nations and to attain world peace through the U.N."

Sticking to that intent we started with, Japan has since then continued to serve as a stout and sturdy pillar supporting the United Nations, right up to the present.

It will continue to be very much important for us to recall the elation and appreciation we felt 60 years ago, and to embrace the same initial spirit as our pledge for today. This much, I wish to convey in particular to my country's younger generations who are the mainstay for our future.

Making financial contributions and putting forward ideas

It was the second Secretary-General, Dag Hammarskjöld, who said that the United Nations "was NOT created to take mankind to heaven." That famous epigram continues, "BUT to save humanity from hell."

It still resonates with us as words from a man who never lost zeal at the height of the Cold War to never forsake the *raison d'être* of the U.N.

As far as Japan goes, however, there was no need whatsoever for anyone to persuade us of the importance of the United Nations.

And why was that, ladies and gentlemen? It is because the Japanese are a people who are always thinking about what they can do, sparing no efforts, in keeping with the ideals advanced by the United Nations.

It is because, in that regard, the Japanese are second to none. That is how the country has been until now, and that's how it will continue to be into the future.

The cumulative total of the contributions to the U.N. and financial contributions to peacekeeping operations that Japan has paid in, as a simple tally of the book value of those contributions, easily exceeds 20 billion U.S. dollars. The one and only country whose financial contributions surpass those of Japan over the past 30 years or so is the United States.

Our track record of development assistance amounts to 324.9 billion U.S. dollars, again as a simple tally of the then book value.

I am not blowing my own horn here. I have ventured to tell you these things to let you see that we have been faithful to our initial spirit of 59 years ago up till now, and also to remind ourselves of that fact.

Allow me at this point once again to call your attention. Reform is indispensable for the U.N. so that it remains able to respond to the shifting and increasingly complex challenges facing the international community. Realizing its reform, including the reform of the Security Council, is absolutely essential.

Here, I have one more point to touch on as regards Japan's relations with the U.N.

This took place during the 1990's, when the Cold War had just ended with our side, i.e., the side that enjoyed free and democratic political economic systems, emerging victorious.

Japan, together with such leaders as Dr. Amartya Sen and Dr. Sadako Ogata, urged a certain fundamental shift within the concept of security.

It was at that point that the word "human," in addition to the word "national," came to be used in front of the word "security."

This was also a time when, seizing the changes in the undercurrent, Japan set forth with conviction the philosophy it had long fostered, as a goal for the United Nations and a matter for humankind.

This was because giving weight to each individual human being, teaching them reading, writing, and arithmetic, and aiming to free them from want and fear was the path that Japan had consistently followed since early-modern times.

The form of assistance that we developed

Indeed, it is education that gives rise to people's dignity as human beings and creates the foundation for peace and prosperity. Education prevents crime and extremism and leads to social stability.

That all children without exception deserve high-quality education always stands as one of the pillars of Japanese development assistance.

We build schools in villages. We put hygienic bathrooms therein, liberating girls from fear and worry.

Many women spend half their day just drawing water, and this heavy labour is apt to dig deeply into their shoulders. Regarding these conditions to be an injustice, we pursue the empowerment of each individual woman and girl.

Ladies and gentlemen, we have walked this path exclusively under this approach, right up to the present day.

Every day I call for the creation of a "society in which women shine." I will continue to appeal for this over and over again, never letting up.

Last year we successfully held a symposium known as WAW!, or "World Assembly for Women." We will continue to hold this symposium unfailingly until the day we bring about a "game change" in society. I ask that everyone come together in Japan again this year, at the end of August.

This year, we will increase the amount of our contribution to U.N. Women to ten times what we did the year before last.

Of the Global Fund, Japan was instrumental in the launch, and has worked tirelessly towards the development, with the fund aiming at ending the "big three" infectious diseases of AIDS, malaria, and tuberculosis.

This year as well, Japan will make a contribution of 190 million U.S. dollars to that Fund, and come December, we will host a meeting to discuss the future of the Fund in Tokyo.

