

# Rising Asia

July-September 2015 Issue 02

**Centre for East Asia (Foundation)  
Bangladesh**



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# Rising Asia

A Quarterly Magazine of CEAF

Issue - 2  
July - September, 2015

*Striving for Asian Solidarity*



**Centre for East Asia Foundation (CEAF)**  
**Dhaka, Bangladesh**



# Rising Asia

A Quarterly Magazine of CEAF

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## Message

I congratulate the Centre for East Asia Foundation (CEAF) on the occasion of the second publication of the “Rising Asia” magazine in July 2015.

The commitment of CEAF to enhance the understanding and strengthen the ties of the people and the policymakers of Bangladesh with those of East Asian and South East Asian countries in the Asia-Pacific region is praiseworthy. I hope it will contribute towards identifying and solving the common problems related to human development, human security, trade relation, security cooperation, counter terrorism, good governance and climate change experience in the region.

A close and good relationship between Bangladesh and Norway is among the oldest - as Norway was one of the first countries to recognize Bangladesh's independence on 14 April 1972.

Human rights have always been at the centre of the cooperation between Bangladesh and Norway. I am pleased that Norway, although no longer a classic development partner, cooperates with Bangladesh and Bangladeshi civil society on human and women's rights issues. Climate change and disaster preparedness is another vital area where our two countries cooperate, share views and positions, and carry out activities together.

Norway encourages Bangladesh's growing economy and rapid social development, by focusing on private sector cooperation and investments. Big Norwegian investments in Bangladesh's telecom sector contribute to development, and help bring Digital Bangladesh closer. I hope for more investments and more cooperation in more sectors in the time ahead.

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

**Merete Lundemo**  
Ambassador  
Embassy of Norway



## Message

I congratulate the Centre of East Asia(Foundation) Bangladesh for the inaugural issue of the quarterly magazine “Rising Asia”. I commend the relentless efforts by Mr. Nasim Mahmud that make it happen.

Asia is on the rise! Accounting for one third of the world economy, Asia is widely regarded as the most dynamic region with all the potential. It is indeed necessary for us to pursue the study of the phenomenon, significant implication and future role of the rising Asia as a whole while Asia is attracting the attention of the rest of the world.

With increasing interaction, cooperation and intertwining of interests, a community of common destiny is gradually taking shape in Asia. As members of the community, the Asian countries should go for sustainable development and security based on mutual respect, mutual understanding and win-win cooperation. “Rising Asia” will be a new platform that serves this purpose.

Friendly relations between the Chinese and Bangladeshi peoples date back more 2500 years ago as the ancestors began to interact along the silk road. The visit to Bangladesh by Chinese Monks Fa Xian and Xuan Zang, and the visit to China by Bangladeshi scholar Atish Dipanka added chapters in the history of bilateral relations.

This year marks the 40th anniversary of the diplomatic relations between China and Bangladesh. We are proud to see the enormous progress made over the last 40 years in all areas. Bangladesh is now the third largest trading partner of China in South Asia, with a total trade volume of over US\$12.5 billion. We have all the reason to believe this relationship of friendship and cooperation will further flourish with the strong support of the people in China and Bangladesh.

I wish CEAF’s endeavour will significantly contribute to enhancing the mutual understanding and cooperation among the Asian community members.

**Ma Mingqiang**

Ambassador

Embassy of the People’s Republic of China



## Message

I would like to extend my heartfelt congratulations on Centre for East Asia Foundation's publication of its new quarterly magazine. With an ever growing influence of Asia in the international stage as well as tectonic shift in its geopolitics, the importance of research and analysis on the region has not been more needed as it is today. In this context, I would like to express my deep appreciation to CEAF for its initiative and active role.

Today, Asia is facing challenges and opportunities. These challenges and opportunities need to be managed and solved by Asian countries through close cooperation and coordination. In particular, Asia is day by day deepening its economic interdependence and integration. As one of many examples, simple bilateral FTAs are shifting to regional integration like FTAs, TPP, RCEP, etc. which will result in promoting intra-trade and investment. On the other hand, security tensions such as territorial disputes and conflicts over historical issues are still looming in the region.

Bangladesh, an emerging country with its remarkable annual GDP growth and strategic geographic location, will surely gain from broader engagement in the regional and global trends. I look forward to witnessing Bangladesh as a regional hub in South Asia promoting connectivity, keeping up with its expanded role in this rapidly changing world. I am sure that through these efforts, Bangladesh will be successful in accomplishing the goal to reach a middle-income country by 2021. As a unique and time tested friend of Bangladesh, Korea will remain committed to a shared future of growth and prosperity.

Expecting that Bangladesh will take the lead in materializing the proposed initiatives for more connected Asia, I hope CEAF will also act as a bridge in the process and promote academic progress which will help the region address various issues and boost cooperation through enhanced understanding. Congratulating once again on the new magazine publication, I sincerely wish CEAF continuing success.

**Lee Yun-young**  
Ambassador  
Embassy of the Republic of Korea





## Message

I have the immense pleasure to recognize that the Centre for East Asia Foundation (CEAF) has initiated a quarterly magazine named; “Rising Asia” dedicated to the Asia improvement matters. I express my sincere congratulation to the Editors for its first publication as well as to CEAF for its past manifold achievements.

It is worthy to mention that Asia is going to be a bond of worldwide mediation. I show my expectation that magazine “Rising Asia” will also pave the way to contribute in the development of Bangladesh and expand the prospect of their entrepreneurs. Iran and Bangladesh has friendly and brotherly relations since a long.

Moreover, Islamic Republic of Iran has great achievements in the field of science, technology, nano technology and industrial base development. Iran has already signed some cultural, commercial, educational and trade agreement with Bangladesh.

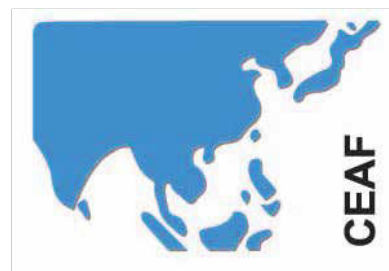
I am confident that audience of your esteemed magazine “Rising Asia” will be very interested to know more about the Islamic Republic of Iran with Asian countries and look forward to reading the second issue of the publication.

I wish your magazine a great success by contributing peace, stability, friendship, cooperation and development in the arena.

**Dr. Abbas Vaezi**

Ambassador

Embassy of the Islamic Republic of Iran



## Editor's Note

2015 is a crucial year for the health of shared earth and the fate of human kind as the International Community prepares to adopt a new global climate deal in Paris in December. At the Paris summit, 196 countries will meet to sign a new climate change agreement. The upcoming Paris conference, formally known as the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), is an important milestone on the road to collective action on global warming. Eliminating poverty, improving health, and building security are all outcomes linked to tackling climate change. And it will also bring huge benefits to the natural environment by helping avoid loss of biodiversity and the degradation of ecosystems.

In the current issue of Rising Asia, we have introduced an in-house discussion topic for our study centre pursuant to the 60th anniversary of Asia Africa Conference (AAC). This year the conference was held in Bandung, Indonesia. The conference remains the key bridge connecting Asia and Africa in the new world. It follows the legacy of the Non-Aligned Movement of the Cold War period in seeking a multi-polar world in which the developing countries may have more voice and leverage in shaping the new global order.

Our heartiest felicitations to the Ambassadors or Heads of Missions in Dhaka who have sent their goodwill messages and articles for the current issue of Rising Asia. We seek your further cooperation in a) providing us with topical printed materials/references for publication or republication and b) Individual contributions for our future issue. Please write to us at [info@ceafasia.org](mailto:info@ceafasia.org).

We take this opportunity to express our indebtedness to all those who have helped us with their luminous articles and suggestions. Our sincere and utmost thanks to the Chief Patron of CEAF for his cooperation.

We would appreciate your feedback/critique on our quarterly.

Best regards  
**Nasim Mahmud**  
Editor, Rising Asia

## Joint Declaration between Bangladesh and India during the Visit of Prime Minister of India to Bangladesh

**"Notun Projonmo – Nayi Disha"**



Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi meets Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina in his visit to Bangladesh on June 2015.

June 07, 2015

1. At the invitation of the Prime Minister of the Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh, Sheikh Hasina, the Prime Minister of the Government of the Republic of India, Mr. Narendra Modi, paid a State visit to Bangladesh from 6-7 June 2015.
2. During the visit, Prime Minister of India called on H.E. Mr. Md. Abdul Hamid, Hon'ble President of Bangladesh.
3. Prime Minister Modi laid a wreath at the National Martyrs' Memorial at Savar as a mark of respect to the memory and contribution of the great freedom fighters of Bangladesh. He paid rich tribute and respect to the memory of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman at the Bangabandhu Memorial Museum in Dhaka.
4. Sushri Mamata Banerjee, Chief Minister of West Bengal, also joined Prime Minister Modi and Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina in Dhaka on June 6, 2015 for the historic ceremony wherein they witnessed the exchange of instruments of ratification of the India- Bangladesh Land Boundary Agreement, 1974 and its 2011 Protocol. The three leaders jointly flagged off the 2 bus services connecting Bangladeshi and Indian cities.