Soon, Japan will provide the Kenyan government with assistance of roughly 33 million U.S. dollars, aiming to support its health policies in their entirety, as an unprecedented kind of assistance.

Their policies promote "UHC," or "universal health coverage," which aims to make everyone able to receive basic healthcare services at reasonable cost.

Such is the development policy we have advanced without wavering over the last 20 years. It has shown our philosophy of assistance grounded in the concept of human security. And of late, by publishing Japan's "Development Cooperation Charter", we have made them salient.

Development must be sustainable and take a long-term perspective. In addition to freedom from want and freedom from fear, going forward, it will be necessary for development to become something that imparts upon people the freedom to dream. It is for that very reason that we must aim at quality growth.

That is the thinking that flows through our "Development Cooperation Charter." I very much hope that this will contribute to the discussions on the post-2015 development agenda.

Hiroshima, Nagasaki, and peace building

In his address 59 years ago on the day Japan acceded to the United Nations, then-Foreign Minister Shigemitsu stated, "Being the only country which has experienced the horrors of the atomic bomb, Japan knows its tragic consequences."

It is undoubtedly true that Japan knows better than anyone else that Hiroshima and Nagasaki must never be repeated. That is precisely why Japan has been advocating tirelessly at the United Nations the necessity of total elimination of nuclear weapons.

This year also marks 70 years since the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. We will hold major international conferences in both cities, stressing the importance of nuclear disarmament and the danger of proliferation. In addition, this year Japan will again submit to the United Nations General Assembly a draft nuclear disarmament resolution.

At the beginning of the year I visited YadVashem in Jerusalem. That visit etched deeply into my mind how much merciless humans can be by singling out a group of people and making that group the object of discrimination and hatred.

To dispel hatred and promote reconciliation, Japanese diplomacy has made modest but continuous efforts in Mindanao in the Philippines or in Sri Lanka. This June, we will hold the "High-Level Seminar on Peacebuilding, National Reconciliation and Democratisation in Asia."

The seminar will have Asian countries each bringing their own experiences in these areas, and the venue will be right here at the U.N. University.

I trust you are already well aware that Japan is now bearing the flag of "Proactive Contribution to Peace based on the principle of international cooperation." It goes without saying that cooperation and collaboration with the United Nations comprise the very essence of this.

I would also ask that you bear in mind that we will now start a comprehensive program to foster professionally trained peace builders.

The United Nations: Unable to be out of step with the times

As I conclude my remarks to you today, I would like to say that we commemorate the longevity of an organization like the U.N. only when it serves as a testimony that the organization is continuously moving forward.

At this very moment, there are people suffering from Ebola, there are people whose lives are threatened by lawless terrorists. Some are working diligently to construct weapons of mass destruction, while others conspire towards their proliferation.

The United Nations is an organization that was precluded from the beginning from falling out of step with the times. It is a body that is obliged to be continually transformed anew. This is because whatever form or type issues may take, such issues never fail to exist.

In closing may I reiterate that reform of the United Nations is a matter of great urgency, and we will spare no effort in any way to make that reform a reality.

The Symposium was held on March 16, 2015 at United Nations University, Tokyo, Japan.

A ‘Freer’ Flow of Skilled Labour within ASEAN: Aspirations, Opportunities and Challenges in 2015 and Beyond

Guntur Sugiyarto and Dovelyn Rannveig Agunias



In 2007, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) agreed on an ambitious goal to fast track the creation of the ASEAN Economic Community (AEC) by 2015, which essentially is designed to transform the region into a single market and production base characterized by, among other things, a free flow of skilled labour.

This flow envisioned by ASEAN leaders is different, however, from the notion of free labour flows as understood from the literature or the common practice in Europe, the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), and other regions. Rather than aiming for the unrestricted or “free” flow of skilled labour, the AEC seeks to offer ways to facilitate a “freer” flow, mainly by implementing Mutual Recognition Agreements (MRAs) based on national and ASEAN Qualification Frameworks, as well as the facilitation of temporary visa issuance.

The MRA is completed by occupation, so far covering eight professions that involve less than 1.5 per cent of the ASEAN labour force (ADB-ILO, 2014). The nature of today’s intra-ASEAN migration flows is, however, starkly different than the AEC’s aspiration. Most intra-ASEAN migrants are unskilled workers (more than 87% are low-skilled), and irregular migration remains an intractable problem. These flows are concentrated in just a few corridors. The top five corridors—Myanmar to Thailand, Indonesia to Malaysia, Malaysia to Singapore, Lao People’s Democratic Republic to Thailand, and Cambodia to Thailand—represent 88 per cent of the total intra-ASEAN migrant stock.

Progress toward freer skilled mobility has been slow and uneven, for several reasons. It has been difficult to adapt domestic policies and regulations to meet the provisions of the MRAs; the challenge is broader than just technical obstacles, reflecting a lack of political and public support despite the difficult nature of the problem. A much stronger case has to be made publicly for the benefits of highskilled mobility within ASEAN. Moreover, the mutual recognition of qualifications and experience, while important, is not enough to facilitate skill mobility.

Other equally key components determine who migrates and under what circumstances. Foremost among these are basic labour market demand and supply gaps, admissions and visa policies, and the recruitment process, which is primarily controlled by the private sector. The ASEAN Economic Community Blueprint, which laid down the strategy for the run-up to 2015, envisioned “no substantial restrictions to ASEAN services suppliers in providing services and in establishing companies across national borders within the region” (ASEAN, 2008). ASEAN has also agreed to work “towards recognition of professional qualifications with a view to facilitate their movement within the region.” (ASEAN, 2008)

The blueprint identified the following “actions” ASEAN Member States agree to support in the lead-up to 2015: □ Complete the mutual recognition arrangements (MRAs) currently under negotiation, that is, for architectural services, accountancy services, surveying qualifications, medical practitioners (by 2008), and dental practitioners (by 2009); Implement the MRAs expeditiously, according to the provisions of each respective agreement; Identify and develop MRAs for other professional services by 2012, to be completed by 2015; □ Strengthen human resource development and capacity building in the area of services; Facilitate the issuance of visas and employment passes for ASEAN professionals and skilled labourers who are engaged in cross-border trade and investment-related activities; Enhance cooperation

among members of the ASEAN University Network (AUN) to increase the mobility of both students and staff within the region; Develop core competencies and qualifications for the job/occupational and training skills required in priority and other service sectors; and ☐ Strengthen the research capabilities of each ASEAN Member Country to promote skills and job placements, and develop labour market information networks among ASEAN Member States.

Without jointly and comprehensively addressing these interrelated issues, ASEAN countries face the risk that the free flow of skilled labour will remain an aspiration. The potential gains from more open region-wide skill mobility are tremendous, as exemplified by the very significant contribution of foreign workers in Singapore, as well as Malaysia and Thailand to some degree. Skilled labour mobility also could help address skills shortages and gaps, as well as address unemployment for youth, particularly the well-educated, further promoting growth in the economy and increasing inclusiveness.

A country's competitiveness, productivity, and growth depend largely on its ability to acquire and use new knowledge and constantly upgrade the skills of its workforce. This is truer today than ever, as the people with the skills and innovative ideas needed by domestic economies are increasingly free to pursue opportunities the world over. Numerous countries also do not have educational systems capable of producing the workforces they need, and many more see their most highly skilled workers emigrate. Moreover, global imbalances have also made some countries rich in capital and scarce in labour, so that the natural progression for them is to exchange capital and labour.

Over the past decade, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), a political and economic organization of 10 countries in Southeast Asia, began to face these emerging issues head on. In 2007, ASEAN Member States agreed to fast-track the creation of the ASEAN Economic Community (AEC) by 2015, which is intended to transform the ASEAN region into a "single market and production base," characterized by, among other things, a "free flow of skilled labour." (ASEAN, 2008) The agreement is nothing short of an historic milestone, even as progress on implementation has been slow and uneven.