5. Prime Minister Modi received, on behalf of the former Prime Minister of India Mr. Atal Bihari Vajpayee, the '**Bangladesh Liberation War Honour**' from President Mr. Md. Abdul Hamid and Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina.
6. Prime Minister Modi visited the Dhakeswari Temple and the Ramakrishna Mission on 7 June 2015, and spoke at a public event at the Bangabandhu International Convention Centre (BICC) in Dhaka on 7 June 2015.
7. Prime Minister Modi had a meeting with Prime Minister Hasina on 6 June 2015 which was followed by the delegation level talks. Both the meeting and the talks were marked by great warmth and cordiality reflecting the excellent bilateral relations and friendship that exist between the two countries. The two Prime Ministers led their respective sides in the talks. Prime Minister Hasina hosted a banquet preceded by a cultural programme in honour of Prime Minister Modi and his delegation.
8. During the talks, the two Prime Ministers recalled the shared bonds of history, tradition, aspirations and multitude of other commonalities between the two countries and reiterated their firm conviction to further strengthen the bilateral relations. They recognized that the destinies of the peoples of the two countries were interlinked in their quest for peace, development and stability. The two Prime Ministers also noted that India and Bangladesh have entered a new phase in bilateral relations with a pragmatic, mature and practical approach based on sovereignty, equality, friendship, trust and understanding for the mutual benefit of their peoples and collective prosperity of the region.
9. Prime Minister Modi recalled with deep respect the visionary leadership of the Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. He appreciated the impressive socio-economic development in Bangladesh especially in the areas of economic growth, poverty eradication, women's empowerment and education, under the leadership of Prime Minister Hasina. He also appreciated the steps taken by her towards strengthening democracy and promoting peace, security and stability in the region and beyond. He complimented Prime Minister Hasina for her support to innovative ideas for enhancing sub-regional cooperation and connectivity. He also appreciated her commitment to the betterment of bilateral ties with India and the many path breaking initiatives taken by her to provide greater depth and substance to the relationship.
10. Prime Minister Hasina appreciated Prime Minister Modi for his dynamic and pragmatic approach in leading the largest democracy and one of the largest and fastest growing economies in the world. She expressed her firm belief that Prime Minister Modi's leadership would bring in fresh impetus to the excellent bilateral relations between Bangladesh and India.
11. Both the Prime Ministers underscored the need to preserve the memory and legacy of the Great Liberation War and the freedom fighters. Prime Minister Hasina sought assistance from India in bringing back the mortal remains of valiant freedom fighters of Bangladesh who had been buried in Indian soil during 1971 War of Liberation. Prime Minister Modi agreed to extend necessary cooperation in this regard. Prime Minister Hasina recalled with gratitude India's enormous contribution to the glorious Liberation War of Bangladesh in 1971. Prime Minister Modi conveyed appreciation to the Government of Bangladesh for conferring the 'Bangladesh Liberation War Honour' on former Prime Minister of India, Mr. Atal Bihari Vajpayee, for his outstanding contribution to the Liberation War of Bangladesh. He also appreciated Bangladesh's initiative to honour the memory of Indian soldiers who had laid down their lives in Bangladesh's Liberation War. Prime Minister Modi conveyed that these gestures of Bangladesh will always be remembered and cherished by the people of India and that these are testimony to the close ties between the two peoples. The two Prime Ministers noted with satisfaction the ongoing practice of joint celebration

of Victory Day at Kolkata and Dhaka and also implementation of Muktiyoddha scholarship scheme for heirs of the Muktiyoddhas. Prime Minister Modi handed over to Prime Minister Hasina memento of INS Vikrant, which played an important role in the Liberation War. Prime Minister Modi also handed over to Prime Minister Hasina the audio recording of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman's historic speech on 06 February 1972 at a mammoth rally at Brigade Maidan, Kolkata during his first State visit to India after the independence of Bangladesh. Prime Minister Hasina thanked Prime Minister Modi for this special gesture.

12. Both Prime Ministers expressed satisfaction over the historic passage of the 100th Constitutional Amendment Bill in the Rajya Sabha and Lok Sabha of the Indian Parliament to give effect to the 1974 Land Boundary Agreement and its 2011 Protocol. They recognized that this was a milestone in Bangladesh-India relations. Prime Minister Modi handed over to Prime Minister Hasina the video recording of the debate on this Bill in the Indian Parliament. They recalled with gratitude the role played by the then Prime Minister of Bangladesh Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and the then Prime Minister of India Smt. Indira Gandhi in this regard. Prime Minister Hasina appreciated the political parties and political leaders in India for the great demonstration of camaraderie in the unanimous adoption of the bill. The two Prime Ministers gave directives to the concerned officials on both sides for expeditious implementation of the 1974 Land Boundary Agreement and its 2011 Protocol on the ground. The two Prime Ministers reaffirmed their commitment to extend all facilities to the residents of the enclaves and ensure that the rights of all citizens are protected. The historic instruments of ratification of the 1974 Land Boundary Agreement and its 2011 Protocol were exchanged and modalities for ensuring smooth implementation of the said Agreement and Protocol were worked out under an exchange of letters.

13. The two Prime Ministers recalled the "Framework Agreement on Cooperation for Development" of 2011 that outlines the shared vision for an enduring and long-term cooperation and commits to achieve closer ties through economic integration and better connectivity. They stressed on taking stock of the achievements and charting ways for future cooperation.

14. The two Prime Ministers noted with satisfaction the continued exchange of high level visits which helped achieve a better understanding on many of the issues under discussion. They agreed to encourage more such high level interaction between the two sides. They also appreciated the regular holding of meetings of sectoral institutional mechanisms for continually promoting bilateral relations.

15. Both the Prime Ministers appreciated the progress made in the 3rd meeting of the Joint Consultative Commission (JCC) held in New Delhi on 20 September 2014 led by the two Ministers of Foreign/External Affairs and directed them to coordinate, oversee and follow up implementation of initiatives as well as explore newer avenues for cooperation. It was agreed that the 4th meeting of the JCC would be held in 2015 in Dhaka.

16. The two Prime Ministers expressed satisfaction at the unparalleled level of cooperation between the two countries on security related issues and reaffirmed their unequivocal and uncompromising position against extremism and terrorism in all forms and manifestations, as well as their commitment to cooperate with each other by sharing information about groups and persons indulging in terrorism. They reiterated their commitment that their respective territories would not be allowed to be used for any activity inimical to the other. Prime Minister Modi expressed India's appreciation for the cooperation extended by Bangladesh in security related matters. The two Prime Ministers expressed satisfaction at the conclusion of the MOUs on Prevention of Smuggling of Fake Currency Notes, Cooperation between Coast Guards and Prevention of Human Trafficking, all of which will augment security cooperation.



17. The two Prime Ministers stressed the need for effective implementation of the Coordinated Border Management Plan (CBMP) for better border management so as to prevent cross border criminal activities, irregular movement, incidents of violence and tragic loss of lives. They expressed confidence that it would enhance cooperation between the border guarding forces of the two countries, and enable them to manage the identified vulnerable areas with a view to preventing criminal activities, irregular movement, acts of violence and loss of lives along the border areas. They agreed on the need to free the borders from criminal activities. Both Prime Ministers also welcomed the finalisation of Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) for allowing usage of Indian border roads for construction and maintenance of Border Out Posts (BOPs) of Border Guards Bangladesh as well as use of Indian medical facilities in difficult areas in the border area by Bangladeshi personnel, who are deployed in vicinity. Both Prime Ministers reiterated that the number of deaths at the border must be brought down to zero and directed the concerned authorities and border guarding forces to work to that effect. The two Prime Ministers welcomed the holding of 1st round of meetings of DCs/DMs of clusters of bordering districts and put emphasis on regular holding of meetings.

18. Prime Minister Hasina invited India's cooperation in jointly developing the Ganges Barrage on the river Padma in Bangladesh. Prime Minister Modi conveyed that he would have the matter examined by the concerned agencies in India.

19. Prime Minister Hasina requested Prime Minister Modi for immediate conclusion of the Interim Agreement on Sharing of the Water of Teesta as agreed upon by both the governments in January 2011. Prime Minister Modi conveyed that deliberations are underway involving all stakeholders with regard to conclusion of the Interim Agreements on sharing of waters of Teesta and Feni as soon as possible. The two Prime Ministers noted that discussions on various aspects relating to sharing of waters of the Manu, Muhuri, Khowai, Gumti, Dharla and Dudhkumar rivers were taking place at technical levels under JRC and asked the concerned officials for taking expeditious action to conclude the sharing arrangements at the earliest.

20. The two Prime Ministers recalled Article-2 of the Framework Agreement on Cooperation for Development of 2011 and reiterated their commitment to address the issue of water resources management of common rivers including water sharing, in a holistic manner through common basin management.

21. Prime Minister Modi reiterated the earlier commitment that India would not take any unilateral decision on the Himalayan component of their River Interlinking Project which may affect Bangladesh. Prime Minister Modi also conveyed that the Tipaimukh Hydro-Electric Power Project is not likely to be taken forward in its present form due to statutory requirements on the Indian side and that India would not take any unilateral decision on this matter that may adversely impact Bangladesh.

22. The two Prime Ministers stressed the need for holding the 38th Ministerial meeting of the JRC at an early date to discuss all issues pertinent to water resources for mutual benefit.

23. Both the Prime Ministers expressed deep satisfaction at the level of cooperation and achievements in the power sector between the two countries and agreed to widen the cooperation further. Prime Minister Modi expressed his appreciation for Prime Minister Hasina's untiring efforts in improving the power situation in Bangladesh and her Government's consistent efforts in implementing the 2021 Goal i.e. to achieve installed capacity of 24,000 MW power by the year 2021. He also conveyed that India can be a major partner in achieving this goal and many Indian corporates have the capacity to cooperate with Bangladesh in this endeavour. He requested Prime Minister Hasina for facilitating the entry of Indian companies in the power generation, transmission and distribution sector of Bangladesh. The two Prime Ministers expressed satisfaction at the steps being taken to quickly enhance the supply by 30-50MW over the existing transmission line so that the net power supply to Bangladesh increases to 500MW. Both sides further welcomed the

steps being taken to augment supply of power through the Bheramara-Baharampur grid inter-connection from 500 MW to 1,000 MW and to operationalise the supply of 100 MW of power from India including from Palatana Power Plant to eastern side of Bangladesh and directed the concerned officials to complete the work in a time-bound manner. To enhance power grid connectivity as envisaged in the Framework Agreement, Prime Minister Modi agreed in principle to consider Bangladesh's proposal to allow import from India to Bangladesh additional power in phased manner through construction of an additional grid interconnection on western side of Bangladesh.

24. Both sides welcomed the consensus between Bangladesh and India to evacuate power from the North-eastern region of India (Rangia/Rowta) to Muzaffarnagar of India through Bangladesh constructing a  $\pm 800$  KV, 7000 MW HVDC multi-terminal bi-pole DC grid line with suitable power tapping points at Barapukuria in Bangladesh. Prime Minister Modi agreed in principle to consider Bangladesh's request for providing adequate power from this line for Bangladesh keeping in view the grid security of both countries. Both sides expressed satisfaction at the pace of work of the Bangladesh-India Friendship Power Company's 1320 MW coal-fired power plant at Rampal, Bagerhat, Bangladesh, and were optimistic that the plant will be operational by the target date and meet the exacting environmental and energy efficiency standards to become a fine example of Bangladesh-India cooperation.

25. Noting Bangladesh's interest in importing power in the Bangladesh, Bhutan, India and Nepal (BBIN) framework, India agreed to favourably consider such import subject to grid security, transmission, interconnection and applicable laws, rules and regulations of the respective countries.

26. The two Prime Ministers agreed to further enhance cooperation in energy sector particularly in renewable energy and nuclear energy. Both Prime Ministers agreed to cooperate in the field of civil nuclear energy, especially training for technical personnel.

27. Keeping in view the growing cooperation between the two countries in the energy sector, the two Prime Ministers decided to initiate an annual India-Bangladesh Energy Dialogue to be led jointly by Secretary (Petroleum) of India and Secretary, Power Division of Bangladesh to undertake comprehensive energy sector cooperation including areas of coal, natural gas, LNG, supply of petroleum products in the sub-region, renewable energy, oil and gas pipelines etc.