Since the blueprint's adoption, there have been developments in two critical areas: facilitating visa issuance and recognition of qualifications and skills. In 2012, ASEAN Member States signed two agreements to streamline the movement of select individuals within the region: The ASEAN Agreement on the Movement of Natural Persons (MNP) provides the legal framework to facilitate temporary cross-border movement of people engaged in the conduct of trade in goods, services, and investment. More specifically, the MNP aims to establish streamlined and transparent procedures for business visitors, intra-corporate transferees, and contractual service suppliers to apply for immigration formalities (ASEAN, 2012). ☐

The ASEAN Comprehensive Investment Agreement (ACIA) grants entry, temporary stay, and work authorization to investors, executives, managers, and board members of corporations in the process of "committing a substantial amount of capital or other resources." (ASEAN, 2014) 2. Recognition of Qualifications and Skills ASEAN Member States have taken various approaches to better recognizing qualifications and skills. Indeed, there is mounting evidence that migrants in the region are often unable to put their skills to productive use because their qualifications, experience, and knowledge are not readily recognized in the destination countries. The resulting waste of human capital represents a loss to employers, host communities, and migrants themselves.

At the macro level, this would be reflected in lower levels of economic growth, worker productivity, and country competitiveness. To address this challenge, ASEAN Member States are undertaking two key initiatives: (1) Mutual Recognition Arrangements. Between 2005 and 2012, ASEAN Member Governments signed MRAs in six key occupations (engineering, nursing, architecture, medicine, dentistry, and tourism) and Framework Agreements on MRAs in two others (surveying and accounting). Each MRA aims to facilitate mobility within ASEAN, exchange information and enhance cooperation on the mutual recognition of qualifications, promote the adoption of best practices in standards and qualifications, and provide opportunities for capacity building and training.

The MRAs include specific provisions to guide implementation. For instance, except for the tourism sector, the MRAs require minimum years of experience. Dental and medical practitioners are required to be in active practice for not less than five continuous years in the country of origin before being eligible to apply; nurse practitioners must be in active practice for at least three years. Engineers must have seven years' experience after graduation, of which two years involve significant engineering work. Architects must have been in practice for at least 10 years, five of them after receipt of an architecture license (ASEAN, 2005). These restrictions create additional barriers to entry.

The ASEAN Qualification Framework (AQF). ASEAN Member States have also taken concrete steps toward creating the ASEAN Qualification 4 Framework (AQF) to measure levels of educational or training achievement and create more transparent career ladders between levels. The AQF1 aims to harmonize regulatory arrangements between participating countries by developing mutually comparable national qualifications frameworks (NQFs) based on a common reference framework (CRF). Similar to the European Qualifications Framework (EQF) established in 2008, the AQF will be a common regional reference point and a translation grid that will make it easier to understand, compare, and recognize qualifications across the different systems of ASEAN Member States, Australia, and New Zealand. If properly and widely utilized, it could promote the mobility of workers and students within ASEAN more widely.

Judging from these initiatives, the ASEAN Member States do not aim to facilitate a wholly unrestricted, “free” flow of skilled labour as commonly understood from the literature and other regions. The Agreement on the Movement of Natural Persons (MNP) and ASEAN Comprehensive Investment Agreement (ACIA) do not apply to individuals seeking employment, citizenship, residence, or permanent residence in another ASEAN Member State. It is quite clear, for instance, that ACIA applies only to individuals employed by a registered company in the country of origin. In short, the AEC does not guarantee or seek full labour mobility even among the highly skilled; it only facilitates this movement. In this regard, it is not as open — or ambitious — as the European Union (EU) or the European Economic Area (EEA), where a citizen can freely move, reside, and seek employment in any Member State, regardless of skill level. It is also less ambitious compared to more limited regional groupings such as CARICOM (a political and economic organization of 15 Caribbean nations and dependencies), which allows for visa-free entry among the highly skilled.

The nature of today's intra-ASEAN migration flows is starkly different even from ASEAN's already limited aspiration towards the freer flow of skilled labour. Firstly, most intra-ASEAN migration involves low-skilled workers, and there are knowledge and data gaps on the mobility of skilled workers. Some estimates suggest around 87 per cent of intra-ASEAN migrants are low-skilled workers, and the involvement of skilled workers is still very limited.