28. The two Prime Ministers welcomed the MOU and the Sale-Purchase Agreement signed between Numaligarh Refinery Ltd (NRL) and Bangladesh Petroleum Corporation (BPC) for construction of a pipeline from Siliguri to Parbatipur for supply of High Speed Diesel to Bangladesh. They directed the officials to quickly finalize the terms for establishment of the Joint Venture Company which will construct and operate the pipeline.

29. The two Prime Ministers welcomed the renewal of the bilateral Trade Agreement with the new trade facilitation provisions which would not only further widen bilateral trade, investment and economic cooperation in a balanced and sustainable manner to mutual benefit but also open up opportunities for regional trade. Recalling Article 1 of the Framework Agreement on Cooperation for Development, the two Prime Ministers directed concerned officials to remove all barriers to ensure unfettered bilateral trade. Both sides underscored the need to narrow the trade imbalance.

30. The two Prime Ministers underscored the importance of harmonization of standards and mutual recognition of agreements and certificates for enhancing bilateral trade. They welcomed the conclusion of the Bilateral Cooperation Agreement between the Bangladesh Standards and Testing Institute (BSTI) and the Bureau of Indian Standards (BIS). They also agreed to keep each other informed of new legislation, rules

and regulations in safety and testing to facilitate easy compliance and upgradation of facilities.

31. Both the Prime Ministers stressed the urgent need for up-gradation of infrastructure of the Land Customs Stations (LCSs)/Land Ports/Integrated Check Posts (ICPs) in a coordinated manner. They noted with satisfaction that the work of opening immigration facilities at Phulbari (opposite Banglabandha) has been completed and that the immigration post would be operationalised soon.

32. The two Prime Ministers noted with appreciation the positive experience gained from the functioning of the Border Haats and stressed the need to open more border haats at mutually agreed locations.

33. Prime Minister Modi emphasized the importance and need to increase Indian investment in Bangladesh and underscored the role of the private sector in this regard. He welcomed the decision of Bangladesh to allocate land for Special Economic Zones (SEZs) for India. The two Prime Ministers welcomed the conclusion of MoU for Establishment of Indian SEZs in Bangladesh and directed the concerned officials to work to realize this goal at the earliest. Mongla and Bheramara were identified as possible locations.

34. The two Prime Ministers welcomed the signing of the Coastal Shipping Agreement which would open up newer avenues of cooperation in the areas of bilateral & regional trade and connectivity. They also noted with satisfaction the renewal of the Protocol on Inland Water Transit and Trade (PIWTT) with new trade facilitation measures. Both the Prime Ministers agreed on the need for dredging of the Bangladesh-India inland water protocol routes to utilize their full potential. Both the Prime Ministers directed the officials to explore the possibilities of development of entire protocol route with assured Least Available Depth (LAD) with international funding. Prime Minister Modi agreed to provide necessary assistance for enhancing navigability of the routes as envisaged in the Framework Agreement.

35. The two Prime Ministers agreed to expedite collaborative efforts towards developing a successor organization of the erstwhile International Jute Study Group. Bangladesh appreciated India's assurance of unhindered sourcing of cotton from India for Bangladesh.

36. Both Prime Ministers emphasized the importance of seamless, multi-modal connectivity to ensure regional economic development and people-to-people contact. They noted that roadways, railways and waterways were the building blocks to an inter-dependent and mutually beneficial relationship among the countries of the region. Prime Minister Modi appreciated the various initiatives taken by the Government of Bangladesh in this regard. Both Prime Ministers also agreed to commence negotiations on a Multi Modal Transport Agreement between the two countries and to constitute a Joint Task Force for this purpose.

37. The two Prime Ministers welcomed the commencement of Dhaka-Shillong-Guwahati and Kolkata-Dhaka-Agartala Bus services. The Indian Prime Minister also conveyed that the new bus services on Khulna-Kolkata and Jessore-Kolkata as proposed by Bangladesh, may be operationalised after completion of consultations by both sides. Reviewing developments regarding proposal for construction of a bridge over the river Feni at Ramgarh-Subroom, the two Prime Ministers directed for its expeditious construction.

38. Prime Minister Modi agreed to consider Bangladesh's proposal to introduce the 2nd Maitree Express between Khulna and Kolkata. The two Prime Ministers expressed satisfaction about the ongoing cooperation in the railways sector including the Akhaura-Agartala railway link and revival of the old railway links. They directed the concerned officials of both sides to take measures for ensuring more passenger-friendly customs and immigration facilities for the passengers of Maitree Express. Prime Minister Modi announced that India will construct a modern International Passenger Terminal (IPT) at a suitable location in India so as to facilitate customs and immigration requirements of passengers travelling on the Kolkata-Dhaka

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Maitri Express and other trains that are to connect India and Bangladesh.

39. Both the Prime Ministers expressed satisfaction at the utilization of the first line of credit of US\$ 800 million, which was enhanced by an additional US\$62 million and US\$ 200 million grant extended by India to Bangladesh.

40. Prime Minister Modi announced a second Line of Credit worth US\$ 2 billion for Bangladesh for undertaking various development projects. The Line of Credit is to be utilized, inter alia, for developmental projects particularly in the area of public transport, roads, railways, inland waterways, ports, ICT, education, health etc.

41. Both Prime Ministers agreed that the advantages of sub-regional cooperation in power sector, water resources, trade, transit and connectivity should be harnessed to mutual benefit. In this context, both Prime Ministers noted with satisfaction the progress made by the Joint Working Groups on Sub-Regional Cooperation between Bangladesh, Bhutan, India and Nepal (BBIN) on Water Resources Management and Power/Hydropower and on Connectivity and Transit. Following discussions at the two meetings of the Joint Working Groups held so far, the concerned authorities in the respective countries are working towards identifying potential future power projects in the sub-region to be undertaken jointly involving at least three countries on equitable basis for joint development and financing. They are also exchanging ideas on potential cargo (roads and railways) and bus routes involving at least three countries. The relevant authorities in the four countries are also exploring the possibility of using multimodal transport to meet their commercial as well as tourist needs. They are also considering ways and means of improving trade facilitation at land border stations so as to enhance sub-regional connectivity and cooperation.

42. The two Prime Ministers recognized the need to exploit the synergies between the two countries for expanding the relationship to newer areas. They expressed satisfaction at bilateral cooperation in new areas including nuclear science and technology, space, health, jute and textiles, renewable energy, fisheries, meteorological, and other areas related to development. The two Prime Ministers especially applauded science and technology (S&T) cooperation that is being undertaken under the ambit of the India-Bangladesh Joint Science & Technology Committee, whose fourth meeting took place in New Delhi in December, 2014 coordinated by the Ministry of Science & Technology from Bangladesh side and Department of Science & Technology (DST) from Indian side. Both Prime Ministers appreciated the efforts for spearheading S&T cooperation in various areas. Both Prime Ministers noted with satisfaction launch of India Science Research Fellowship which enables scientists/researchers from Bangladesh to carry out research work at various Indian Institutes. Prime Minister Modi invited more researchers and scientists from Bangladesh to undergo training and exposure in various Indian scientific institutions, particularly in the areas of biotechnology and oceanography, which are identified as priority areas by Bangladesh.

43. Prime Minister Hasina informed that the ‘Bangabandhu Satellite-I’, the first Bangladesh satellite, is scheduled to be launched in 2017 which would take the country to the next level of scientific advancement. She appreciated the SAARC Satellite project being undertaken by India.

44. The two Prime Ministers expressed satisfaction at the amicable settlement of the maritime boundary between the two countries. To harness the vast economic opportunities this has opened up, they agreed to work closely on the development of ocean-based Blue Economy and Maritime Cooperation in the Bay of Bengal and chart out the ways for future cooperation.

45. Both Prime Ministers agreed that climate change is one of the greatest challenges facing mankind today and expressed their resolve for ambitious climate action in their countries in the context of poverty

eradication and sustainable development. They underscored the importance of working together and with other countries to conclude an ambitious, comprehensive, balanced and equitable climate agreement in Paris in 2015 that will also address the issue of genuine technology collaboration and financial support in meeting this common global challenge. They agreed to intensify bilateral cooperation in the areas of climate change and environment protection.

46. The two Prime Ministers also welcomed the signing of the MOU to implement the grant assistance of INR 5 crores from the India Endowment for Climate Change for installation of 70,000 improved cook stoves in Bangladesh.

47. As a technology demonstration pilot project, Prime Minister Modi announced provisioning and installation by India of solar power-based home systems including light bulbs, mobile charging facilities, fans and cook stoves to an off-grid village in Bangladesh.

48. Recognizing the ongoing cooperation between the two countries in the sector of education, the two Prime Minister reaffirmed their commitment to widen this cooperation for mutual benefit. In this connection, they appreciated the various collaborative arrangements between the universities and educational institutes of the two countries. The two Prime Ministers also welcomed the Bangladesh-India Education Initiative and expressed confidence that the framework provided by the Initiative will enable relationships to prosper between institutions of the two countries.

49. Prime Minister Hasina expressed appreciation for the assistance provided by India, under the bilateral MOU on Small Development Projects, for city improvement projects being undertaken in Rajshahi, Sylhet, Khulna & Narsingdi.

50. Prime Minister Hasina thanked India for the substantive strengthening of capacity building programme being undertaken for Bangladesh under the ITEC programme, especially the custom designed courses such as the mid-career training programme for Bangladesh civil servants. She sought continued support of India in training of Bangladesh officials. Prime Minister Modi reiterated India's commitment to training and capacity building of Bangladesh officials and technical personnel.

51. Expressing happiness at the cultural exchanges between the two countries, the two Prime Ministers agreed to further enhance such exchanges. They also noted with satisfaction the implementation of various projects by both the countries for this purpose.

52. Both Prime Ministers welcomed growing exchanges between the two peoples which is helping foster greater understanding and goodwill between the two countries. They agreed to further increase people-to-people contacts. In this context, it was agreed that Doordarshan and Bangladesh Television (BTV) will enter into an agreement to allow BTV to join Prasar Bharati's DTH platform.

53. Both Prime Ministers agreed that strengthening diplomatic and consular presence in each other's country will further boost people-to-people contacts. Prime Minister Hasina appreciated the concurrence of the Government of India to the opening of a Deputy High Commission of Bangladesh in Guwahati as well as upgradation of Bangladesh Visa Office in Agartala to an Assistant High Commission. Prime Minister Modi appreciated the concurrence of Government of Bangladesh for the opening of India's Assistant High Commissions in Khulna and Sylhet.

54. Prime Minister Modi deeply appreciated the Government of Bangladesh for allowing transshipment of 25,000 Metric Tonnes of food grains to Tripura across Bangladesh territory on humanitarian cause. Prime



Minister Hasina deeply appreciated the cooperation extended by Government of India for facilitating movement of humanitarian assistance from Bangladesh for the victims of the recent earthquake in Nepal.

55. Prime Minister Hasina deeply appreciated India's assistance in bringing back Bangladesh nationals from Yemen.

56. Both Prime Ministers reaffirmed their shared commitment to deepen regional cooperation to maximize the mutuality of interests and to ensure equitable share of mutual benefits in all areas, including trade, transport and energy. They recognized the importance of various regional/sub-regional cooperative/collaborative initiatives to improve the lives and livelihoods of all the people across the two countries. Prime Minister Hasina thanked India for the 24 Automatic Weather Stations set up by India under the SAARC STORM programme built by Antrix Corporation of India for the Bangladesh Meteorological Department.

57. Pledging to work closely in furthering relevant regional/sub-regional cooperation processes including SAARC, BIMSTEC and BCIM-EC, the two Prime Ministers reviewed various steps taken in this regard. They welcomed the agreement on establishing of the BIMSTEC electricity grid and expressed the hope that the BIMSTEC Free Trade Agreement will be finalized soon. They also expressed confidence that the BCIM-EC Study Group reports would be finalized soon to allow decision making with regard to several projects envisaged under this framework, particularly the Kolkata-to-Kunming Highway Project.

58. The two Prime Ministers reaffirmed their commitment to work closely in the UN and other multi-lateral organisations including WTO. They underscored the importance of coordinating each other's position on the emerging global development architecture including Post-2015 Development Agenda, Migration and Development, and other multi-lateral issues of common interest. The two sides stressed the need for concluding the Doha Development Round under the WTO, in accordance with its development mandate and especially ensuring an early harvest of the development deliverables for LDCs. Both sides noted with satisfaction contributions of both countries to UN Peacekeeping Operations and agreed to work together to pursue the ongoing Peacekeeping reform process at the UN in the 70th Anniversary year of its establishment. Both Prime Ministers reiterated the importance of an effective multilateral system, centered on a strong United Nations, as a key factor in tackling global challenges. They expressed concern at the slow pace of progress on the long standing subject of UN Security Council Reform and called for urgent outcomes to be achieved in the 70th anniversary year of the United Nations. They reaffirmed their commitment to supporting the Intergovernmental Negotiations (IGN) and called for results oriented outcome of the negotiations that brings about comprehensive reform of the Security Council including an expansion in both categories of membership. Prime Minister Hasina reiterated her country's support for India's candidature for permanent membership of an expanded and reformed UN Security Council.

59. Both Prime Ministers underscored the need for strengthening and reform of multilateral financial institutions and enhancing the voice and participation of developing countries in international economic decision-making. They welcomed the potential role the New Development Bank and the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) may play in responding to needs of the developing countries. In this connection, Prime Minister Modi took note of Bangladesh's request to become a member of the New Development Bank in due course.

60. The following bilateral documents were signed, exchanged, adopted and handed over during the visit:

- i. Exchange of Instruments of Ratification of 1974 Land Boundary Agreement and its 2011 Protocol
- ii. Exchange of letters on Modalities for implementation of 1974 Land Boundary Agreement and its 2011 Protocol

- iii. Bilateral Trade Agreement (renewal)
- iv. Agreement on Coastal Shipping between Bangladesh and India
- v. Protocol on Inland Water Transit and Trade (renewal)
- vi. Bilateral Cooperation Agreement between Bangladesh Standards & Testing Institution (BSTI) and Bureau of Indian Standards (BIS) on Cooperation in the field of Standardization.
- vii. Agreement on Dhaka-Shillong-Guwahati Bus Service and its Protocol
- viii. Agreement on Kolkata-Dhaka-Agartala Bus Service and its Protocol
- ix. Memorandum of Understanding between Coast Guards
- x. Memorandum of Understanding on Prevention of Human Trafficking
- xi. Memorandum of Understanding on Prevention of Smuggling and Circulation of Fake Currency Notes
- xii. Memorandum of Understanding between Bangladesh and India for Extending a New Line of Credit (LoC) of US\$ 2 billion by Government of India to Government of Bangladesh
- xiii. Memorandum of Understanding on Blue Economy and Maritime Cooperation in the Bay of Bengal and the Indian Ocean
- xiv. Memorandum of Understanding on Use of Chittagong and Mongla Ports
- xv. Memorandum of Understanding for a Project under IECC (India Endowment for Climate Change) of SAARC
- xvi. Memorandum of Understanding on Indian Economic Zone
- xvii. Cultural Exchange Programme for the years 2015-17
- xviii. Statement of Intent on Bangladesh-India Education Cooperation (adoption)
- xix. Agreement between Bangladesh Submarine Cable Company Limited (BSCCL) and Bharat Sanchar Nigam Limited (BSNL) for leasing of international bandwidth for internet at Akhaura
- xx. Memorandum of Understanding between University of Dhaka, Bangladesh and Council of Scientific and Industrial Research, India for Joint Research on Oceanography of the Bay of Bengal
- xxi. Memorandum of Understanding between University of Rajshahi, Bangladesh and University of Jamia Milia Islamia, India
- xxii. Handing over of Consent Letter by Insurance Development and Regulatory Authority (IDRA), Bangladesh to Life Insurance Corporation (LIC), India to start operations in Bangladesh

61. In a ceremonial event at the Prime Minister's Office, the two Prime Ministers unveiled/inaugurated/flagged off the following:

- i. Flagging off Dhaka-Shillong-Guwahati Bus Service
- ii. Flagging off Kolkata-Dhaka-Agartala Bus Service
- iii. Unveiling of Foundation Stone for Construction of Khulna-Mongla Railway line
- iv. Unveiling of Foundation Stone for Rehabilitation of Kalaura-Shahbajpur section of Bangladesh Railways.
- v. Inauguration of Tarapur-Kamlasagar Border Haat
- vi. Unveiling of Foundation Stone for Bangladesh – India Friendship Building at National Police Academy, Sardah.

- vii. Inauguration of Upgraded Laboratories at BSTI
- viii. Unveiling of Foundation Stone of Rabindra Bhaban Kuthibari, Shilaidaha
- ix. Unveiling of Foundation Stone for Construction of Bangladesh–India Friendship Bridge-1 over Feni River

62. Prime Minister Modi handed over the following to Prime Minister Hasina:

- i. Audio recording of Bangabandhu's Speech at Brigade Maidan, Kolkata (06 February 1972)
- ii. DVD of Parliamentary Debate on Land Boundary Agreement
- iii. Mementos of INS Vikrant
- iv. Replica of a dredger supplied to MonglaPort
- v. Photo and replica of one of the 24 Automatic Weather Stations installed in Bangladesh under the STORM programme

63. Prime Minister Hasina handed over the following to Prime Minister Modi:

- i. A photograph of the "Signing Instrument of Surrender 1971"
- ii. A map indicating the location of SEZs for India
- iii. A photograph of the model of the Maitree Super Thermal Power Project (2x660 MW) at Rampal.

64. Prime Minister Modi thanked Prime Minister Hasina for the warmth and cordiality shown and gracious hospitality extended to him and members of his delegation during their stay in Bangladesh.

65. Prime Minister Modi extended an invitation to Prime Minister Hasina to pay a visit to India. The invitation was accepted and it was agreed that the visit would take place at a mutually convenient date.

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Dhaka,  
June 7, 2015

## China and Bangladesh pledge to deepen comprehensive partnership



China and Bangladesh have pledged to deepen the comprehensive cooperative partnership between the two countries and further boost cooperation in various fields. The pledge was made when visiting Chinese Vice-Premier Liu Yandong met with Bangladeshi Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina on May 24.



Chinese Vice-Premier Liu Yandong (L) shakes hands with Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina in Dhaka on May 24, 2015 (Source: Xinhua)

During the meeting, Vice-premier Liu said that this year marks the 40th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic ties between the two sides and China is willing to deepen the traditional friendship, broaden the pragmatic cooperation, strengthen the people-to-people exchanges and further develop the comprehensive cooperative partnership between the two countries.

Liu expressed the hope that the two sides will work together to maintain the momentum of high-level exchanges, take the opportunities and achieve the common development of cooperative win-win so as to realize the Chinese Dream and “the dream of a golden Bangladesh”.

The vice-premier said, Bangladesh, which enjoys a unique geographical position in the region and has abundant labor forces, is one of the important countries along the 21st Century Maritime Silk Road, and China appreciates Bangladesh’s support for the initiatives of the “One Belt and One Road” and the Bangladesh-China-India-Myanmar (BCIM) economic corridor.

Liu also said, under these frameworks, China is ready to join hands with Bangladesh to seek common interests, boost cooperation in industrial cooperation, infrastructure construction, agriculture, medical health, among others, so as to achieve substantial results and make due contribution to regional development. The occasion of the 40th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic ties between the two nations is a new opportunity for both sides to strengthen people-to-people exchanges and China is willing to boost friendly exchanges and cooperation between the political parties, think tanks, colleges and universities, youths, women and media of the two counties to deepen the mutual understanding of the two peoples and lay solid foundation for the development of comprehensive cooperation partnership of the two countries.

The Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina said in the past 40 years, the friendly cooperative ties between the two sides have kept developing with mutual support and mutual help, and her country is appreciated for China's support and help in its development.

She said her country is satisfied over the cooperation progress between the two sides in important projects including the construction of bridges, tunnels and industry parks.

The Bangladesh Prime Minister expressed the hope to boost cooperation with China in various sectors so as to further lift the comprehensive cooperative partnership between the two countries.

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*CEAF Desk*



## **"A Peace-Loving Nation Walking with Asia"**

**Highlights of the Keynote Speech by Japanese Foreign Minister Fumio Kishida at the High Level Seminar on Peacebuilding, National Reconciliation and Democratization in Asia, June 22, 2015.**



I am truly honored to hold this seminar here (Tokyo) at the United Nations University, in presence of renowned leaders and experts on Peacebuilding, National Reconciliation and Democratization.

I will take this opportunity to describe Japan's ongoing efforts towards peacebuilding moving forward into the future, while looking back on the path Asia and Japan have taken since the end of World War II.

### **1. Asia and Japan's Progress since the End of the War**

Looking back 70 years, there were only a handful of independent nations in Asia immediately after World War II. Japan returned to the community of nations as a result of the entry into force of the San Francisco Peace Treaty in 1952. Around the same time, many Asian nations gained their independence.

As a politician from Hiroshima, the concept of peace and war resonates especially strongly with me.

Seventy years ago, Japan was devastated by World War II. In addition, Japan brought a great deal of suffering to the peoples in Asia by its actions. Based on this experience, the Japanese people have earnestly worked on reviving the nation of Japan, and built up a free and democratic nation that upholds basic human rights. We have walked the path of a peace-loving nation, with feelings of remorse, and resolved to keep the peace and never to wage a war again. This resolution that Japan has taken as a peace-loving nation will remain unchanged. We must not avert our eyes from the past, and have to strive as a peace-loving nation towards the future.