Recruitment of low-skilled workers for temporary stays began in Singapore as early as the 1970s (Orbeta, 2013). Malaysia, which long employed Indonesians in its plantations, saw the expansion of low-skilled labour migration in other sectors from the 1990s on, while Thailand is a more recent destination. Although some countries do not report the number of foreign immigrants in domestic employment, they compose the majority of such workers in Singapore, and a large portion in Thailand (OECD, 2012). Bilateral remittance data that cannot account for remittances sent through informal channels may offer some clues on the nature of the jobs — and therefore skills — migrants take at the destination. For instance, nearly 2 million emigrants from the Lao People's Democratic Republic and Cambodia were in Thailand in 2013, representing more than one-quarter of all intra-ASEAN migrants. However, the amount of remittances sent to Lao PDR and Cambodia from Thailand amounted to just USD 39 million, which is not even 1 per cent of total intra-ASEAN remittances. The AEC does not guarantee or seek full labour mobility even among the highly skilled.

The opposite could be said of the approximately 8,000 Thais living in Malaysia, who are estimated to have sent back USD 365 million in remittances to Thailand in 2012, or around 4 per cent of that country's total intra-ASEAN remittances. Likewise, the Philippines received nearly USD 100 million in remittances

from Although intra-ASEAN migration has increased in numbers, it is still highly concentrated in just a few corridors, reflecting flow imbalances. Cambodia and the Lao People's Democratic Republic received an overwhelming majority of their remittances from the United States and France, not Thailand. Secondly, although intra-ASEAN migration has increased in numbers, it is still highly concentrated in just a few corridors, reflecting flow imbalances. According to the United Nations' most recent stock estimates, an overwhelming majority (70% or 6.5 million) of the 9.5 million migrants in the ASEAN region in 2013 are from within the region (United Nations, 2013). This is a complete reversal of the trend seen in 1990, when 60 per cent of migrants from ASEAN Member States migrated to a country outside the region. Clearly, there has been an increase in intra-ASEAN migration over the past two decades. However, around 97 per cent of the 6.5 million intra-ASEAN migrants in 2013 traveled between just three countries: Thailand, Malaysia, and Singapore. Thailand hosts the majority of migrants from the region (more than 3.5 million), followed by Malaysia and Singapore (1.5 million and 1 million, respectively).

Although data from the United Nations registered 57 corridors involving intra-ASEAN migrants, the top five corridors alone — Myanmar to Thailand, Indonesia to Malaysia, Malaysia to Singapore, the Lao People's Democratic Republic to Thailand, and Cambodia to Thailand — represent 88 per cent of the total intra-ASEAN migrant stock (UN, 2013). As Table 1 shows, nearly 2 million migrants from Myanmar are in Thailand, or almost one-third of the total intra-ASEAN migrant stock, while around 1 million migrants each from Indonesia, Malaysia, and Lao People's Democratic Republic have migrated to Malaysia, Singapore, and Thailand.

Despite an increasing number of policy measures to regulate the recruitment process and tighten border controls, irregular migration within the ASEAN region remains intractable. As for most irregular migration, data on its extent are scarce. The largest number of irregular migrants has been documented in Malaysia, where low-skilled jobs in the plantation industry attract irregular migrants, mainly from Indonesia. In 2005, when an amnesty programme regularized about 400,000 migrants (out of the approximately 800,000 to 1.2 million), around 87 per cent of those who registered were from Indonesia and an overwhelming majority (70%) were male (Agunias et. al., 2011). Indeed, regularization numbers give a good indication of the extent of irregular migration. In Thailand, for instance, more than 500,000 immigrants were regularized in 2001, and more than 1 million in 2009 (OECD, 2012). There have been some studies highlighting that the Malaysian and Thai economies have become dependent on irregular migrants (Sugiyarto, 2014).