During the post-war era, the conflicts never ended in many parts of Asia. Given the plight of our own nation 70 years ago, and seeing the continuing conflicts across Asia, Japan has sought to reach out as a friendly nation; and provide as much support and assistance as possible. Japan should not be the only nation accustomed to peace. Only after the benefits of peaceful and friendly relations accrue to the region and the entire world, we can establish a true and long-lasting peace. With this strong inner determination, Japan has been actively striving for peace in Cambodia, Myanmar, Mindanao, Aceh, and Timor-Leste, home of former President H.E. Dr. José Ramos-Horta; as well as Sri Lanka and other parts of Asia.

At present, Japan has set out a "Proactive Contribution to Peace" based on the principle of international cooperation as the basis of its security policy. This policy is founded on Japan's firm commitment to peace. The core of Japan's "Proactive Contribution to Peace" represents the contributions that Japan has made to peacebuilding in Asia. In order to ensure more effective and seamless implementation of its contribution to

peace, Japan's Legislation for Peace and Security is currently under deliberation in the National Diet.

Seventy years ago no one could have imagined the degree of development and progress seen in Asia today. Unfortunately, there are still some conflicts, as well as their underlying causes, that remain unresolved. Looking forward, Japan, with our Asian partners and friends, will continue to make strong efforts towards achieving and establishing peace-building, national reconciliation, and democratization.

## 2. The Three Principles of Japan's Peacebuilding

Under what conceptual framework has Japan worked on peacebuilding? Looking back on the past, I think Japan's peacebuilding has the following three principles and characters.

**Principle number 1 is the emphasis on “people” and the “field.”** Japan attaches importance to going out to the field, in cooperation with the local governments, where peacebuilding and democratization operations are underway. This allows us to walk hand-in-hand with local people and think things over together.

We also consider it critical that Japan's technological expertise and know-how are embraced by the local populace and take root on the ground.

The activities of JICA represent the front line of Japan's contribution to international cooperation. Japan Overseas Cooperation Volunteers (JOCV) work with local people in the field at the grass-roots level. Furthermore, Japan has also deployed personnel and troops to support UN PKOs in post-conflict regions such as Cambodia, where Mr. Yasushi Akashi, the Chairman of today's seminar, served as the Special Representative of the Secretary-General.

It is from this point of view that Japan is working to strengthen the training of peace-builders. This year, we will reinforce our past efforts and start the “Program for Global Human Resource Development for Peace building and Development.” Also, through “JENESYS2015,” which is a people-to-people exchange program between Japan and the Asia-Pacific region, we will invite approximately 300 youths to Hiroshima and Nagasaki to deepen their understanding of the reality of atomic bombing and to discuss peacebuilding with the youth of Japan.

**Principle number 2 is the emphasis on economic development.** As the basis of peace and reconciliation, Japan made great efforts to improve living standards through economic development. Japan reinforced its own path as a peace-loving nation through the success of economic development. Peace will remain fragile, even when parties to a dispute are able to overcome their differences, if the peace is not undergirded by economic development. Long-term peace can only take root when the so-called “peace dividends” are shared and felt by the people. It is this idea upon which parties to the “Tokyo Conference on Reconstruction and Development of Sri Lanka”, held in 2003, based a policy called “positive linkages.” This policy linked the assistance of the international community closely to the progress of the peace process in Sri Lanka.

Currently in Asia there are many post-conflict countries that have come to achieve high levels of economic growth. I am pleased that Cambodia, Sri Lanka, and Myanmar are leading Asia with annual growth rates of 7%. Japan will continue to take an approach to peace-building that emphasizes economic growth in order to improve living standards.

**Principle number 3 is tolerance of diversity.** While emphasizing universal values such as freedom, democracy, and human rights, Japan is cautious about hastily seeking results in Asia given its ethnic and religious diversity.

A good example of a successful approach to this effort is Indonesia. Despite the wide variety of ethnicities and religions in that country, they could achieve a transition to a unified and cohesive democracy through the implementation of a national policy called “Pancasila – the five principles.” From this point of view, we focus on the creation of societies resilient to radicalization. We must prevent the spread of extremist views in Asia that groups like ISIL seek to promulgate. Japan fully supports the promotion of moderation by nations including Malaysia and Indonesia. We will carry out projects that counter violent extremism, utilizing the Japan-ASEAN Integration Fund (JAIF), which Japan established in ASEAN and developed in cooperation with H.E. Dr. Surin Pitsuwan, former Secretary-General of ASEAN.

### **3. Japan’s Contribution from this Point Onward: Five Efforts**

Under these principles, Japan will continue active efforts towards peacebuilding, national reconciliation, and democratization in Asia. More specifically, we will continue to work on the following five issues.

*Firstly*, we will continue to support national reconciliation between the Government of Myanmar and ethnic minority groups. Under the cooperation with Mr. Yohei Sasakawa, the Special Envoy of the Government of Japan for National Reconciliation in Myanmar, we support the efforts of the Government of Myanmar toward achieving national reconciliation with these ethnic minorities. For that, Japan will steadily implement the assistance of up to 10 billion Japanese Yen for the next five years.

*Secondly*, we will continue to support peace in Mindanao. Based on the summit meeting between Prime Minister Abe and President Aquino earlier this month, we will support the steady implementation of economic development projects via J-BIRD 2 under the cooperation with H.E. Murad Ebrahim, Chairman of Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF).

*Thirdly*, we will continue to support national reconciliation in Sri Lanka. We welcome the serious efforts toward reconciliation taken by the new Sirisena administration. Working closely with Foreign Minister Samaraweera, we would like to further strengthen our support for Sri Lanka with the assistance of Mr. Akashi. As part of this effort, Japan will implement human resources development training for over 1,800 local government officers.

*Fourthly*, Japan will support recovery and reconstruction of Nepal. Japan will co-chair the International Conference on Nepal’s Reconstruction to be held in Kathmandu on June 25, and intend to exert our utmost effort in a seamless manner from the stage of emergency assistance to the recovery and reconstruction phase. It is important to assist Nepal in a manner that prevents the calamity from derailing the democratization process, so that Nepal will recover as a more vibrant democratic nation.

*Fifthly*, but not the least, we will support protection of women and children. The most vulnerable populations in conflict situations are women and children. From the perspective of human security, Japan will utilize ODA to promote educational support for girls, and to protect victims of trafficking in persons. We will also continue to deepen our cooperation with the UN Office of the SRSG on Sexual Violence in Conflict. In fact, Japan became the top donor last year.

With regard to non-regular immigrants, including women and children trying to cross the Indian Ocean, Japan has decided to extend 3.5 million US dollars through IOM and UNHCR.

### **4. Conclusion**

Many people argue that the 21st century is the Asian Century. However, without an abiding and sustainable

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peace, this economic growth will not last. We have to continue our efforts to keep the peace. As a Minister of Foreign Affairs from Hiroshima, I again pledge my commitment to peace here and now. Moving forward, I will make the contribution to peacebuilding, national reconciliation, and democratization in Asia a new pillar of my “Kishida-Diplomacy.” And with Asia, and with the broader world, we are dedicated to make strong efforts together towards a future of peace and prosperity.

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## Economic Basis of Our Cooperation

Alexander A. Nikolaev



Russia-Bangladesh trade relations show constant growth despite the on-going global economic turbulence. The volume of bilateral trade in the first quarter of 2015 has reached US\$ 230 mln and for the whole 2014 year trade balance totaled US\$ 0.9 bln. Evidently, there is great potential to increase it far beyond US\$ 1 bln.

The fast growing and perspective IT market of Bangladesh attracts Russian ITC companies. The “Ollo” provides reliable broadband optic fiber Internet access for customers in Bangladesh. The major stakeholder of the Banglalink is the multinational holding Vypelcom. Russian corporation “General Satellite” will provide soon SatTV receivers and has joint venture with one of the largest Bangladeshi holdings. The “Kaspersky lab” became familiar to every PC user in Bangladesh for its up-to-date antivirus protection. More bright perspectives for bilateral trade will be achieved by forming a Joint Commission on Trade, Economic and Science-Technologic Cooperation. signing of intergovernmental agreements on Joint Commission and Trade Representation. The renewal of activity of Trade Section of the Embassy is expected to be approved by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA) of Bangladesh.

The great need in these instruments is proved by intensified contacts between Bangladeshi and Russian business communities.

Russia substantially contributes to the development of energy and power sector of Bangladesh. The first ever NPP “Rooppur” is being constructed here with the support of ROSATOM and ATOMSTROYEXPORT companies. The goal is to energize the country with additional 2000 MWs. In oil and gas sector the leading Russian gas producing company GAZPROM drilled and commissioned ten wells last year thus Bangladeshi gas-transport network gained additional 5,118 mln cubic meters of gas per day. Power plants in Ghorasal and Siddhirganj built with the Soviet support are still producing around one fifth of total electricity output here. At present, these facilities are being revamped by the expert TECHNOPROMEXPORT Company.

### Hand in Hand towards Nuclear Era

Energy is the most important field of Russian-Bangladeshi cooperation. Strong energy sector is a major precondition for overall development of any modern state. Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman fully realized this postulate. Therefore it was not a mere coincidence that immediately after the victory in the Liberation War 1971 and revival of basic infrastructure, the energy sector became a focal point of bilateral cooperation between Bangladesh and Russia. And it remains a backbone of the Bangladesh-Russian cooperation today.

The unsatisfied demand for electricity is a crucial bottleneck to the overall development of Bangladesh. The government of Bangladesh has clear commitment to achieve “Universal Electrification” by the year



2021. That is why an intergovernmental cooperation agreement with government of the Russian Federation for construction of “Rooppur” nuclear power plant with two VVER-type reactors was signed to meet this noble goal.

It is necessary to recognize that this idea was also the brilliant dream of the advanced patriotic Bangladeshi scholars over 50 years ago already. Practically immediately after the launch of the first nuclear power station in our country which was the very first power station of such a kind in the world. And these dreams are very near to be realized nowadays by the cooperation of our two nations.

Nuclear power plant has the obvious advantage over thermal power plant or hydro power plant in regard of lack of wastes, lack of gas emissions, lack of necessity to construct the cyclopean dams and huge reservoirs. The generating capacity of nuclear power plant is million time higher than capacity of any gas- or coal-fired power plant, as well as hydro-power plant. So, consuming of nuclear fuel to generate electricity became a very attractive idea since the middle of XXth century.

Nuclear power plants play an important role in electricity generation nearly in all developed countries of the world. According to International Atomic Energy Agency, in the world there are 438 nuclear reactors in operation and 71 under construction, with a half of them in China and Russia. Also new nuclear reactors are being built in the United Arab Emirates, India, France, USA and other countries.

The intergovernmental cooperation agreement includes design, construction, installation, start up, commissioning, warranty operation of the plant, as also fuel supply during the entire operational period of the power units and take back of spent fuel to Russia. The capacity of each reactor is more than 1000 MW. The VVER is a proven technology with a long international experience.

More than 40 years these types of NPPs are successfully operating in the Russian Federation, in Ukraine, Armenia, Bulgaria and Slovakia.

And Russia is going to build the advanced and more perfect modification of this reactor type in Bangladesh. This design includes both active and passive safety systems.

The VVER with advanced safety is presently operating in Finland, China, India and Iran along with the Russia. Several same types of reactor were chosen as most safe and reliable by national governments and are now under construction in India, China and Turkey.

Along with Bangladesh such countries as Vietnam, Jordan, Turkey, Belarus and Morocco have decided for introduction of such VVER technology as their first NPP.

Our country is the leading nuclear power developing country and the pioneer supplier of nonmilitary energy NPP technology.

The Russian Federation will provide Bangladesh with all required technical, technological and financial support during preconstruction, construction, commissioning, operation and decommissioning of the plant. Russia is offering an integrated solutions for the implementation of Bangladeshi Nuclear Power Program. They are: 1) The whole cycle of nuclear fuel management, including a long term supply of nuclear fuel to Bangladesh and take back of spent fuel from Rooppur NPP to Russia; 2) Knowledge, skills and human development for nuclear power field in Bangladesh; 3) Creation of necessary nuclear and regulatory infrastructure in accordance with International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) requirements.

Russia has necessary infrastructure for human resource development. It provides comprehensive access of Rooppur NPP personnel to its advanced experience and facilities for personnel training and education.

Over the years, it has been realized that the financing of the new NPP is the most challenging issue. Bangladesh could not build the Rooppur NPP due to lack of funding and financing. This issue has been taken with special care. The Russian Federation has granted the state export credit for the construction of Rooppur NPP under very soft conditions.

So, the construction of Rooppur NPP in the People's Republic of Bangladesh marks the beginning of a qualitatively new stage in the Russian-Bengali relations. Being traditionally friendly, now they will be strengthened by the cooperation in the high technology sphere. A nuclear power plant's entry to a country unfailingly entails energy independence, surge of the national science, and local business development. A large number of Bangladeshi construction and logistic companies will be engaged in the project in the coming years. The mere preparation for the construction of Bangladesh's first NPP will facilitate modernization of the entire infrastructure from the traffic network through the system of power supply for a significant part of the country.

### **Russian Contribution in Brain Gain for Bangladesh**

Bangladesh has a booming population with 37 public universities and 85 private ones spread throughout the country, providing higher education to thousands of students, and a large number of young people going abroad to get higher education.

Since 1995 the Ministry of Education and Science of the Russian Federation has been inviting annual applications for university scholarships available for Bangladeshi students to study at various Russian higher education institutions as well as providing opportunities for receiving higher education in Russia on commercial or self-finance basis.

Being a representative of Rossotrudnichestvo (the Federal Agency for the Commonwealth of Independent States, Compatriots living abroad, and International humanitarian cooperation), the Russian Center of Science and Culture (RCSC) in Dhaka assists in selecting Bangladeshi applicants and sending them to Russia to receive higher education in Russian universities. RCSC resorts to different forms of seminars and briefings for local mass media to distribute information regarding rules and regulations of Russian higher education system, as well as requirements for Bangladeshi HSCE graduates and university students to pursue Russian Bachelor's, Master's and Specialist's studies programmes. In tandem with the Soviet Alumni Association, Bangladesh RCSCS holds workshops to inform young Bangladeshis about the possibilities of Russian higher education institutions. These young people usually show great interest during the workshops and ask many specific questions regarding specialties in Russian universities, including Nuclear Power field, possibilities of obtaining government grants, conditions of studying, accommodation, leisure activities and many other questions.

This year the Ministry of Education and Science of the Russian Federation granted 50 state scholarships for students from Bangladesh. Twenty of them were awarded to those who would like to receive higher education in the field of nuclear power. By comparison, last year only ten Bangladeshi students had an opportunity to study at the National Research Nuclear University MEPhI.

The system of Russian higher education is considered to be outstanding and its universities are highly praised worldwide. There are a lot of famous universities for higher education in Russia where many Bangladeshi students study successfully. Among these universities are:

\* *People's Friendship University of Russia (PFUR)* - a unique international university annually teaching students from 145-150 countries of the world. It is also the only university in Russia with such multi-profile structure and fundamental education, which enables PFUR alumni to build careers in all the countries of the world in various spheres of industry, business, research and public administration. PFUR diplomas make graduates competitive in labor market thus giving them a chance to become state and political figures, members and heads of their governments and parliaments.

\* *Ryazan State Medical University* - one of the largest profile institutions of higher education in the Central Federal district of Russia. Currently Ryazan State Medical University is a well-established modern system of training of qualified medical staff open to cooperation in all areas of its activities.

\* *Gubkin Russian State Oil and Gas University* as well as *Tyumen State Oil and Gas University* are the leaders in the Russian professional education system that assimilated the best traditions of domestic higher education institutions.

\* *Siberian State Aerospace University (SibSAU)* is a unique higher educational institution, founded in 1960, where theoretical training is combined with practice in hi-tech enterprises. Currently SibSAU is a contemporary multi-disciplinary higher school where specialists in such high technology and innovative spheres as rocket and space production as well as computer sciences, international business, finance and management are trained.

\* *National Research Nuclear University MEPhI (Moscow Engineering Physics Institute)* - a major institution of higher education located in five Federal Districts and dominating within the structure of nuclear education cluster of Russia. The University consists of 11 profile educational institutions of higher professional education, 15 colleges and secondary technical schools offering secondary professional educational programmes.

Education is a basic component, and Bangladeshi society needs its younger generation to educate themselves in order to modernize the country. Getting higher education in Russia permits young Bangladeshis to master strong skills and academic knowledge in various spheres of human activities.

A huge number of students from Bangladesh after their graduation from foreign universities decide to settle abroad. Thus, on average, Bangladesh is suffering a large annual brain drain when it needs educated people at home. Looking to the history of Russian-Bangladeshi cooperation in the field of higher education, everyone cannot but notice that almost one hundred per cent of graduates armed with economic, technical or scientific skills and qualifications used to come back home in order to change life in their country for better. Starting from the early 70s, many Bangladeshi students put off on a long journey to the then Soviet Union in pursuit of higher education. Since then, a large number of students after obtaining degrees in various specialties have returned home. Many former graduates of Soviet and Russian higher education institutions became well-educated professionals and work in various Bangladeshi government, autonomous, non-government organizations and private companies with success.

The time spent at Russian universities offers not only professional knowledge and skills of working in a multinational team but also gives an opportunity to gain strategic potential for further successful career based on personal contacts with numerous alumni from many countries of the world. These alumni of Russian higher education institutions may help Bangladeshi society to plug the national brain drain and swing the process in the opposite direction. Finally, we hope to see a real brain gain for Bangladesh for the sake of prosperity of this wonderful and hospitable country.

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***Alexander A. Nikolaev, Ambassador of the Russian Federation to Bangladesh***

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## **COP21: a Challenge for Humanity**

**Sophie Aubert**



Rising Asia Quarterly gave me the opportunity to share with you ideas and reflexions. That's why I would like to focus today on a worldwide priority: climate change.

At the end of this year, my country, France, will host the 21st International Conference of Parties on Climate negotiations, COP21, the United Nations framework for the negotiations on climate change.

COP21 is a turning point for humanity. It is not "one more COP": it is a very essential Conference, because our world has been changing drastically through the last decades; we must react urgently and collectively to transform the way we live, in order to create a new world. If we don't, climate change impacts will create a non-sustainable world for human beings.

Some people still refuse to believe it. But here in Bangladesh, everybody knows about the 2500 people who died in India last June, because of extreme heat. And people know about forced migrations being a consequence of climate change.

The fact is that human industrial activity has induced a complete change in the composition of our atmosphere, which has led to a huge increase of CO<sub>2</sub>, because of green house gas emissions. This change has paved the way to the increase of global temperature worldwide. According to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), we must address the issue now in order to maintain global temperature below 2° Celsius by the end of the century, compared to pre-industrial levels, if we want to keep our world sustainable for us. This means that we must reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 80% by 2100. We must shape together new low carbon strategies, if we want to avoid disasters. Here in Bangladesh, we must find new business models, saving water, energy and land, in order to protect the future of the country.

This effort demands a complete change of our ways of living, producing, sourcing and assessing values. Everybody must face one's responsibility in order to face this huge challenge: Governments are expected to create the policy framework and, along with the private sector, to mobilize the necessary funds to innovate in order to create a new climate friendly environment.

Considering the conclusions of the Business and Climate Summit, which took place in Paris last May, industrial solutions do exist. But now, we must also find out new sustainable business models, in order to transfer technologies and innovations to those who could not afford them without a global financial effort.

Everybody has to feel and be responsible. This is the challenge of the next Conference of Parties, COP21. In December, we want to create a Paris Alliance for Climate, lying on four main pillars:

- The first one is to get a universal and legally binding agreement. This agreement will have to consider equally mitigation and adaptation, which is a priority for Bangladesh and all the countries already facing climate impact. This agreement will open the door to a long-term process of cooperation. COP21 must not be the end of a process; it must be a beginning for a new world and a new worldwide consciousness.
- The second pillar is the National contributions, so called INDC. INDC have to be published before Paris Conference, to be integrated there. INDC present the national commitments on mitigating greenhouse gas emissions and they can include adaptation plans. INDC are the way to assess our global effort in reducing greenhouse gas emissions. 40 countries have published their INDC and we are confident that Bangladesh, though it is not obliged to, as a LDC, will comply with this commitment very soon.
- The third pillar is financing. The international community has committed itself to mobilize, by 2020, 100 billion dollars per year, to address climate issues. Through the Green Climate fund and other ways of financing, this effort is necessary, in order to redirect public and private flows towards low-carbon economies.
- The last pillar is the Lima-Paris agenda. The goal is to involve all the actors and to create a collective effort in order to change our global society. In Paris, NGO's, private sector and other actors will be able to showcase their positive solutions to address climate change.

In fact, climate change has become a moral issue: we must decide what sort of world we want to leave to our children. This is why COP21 must be a success, for the sake of the next generations.

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***Sophie Aubert, Ambassador of France in Bangladesh***



## Paris 2015

### Getting a global agreement on climate change

At the Paris summit in December 2015, 196 countries will meet to sign a new climate change agreement. But how likely is it that it will be meaningful and make a difference to climate action on the ground? Not only is a deal possible but, with the right political leadership, it can lead to ambitious outcomes that will have a real impact on tackling climate change. Countries like the US and China are working to ensure an outcome is likely in 2015; and the years since the 2009 Copenhagen negotiations have seen some significant breakthroughs. The 2009 negotiations were fraught and chaotic, with a last minute agreement emerging after frantic scenes on the conference floor. Yet international negotiations remain vital for countries to build on national approaches, providing reassurance that they are not acting alone, and making it easier for nations to work together towards a low carbon future.