Two other factors contributing to this issue are the commercialization and feminization of the current migration. The role of recruitment agencies has become very dominant, including in acting as employers willing to finance the recruitment and migration costs to be deducted from the migrant's salary later on. This creates a bonded labour force, putting migrant workers in a vulnerable position. In this context, increasing participation of women in the migration process as low-skilled workers in the domestic services further highlights their vulnerability to abuse and exploitation (Sugiyarto, 2014). The phenomena of "fly now, pay later" and changing contracts for the departure and after arriving at destination highlight this issue.

Three Key Challenges Progress on realizing ASEAN's vision has in general been very slow and uneven, despite the stated deadline of 2015. Because of this, many have suggested that 2015 should be seen as a milestone rather than the ultimate deadline. The implementation of agreements and frameworks remains difficult for three main reasons. First, it is difficult to adapt domestic policies and regulations to meet the provisions of the MRAs. In a 2012 official review of the achievement of the AEC, the Economic Research Institute for ASEAN and East Asia (ERIA) noted "substantial progress especially in architecture services and engineering services" although performance varies across various ASEAN Member States. The greatest progress has been made in the establishment of implementation mechanisms and processes at the regional and national levels. (ERIA, 2012) For architecture and engineering services, this involves the

selection of ASEAN-chartered professionals submitted to the ASEAN Architecture Council and the ASEAN Chartered Professional Engineer Coordinating Committee. More remains to be done, according to ERIA, in revising domestic policies and regulations to be consistent with the provisions of the MRAs. ERIA highlights, for instance, the case of medical and dental professionals; ASEAN Member States have generally maintained their national authority in deciding who can practice in their countries. Indeed, the technical hurdles are significant. Simply signing an agreement between governments is not enough. Necessary, concrete measures may include detailed occupation-by-occupation analyses and negotiations of a highly technical nature that require considerable persistence and political will. Governments seeking to simplify and reduce barriers to professional practice face a highly complex system with a wide range of stakeholders responsible for various aspects of the recognition process — especially where occupational regulation is delegated to subnational actors.

Some countries, such as the Philippines, have constitutional provisions barring migrant workers from receiving a license in some occupations. Second, stronger political and public support is needed to drive the process forward despite the time-consuming and technical difficulty of the task. A much stronger case has to be made for the benefits of high-skilled mobility within ASEAN in order to increase public support and enthusiasm for the implementation of the MRAs and the ASEAN Qualifications Framework (AQF). For instance, national professional associations in the region are worried about the implications of the AQF for their professions, and may see more threat than benefit for their members. As Chiu (2014) notes, “differences in language, culture, and social acceptance can create practical barriers to labour mobility beyond any provisions that may be set down in law.” For instance, the influx of professionals and managers in Singapore has led to development of what Yeoh and Lin describe as “nationality-based enclaves in private residential and condominium belts.” Yeoh and Lin (2012) write: There is a degree of resentment among the local population that these ‘foreign talent’ take away jobs, are paid too much, and enjoy all the privileges of living in Singapore with none of the responsibilities that citizens bear...The influx of well-heeled expatriates boost property prices and rental yields reaped by homeowners and transformed neighbourhoods: “old-school shops selling joss sticks and simple grocery items” have turned into alfresco eateries, upmarket specialist shops, modern convenience stores or supermarkets, wine shops, and new beauty and wellness services that attract a “more diverse ‘globe-trotting’ crowd” or serve a “cosmopolitan clientele.”

Beyond addressing technical barriers, success also rests on cultivating political and public support for reforms. Central to gathering this support is an honest assessment of the potential gains from skilled labour mobility — for the sending and receiving societies as well as individual migrants — and also an examination of the costs and challenges at the global, regional, and country levels. Last, along with the mutual recognition of qualifications and experience, other key factors that shape the migration process require regional cooperation and action. Foremost among these deciding factors are market demand and supply gap analysis, admissions and visa policies, origin countries’ emigration policies, and the recruitment process, which is primarily controlled by the private sector. Without jointly and comprehensively addressing these interrelated issues that fall above and beyond recognizing qualifications, ASEAN countries face the risk that competent authorities will implement the MRAs inconsistently or, worse, not at all, and that the free skilled labour mobility aspiration will never be realized.