This is why the 2015 Paris summit is important. To ensure meaningful action on climate change, the deal must contain the following elements:

- ambitious action before and after 2020
- a strong legal framework and clear rules
- a central role for equity
- a long term approach
- public finance for adaptation and the low carbon transition
- a framework for action on deforestation and land use
- clear links to the 2015 Sustainable Development Goals

A strong deal will make a significant difference to the ability of individual countries to tackle climate change. It will provide a clear signal to business, to guide investment toward low carbon outcomes. It will reduce the competitiveness impacts of national policies, and create a simpler, more predictable framework for companies operating in different countries. Vitrally, a strong climate deal will help to meet international development aims, which are at increasing risk from rising global temperatures. Eliminating poverty, improving health and building security are all outcomes linked to tackling climate change. And it will also bring huge benefits to the natural environment by helping to avoid biodiversity loss and the degradation of ecosystems upon which we all depend.

*“So the question now is whether we will have the courage to act before it’s too late. And how we answer will have a profound impact on the world that we leave behind not just to you, but to your children and to your grandchildren.”*

**US President Barack Obama,  
Georgetown Address, June 2013**

*(Published by Green Alliance, 36 Buckingham Palace Road, London, United Kingdom )*

## TOGETHER BUILDING RESILIENCE



2015 is a crucial year for the climate as the international community prepares to adopt a new global climate deal in Paris in December. This is an historic opportunity we cannot afford to miss. All countries are expected to come forward with their contributions well in advance of the Paris conference to enable us to design and agree a robust and dynamic deal capable of keeping the global temperature rise below 2 degree C. Contributions need to be as ambitious as possible given parties' responsibilities and capabilities. This agreement needs to respond to today's reality and be fit for future.

As a low-lying and highly populated country, Bangladesh is highly vulnerable to climate change. The effects are increasingly being felt in Bangladesh; be it increased salination in coastal areas, unpredictable weather patterns or riverbank erosion. By 2050, 70 million people could be affected annually by floods, and eight million by drought, and as much as 8% of Bangladeshi territory could be lost to inundation. One third of the country's could be lost if sea levels rise by a metre. The European Union Delegation and Member States being Bangladesh's major development partners are committed to assist Bangladesh to cope with the many challenges ahead in this area. Support to environment and climate-change adaption for the poorest people is already a vital part of the EU delegation and Member States' assistance to Bangladesh.

It is clear the Paris deal must also deliver on challenges other than reducing emissions. Substantial financial support must be available to those most vulnerable to climate change and with least means to cope with its negative consequences. We also need to secure relevant provisions to increase cooperation in the area of adapting to climate change. The EU is fully committed to doing its part and counts on the continued cooperation and collaboration of international partners like Bangladesh to reach a successful conclusion in Paris. In line with the EU's climate Diplomacy Action Plan for 2015, the European Union Delegations and Member States Embassies around the world celebrated a Climate Diplomacy Day on June 17th, promoting a common worldwide understanding of the need for climate action.

The EU Delegation and the Member States are the largest contributor of climate finance to developing countries and the world's biggest development partner, collectively providing more than half of global official development assistance (ODA). Climate change is being increasingly integrated into the EU's broader development strategy. To respond to challenges and investment needs related to climate change, the EU has agreed that at least 20% of its budget for 2014-2020-as much as 180 billion euro – should be spend on climate change- related action. The economic and business opportunities of a transition to a low carbon future are also significant: the sooner we act, the greater the benefit. Timely investment in low carbon, climate resilient development can generate jobs and growth and reduce the long term costs of lowering emissions and adapting to climate change impacts. EU's global commitment in this field is also reflected in Bangladesh through grant assistance.

The EU and Bangladesh agree on the key principles of an agreement to tackle climate change, which should be ambitious, comprehensive and legally binding. The EU-Bangladesh Climate Diplomacy Day is such an initiative that highlights the importance and benefits of enhancing climate action in all countries and reaching a new international climate deal in Paris.

*Source: Published by Delegation of the European Union (EU) to Bangladesh on the eve of EU-Bangladesh Climate Diplomacy Day, 2015.*

## Iran A model of development and progress

Dr. Abbas Vaezi



Iran is the 18th largest country of the world. It stretches from the Caspian Sea in north to the Persian Gulf in the south. Iran is one of the world's major countries in oil export and it is rich in natural resources. It has land borders with Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Turkmenistan in the north, Afghanistan and Pakistan on the east, and Iraq and Turkey in the west.

Owing to its special geographical location, which connects Central Asia and the Far East to the near east and Europe, the Iranian plateau has since pre-historic times been one of the most attractive regions of the world from the viewpoints of migration, inhabitation, war, and various kinds of other developments. It is not clearly known when human settlement in the Iranian plateau first began. Nevertheless, some researchers have referred to the possibility of human exodus from Africa, Central Asia, the Caucasus, and the Indian subcontinent towards this region. Apparently, the oldest region belonging to the Stone Age to have been discovered in Iran thus far is located in the Khorāsān province and on the bed of the Kashafrud river and the age of the excavated stone objects discovered from these areas have been estimated to be 8,00,000 years old. Some of the stone effects belonging to the middle Stone Age (middle Pal eolithic), too, have been discovered in Central Iran, south-east of Shirāz. Following the course of these periods, Iran, like the other parts of the Middle East too had entered the Copper Age at a time when Europe was still in the Stone Age. Evidences and effects of the presence of human life and the earliest human civilizations have been discovered from various parts of Iran.

Evidences of the existing civilizations in the Iranian plateau up to the beginning of the 1st Millennium BC. One of the earliest known pre-historic civilizations of Iran is the Sialk civilization. Evidences of this civilization found from the Sialk Hills, southwest of Kāshān, indicate that this was one of the earliest regions to have been inhabited in the Iranian plains. The age of the oldest Sialk Hills dates back to between the latter part of the 6th millennium BC and the early 5th millennium BC. The earthenware excavated from these hills is among the oldest in Iran. A large number of decorated pots have been discovered from this region, the ages of some of which date back to c. 4000 BC.

The Iranian nation toppled the US-backed Pahlavi regime in 1979, ending virtually 2,500 years of monarchical rule, and will see nationwide rallies on Feb. 11, the anniversary of the Islamic Revolution. In the 37 years since mass protests deposed the monarchy in Iran, the country has struggled with immense challenges. After the Islamic Republic's establishment by way of a popular referendum, Iran endured a period of chaotic instability, with various armed factions seeking to undermine the nascent government.

Amid this volatility, Iran was invaded by Saddam Hussein's Iraq, whose army was supported by most global powers and against whose aggression Iranians of all walks of life defended their country. After the devastatingly costly war — during which hundreds of thousands of Iranians and Iraqis died, many under the barrage of Saddam's chemical weapons — the country started the arduous process of attempting to rebuild.

Any endeavors toward a speedy recovery, however, were thrashed by increased Western sanctions, as a clear and persistent strategy of coercion was seemingly put into full-throttle against Iran. Since then, Iran's tensions with the West have unfortunately only further escalated, and the country has faced a more or less all-out economic war waged upon it, which has been complemented by numerous covert actions in the

form of assassinations and bomb attacks and even cyber attacks.

Yet, despite all of these crises, Iran has persevered. It emerged from the Iran-Iraq War without giving up an inch of its soil in spite of the all-out support given to the aggressor by the superpowers and even some regional Arab countries. It also did this without resorting to the use of chemical weapons, even as it had the capability to do so, as the country is signatory to all weapons of mass destruction conventions. Iran has since managed to become one of the rare countries able to maintain its political-security independence and foster an atmosphere of socio-economic self-reliance in a nation that was once so incredibly dependent on outside powers.

Iran has made commendable strides in many areas since the 1979 Islamic Revolution. From 1980 to 2012, Iran's Human Development Index (HDI) value — which takes into account lifespan, access to education and standard of living — increased by 67%, a rate of growth that was twice the global average. As of 2012, Iran's HDI value sat at 0.742, which put the country into the “high human development category.” Access to electricity and piped water in rural areas, life expectancy, infant mortality and access to health care have all markedly improved. The literacy rate, which stood at 36% in 1976 and at just 25% for females, stands at 99% for males and females ages 15-24. Tertiary education has also never been so widely attainable by the Iranian population, with more than 2 million Iranian students enrolled at a university, over 60% of whom are women.



Iran has also made many advances in the sciences as well: it has indigenously mastered the nuclear cycle and ranks in the top 10 countries in stem cell and cloning research; in the top 20 nations in nanotechnology, chemistry, medicine, computer science and mathematics; is the ninth country in the world with a full space program that successfully puts satellites into orbit; and is the first manufacturer in the world of eye bio-implants. Last but not least, Iran today is self-sufficient in building submarines, helicopters, fighter jets, missiles and tanks.

Iran has a growing biotechnology sector that is one of the most advanced in the developing world. The Razi Institute for Serums and Vaccines and the Pasteur Institute of Iran are leading regional facilities in the development and manufacture of vaccines. In January 1997, the Iranian Biotechnology Society (IBS) was created to oversee biotechnology research in Iran.

Agricultural research has been successful in releasing high yielding varieties with higher stability as well as tolerance to harsh weather conditions. The agriculture researchers are working jointly with international Institutes to find the best procedures and genotypes to overcome produce failure and to increase yield. In 2005, Iran's first genetically modified (GM) rice was approved by national authorities and is being grown commercially for human consumption.

In 2010, Iran begun mass-producing ocular bio-implants named SAMT. Iran began investing in biotechnological projects in 1992 and this is the tenth facility in Iran. 'Life Patch' is the fourth bio-implant mass-produced by Iran after bone, heart valve, and tendon bio-implants. 12 countries in the world produce bio-tech drugs, which Iran is one of them.

Iran had some significant successes in nuclear technology during recent decades, especially in nuclear medicine. However, Iran is among the 14 countries in possession of nuclear [energy] technology.

To be sure, Iran has a long way to go on its road to developing a better society for all Iranians. The human rights situation undoubtedly has room for ample improvements.

However, with all of its shortcomings, the Islamic Republic of Iran remains a political reality. It has firmly entrenched roots in Iran and now garners substantial geopolitical clout throughout the Middle East. After 37 years of overcoming what many thought were insurmountable obstacles, Iran has remained a strong and stable state. This is both testimony to impressive statecraft and demonstrates the necessity of a detente among the countries in the region, the West and this power that is here to stay.