It is important to note that even a full implementation of the MRAs and AQF does not guarantee the mobility of professionals. At best, qualification frameworks enable professional service providers who are registered or certified in signatory countries to be equally recognized in other signatory countries. However, it does not call for the unrestricted free flow of foreign professionals. In other words, MRAs

and qualifications frameworks are just parts of a larger system for facilitating professional mobility. The Migration Policy Institute's research on other regions of the world suggests that MRAs have been most successful when part of a broader strategy for cooperation on both mobility and other economic policy issues.

Overcoming these three sets of challenges highlighted earlier may be difficult but not impossible. The AEC aspiration to facilitate a "free flow of skilled labour" is an ambitious yet highly valuable policy goal for ASEAN in line with the major demographic, economic, and social changes that are sweeping across the region. Moreover, ASEAN Members' economies are becoming ever more interdependent, if unevenly so. The opportunities therefore lay in harnessing these shifting forces in a way that encourages more broadbased, inclusive growth and also utilizes economic competitiveness in the region.

The costs of inaction outweigh the investments that could be made now. With a growing, vibrant market of over 600 million consumers and a combined gross domestic product (GDP) of nearly USD 3 trillion, the ASEAN region stands to gain even more from adopting a more comprehensive approach to facilitating skill mobility. The benefits that foreign skilled workers have brought to the economy of Singapore, as well as those of Thailand and Malaysia to some degree, have exemplified the positive effects of skill mobility. It is important to develop and embrace a longerterm vision for the intersection of human-capital development and economic growth, and the role that skilled labour mobility across the region can play in them.

A freer flow of skilled labour could help address some of the region's greatest challenges, foremost of which is the growing skills gap. Numerous reports have highlighted the disconnect between the knowledge and skills that ASEAN higher education systems provide graduates and those demanded by today's employers. The Economist Intelligence Unit recently reported labour shortfalls and skill shortages in Indonesia, the Philippines, Thailand, and Viet Nam while recent research from the International Labour Organisation (ILO) identified skill shortages in several key sectors within ASEAN, including mining, trade, hydropower, hotels and restaurants, telecommunications, and information technology. A more open ASEAN-wide skilled labour regime could also help address the growing problem of youth unemployment in the region, especially among the well-educated. The ILO estimated in 2012 that around 12.7 per cent of young people, or 73 million, were jobless within ASEAN, with some of the highest unemployment rate recorded in the Philippines (16%) and Indonesia (19.6%). The potential costs of inaction are huge. In order for the region's most promising industries to remain regionally, and even globally competitive would require the presence of a well-trained workforce. Realizing ASEAN aspirations towards a free flow of skilled labour are key to more effectively managing the region's human capital and promoting regional competitiveness and development.

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Asia Factsheet

| Country | Capital | Land Area (sq km) | Population* | Literacy Rate 2015** | GDP Growth Rate 2013*** | Country | Capital | Land Area (sq km) | Population* | Literacy Rate 2015** | GDP Growth Rate 2013*** |
|-------------|------------------------|----------------------|---------------|-------------------------|----------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------|----------------------|-------------|-------------------------|----------------------------|
| Afghanistan | Kabul | 652,230 | 31,280,518 | 32(2011) | 3.10 | Maldives | Malé | 300 | 351,572 | 99.3 | 3.50 |
| Armenia | Yerevan | 29,800 | 2,983,990 | 99.6 | 4.60 | Mongolia | Ulaanbaatar | 1,564,116 | 2,881,415 | 97.1 | 11.80 |
| Azerbaijan | Baku | 86,600 | 9,514,887 | 99.8 | 5.80 | Myanmar (Burma) | Naypyidaw | 678,500 | 53,718,958 | 93.1 | 6.80 |
| Bahrain | Manama | 665 | 1,344,111 | 95.4 | 4.40 | Nepal | Kathmandu | 140,800 | 28,120,740 | 65.6 | 3.60 |
| Bangladesh | Dhaka | 144,000 | 158,512,570 | 61.4 | 5.80 | North Korea | Pyongyang | 120,538 | 25,026,588 | 100 (2008) | 1.30(2012 est.) |
| Bhutan | Thimphu | 47,000 | 765,552 | 64.1 | 5.80 | Oman | Muscat | 212,460 | 3,926,492 | 87.8 | 5.10 |
| Brunei | Bandar Seri Begawan | 5,770 | 423,205 | 96.3 | 1.40 | Pakistan | Islamabad | 803,940 | 185,132,926 | 59.9 | 3.60 |
| Cambodia | Phnom Penh | 181,040 | 15,408,270 | 78.3 | 7.00 | Palestine | East Jerusalem | 6,220 | 4,436,411 | 96.2 | -1.1(Jan. 2015) |
| China | Beijing | 9,596,961 | 1,393,783,836 | 96.4 | 7.40(2014 est.) | Philippines | Manila | 300,000 | 100,096,496 | 96.3 | 6.80 |
| Timor-Leste | Dili | 14,874 | 1,152,439 | 67.2 | 8.10 | Qatar | Doha | 11,437 | 2,267,916 | 96.6 | 5.50 |
| Georgia | T'bilisi | 69,700 | 4,322,842 | 99.8 | 2.50 | Saudi Arabia | Riyadh | 1,960,582 | 29,369,428 | 89.3 | 3.60 |
| India | New Delhi | 3,287,263 | 1,267,401,849 | 71.4 | 7.40(2014-15 est.) | Singapore | Singapore | 693 | 5,517,102 | 96.8 | 4.10 |
| Indonesia | Jakarta | 1,904,569 | 252,812,245 | 93.7 | 5.30 | South Korea | Seoul | 99,720 | 49,512,026 | 100 | 2.80 |
| Iran | Tehran | 1,648,195 | 78,470,222 | 90.6 | -1.50 | Sri Lanka | Colombo | 65,610 | 21,445,775 | 92.5 | 6.30 |
| Iraq | Baghdad | 437,072 | 34,768,761 | 79.5 | 4.20 | Syria | Damascus | 185,180 | 21,986,615 | 86.3 | -2.30 (2011 est.) |
| Israel | Jerusalem | 20,770 | 7,822,107 | 100(2011) | 3.30 | Russian Federation | Moscow | 17,098,242 | 142,098,141 | 99.7 | 0.50 |
| Japan | Tokyo | 377,835 | 126,999,808 | 99(2002) | 2.00 | Tajikistan | Dushanbe | 143,100 | 8,408,947 | 99.8 | 7.40 |
| Jordan | Amman | 92,300 | 7,504,812 | 94.5 | 3.30 | Thailand | Bangkok | 514,000 | 67,222,972 | 95.2 | 2.90 |
| Kazakhstan | Astana | 2,717,300 | 16,606,878 | 99.8 | 5.00 | Turkey | Ankara | 783,562 | 75,837,020 | 95.5 | 3.80 |
| Kuwait | Kuwait City | 17,820 | 3,479,371 | 95.6 | 2.30 | Turkmenistan | Ashgabat | 488,100 | 5,307,171 | 99.7 | 12.20 |
| Kyrgyzstan | Bishkek | 198,500 | 5,625,015 | 99.5 | 7.40 | United Arab Emirates | Abu Dhabi | 82,880 | 9,445,624 | 92.8 | 4.00 |
| Laos | Vientiane | 236,800 | 6,894,098 | 79.6 | 8.30 | Uzbekistan | Tashkent | 447,400 | 29,324,920 | 99.6 | 7.00 |
| Lebanon | Beirut | 10,400 | 4,965,914 | 93.9 | 1.60 | Vietnam | Hanoi | 329,560 | 92,547,959 | 94.0 | 5.30 |
| Malaysia | Kuala Lumpur | 329,750 | 30,187,896 | 94.5 | 4.70 | Yemen | Sana'a | 527,968 | 24,968,508 | 70.2 | 3.80 |



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