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***The writer is currently the Ambassador of the Embassy of Islamic Republic of Iran to Bangladesh***



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## Modi's visit to Bangladesh ushers in a new era of relations amidst some disappointments

**Barrister Harunur Rashid**



It was Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's landmark four-day visit on 10-13th January 2010 to India which created an excellent environment of mutual trust, laying the foundations to a much more mature, stable and fruitful relationship with India through a - 51-paragraph Joint Statement.. It reflected a pragmatic policy because Bangladesh cannot achieve to become a middle-income country without cooperative policy towards India given Bangladesh's geographic location.

After the visit, the Hasina government moved quickly to address Delhi's concerns on cross-border terrorism (including expelling top ULFA insurgents to India) and connectivity to the land-locked north-eastern states of India, so-called "seven sisters" from western side of India through Bangladesh.

Although the Congress-led Manmohan Singh government had the intention to reciprocate its friendly relations toward Bangladesh by concluding the Teesta Water Sharing Agreement and Land Boundary (LBA) deal, it could not do so because of the negative position adopted by opposition parties including BJP. However the Congress-led government kept the LBA alive in the agenda of the Upper House (RajyaSabha) of parliament for taking appropriate action by the successor government.

### **Neighbourhood first policy:**

After winning a huge majority in the Lower House (LokSabha) of parliament, the Indian Prime Minister NarendraModi embarked on "neighbourhood first policy". The push for renewed vigour in regional cooperation in South Asia came from the decision by Prime Minister Modi when he invited the SAARC leaders to attend the swearing in ceremony on 26th May last year in New Delhi .The invitation was unprecedented and imaginative step by the Prime Minister.

The invitation generated a positive spirit among SAARC leaders that India has been willing to be engaged in the forefront for regional unity and prosperity with the expectation that some positive initiatives of the outstanding key bilateral issues would be adopted between India and other neighbouring to restore as confidence building measures which will restore mutual trust among them.

Modi and his External Affairs Minister SushmaSwaraj chose several Asian countries for their initial bilateral visits. He has made state visits to Bhutan and Nepal within the first 100 days of his government, Swaraj came to Bangladesh in June 2014.

Analysts say that Modi's "neighbourhood first policy" is conceived as a counter to growing Chinese influence in South Asia, particularly in Sri Lanka, Bangladesh and Nepal and this has full support from the US and Japan.

The Modi government appreciated that in the days of economic globalization there is no alternative other than regional or sub-regional cooperation. The IT technology has introduced speed and innovation and with a click on the mouse one can invest or divest investment from a country within seconds. If progress and economic growth is to be made in India to eliminate poverty among 200 million Indians, the whole sub-region needs to be rejuvenated with economic activities.

### **Bangladesh's geographic location:**

Bangladesh is considered a nation of strategic importance not only to South Asian region but to the larger geo-political dynamics of Asia as a whole. It sits between India and resurgent Myanmar and is a near neighbor to China. India needs cooperative relationship with Bangladesh because of its location.

India realizes that if sub- regional cooperation is strengthened, it may act as a catalyst for stronger sub-regional economic prosperity including economic growth in the northeastern states of India. Once people have the money in pocket, they are not drawn towards extremism or rebellion which exist in some of the states in the northeastern states, adjacent to Bangladesh.

Furthermore Bangladesh has an access to the Indian Ocean through the Bay of Bengal and the security of sea lanes of the Indian Ocean is very important to the US, China and India. Some analysts say that it is the dominance of the Indian Ocean which will determine the power- game in this century.

### **Modi's visit to Bangladesh:**

Indian Prime Minister had always kept in his mind to visit Bangladesh and he could not come empty-handed. When the LBA was adopted without any opposition from any party, he decided to visit Bangladesh for a 36 hour trip on 5th-6th June.

Furthermore relations between the two countries have reached a new height which could result Bangladesh, a hub of economic activities in the sub-region. It is reported that the World Bank could lend more than \$1 billion to Bangladesh to implement a number of regional connectivity projects for boosting trade and investment among Bangladesh, India, Nepal and Bhutan..

It is good to note the Land Boundary Agreement came into fruition after 41 years removing a humanitarian problem for the inhabitants of the enclaves in both countries.

According to some analysts, since most of the benefits will be accrued to India, it would have been desirable for India to have provided \$500 million or one billion as a grant to Bangladesh out of \$ 2 billion credit suppliers' loan. For a country with \$2 trillion GDP, \$500 million or one billion dollar is considered as a "pea nut". In recent years India had provided to Afghanistan about \$ 400 million as a grant.

After he left, analysts began to examine what Bangladesh got from India in comparison to what India had received. However this comparison is not possible. As regards benefits, however, we should also remember that benefits, tangible or intangible, in each and every case are not comparable and unlikely to be equal and Bangladesh may gain more than India in some areas and reverse may be the case for India.

During the visit India had signed 22 agreements and memorandums of understandings on all possible sectors including multi-modal connectivity. It is a new dawn for the sub-region. The deals also will open up the sub-region in an unprecedented scale for investment, trade, people-to people contact which will have multiplier positive effects on the sub-region.

The Hasina government has been a strong believer in sub-regional connectivity, and given the country's unique geographical position, it can derive enormous economic benefits from sub- regional connectivity. Connectivity through road, rivers and railways is perceived as an economic necessity and constitutes a part of the service industry. The recent four-nation Motor Vehicles agreement signed on 15th June in Bhutan will facilitate the transportation of people and goods to four nations possibly from next year.

However certain conditions in the agreement such as cabotage restriction to transportation of goods, requirement of English or local language (Hindi, Nepalese and Bhutanese language) speaking Bangladeshi drivers and installation of vehicle tracking system would be impediments to Bangladesh, according to experts.

### **Analysis of the visit:**

Some analysts has perceived Modi's visit as "he came, he saw and he conquered – veni, vindi, vici" Bangladesh. His speech organized by the Dhaka University has been able to mesmerize the people of Bangladesh because he was eloquent in praise of the leadership of Bangladesh and its people as well as empowerment of women in the country.

It is desirable to recall Lord Palmerston's dictum that there are no eternal friends or permanent enemies. What is eternal in national interest and those are to be pursued vigorously. From this standpoint, his visit is to be examined.

While the Bangladesh-India relations has a new trajectory for attaining optimum benefits for both countries, there are some disappointments too which are described below:

**First,** although the bilateral relations has gone to a new height with the visit of Prime Minister Modi, it has been perceived to have been greatly diminished by the non-signing of the Teesta Water Sharing Agreement. Bangladesh people expected that Indian Prime Minister with its huge mandate from his people would be able to conclude the Teesta sharing agreement.

It is reported that Prime Minister Modi said "Our rivers should nurture our relationship, not become a source of discord. Water sharing is, above all, a human issue. It affects life and livelihood on both sides of the border" and expressed his confidence that with the support of all stake holders in India, he would be able to reach a consensus over Teesta deal. However no time is provided by which the agreement of the Teesta River would be concluded. Some analysts say that Teesta deal would be possible after the legislative elections of West Bengal in 2016 because politically it is not desirable to conclude the deal before the elections in which both BJP and Trinamool Congress will contest.

It is satisfying to note Bangladesh Prime Minister requested her Indian counterpart for immediate conclusion of the interim agreement on sharing of water of Teesta as agreed upon by both the governments in January 2011. It simply means that no amended or revised agreement on sharing of water of Teesta River would be acceptable to Bangladesh.

It is also heartening to note a report in the media that Bangladesh Prime Minister reportedly conveyed this message "very boldly and diplomatically" to her Indian counterpart NarendraModi for a fair and comprehensive solution to sharing of water not only of the Teesta but of all the 54 common rivers with India.

**Second,** although the two Prime Ministers noted that discussions relating to sharing waters of the Manu, Muhuri, Gumti, Dharla and Dudkumar rivers were taking place at the technical level under JRC (Joint Rivers Commission) and asked the concerned officials for taking expeditious actions to conclude the sharing arrangements "at the earliest" but no date was provided when the meeting of the concerned officials would take place.

**Third,** the two Prime Ministers stressed the need for holding the 38th Ministerial meeting of the JRC at an early date to discuss all issues pertinent to water resources but no date was proposed. It remains uncertain when the Ministerial meeting would be held..

**Fourth,** Prime Minister Modi talked about increasing tourism between the people of the two countries but he did not provide on arrival visa (online visa-e-visa) to India as Bangladesh people expected. However the Indian Prime Minister during his visit in the middle of May reportedly provided online visa facilities for Chinese tourists.

**Fifth,** while Prime Minister Modi has reportedly said: “People thought we were paas-paas (close to each other) but also saath-saath (together),” and if this is the case, it does not seem to be consistent with India’s fencing off with barbed wire of 3,300 kilometres border of Bangladesh which has always been perceived to display the unfriendly sentiment of India towards people of Bangladesh.

**Sixth,** in the western side of Bangladesh, the adverse effects of Farakka Barrage have practically led to the death of many rivers (100 or more) in Bangladesh, according to water experts. To counter the effects of Farakka Barrage Bangladesh needs to construct the Ganges Barrage inside Bangladesh with Indian support. If the Ganges Barrage is built, the benefits will be huge. According to a report, it is estimated that an additional 2.6 million tonnes of food grains would be produced and 240,000 tonnes of fish would be available. Furthermore the Ganges Barrage would have provided more water to the river near the Rooppur Nuclear Plants, being constructed in Pabna with Russian assistance.

It is reported that when the issue was raised, Indian side stated that the proposal would be examined by the concerned agencies in India (not jointly with Bangladesh). Diplomatically it could mean that the Bangladesh proposal of the Ganges Barrage may not see any fruition in near future.

Despite all these disappointments, we congratulate both the Prime Ministers for the bold vision of new pathway of progress and prosperity to eliminate poverty which is the common enemy for the sub-region as our Prime Minister recently indicated, it is hoped that at the earliest border killing for whatever reasons becomes zero, trade deficit for Bangladesh is drastically reduced and sharing of waters of all common rivers turn out to be a reality.

Furthermore the Hasina government’s friendly policy toward India is vindicated in the eyes of Bangladesh people, and Prime Minister Modi’s visit will not only boost Bangladesh-India relations but also may act as a catalyst for stronger sub-regional architecture through the signing of 22 deals during Indian Prime Minister’s visit.

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***Harunur Rashid, Barrister-at-Law, has been an Ambassador for Bangladesh for 12 years to 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 he writes regularly in newspapers and magazines.***

His published books include Bangladesh Foreign Policy (third revision in 2015), International Relations & Bangladesh (revised edition 2015), Current Affairs (2013), Peace and Conflict Studies (2012) Indo-Bangladesh Relations, (2010), International Law (2004) and Refugee Law (2002).

## Bhutan: Challenges, Conflicts and Gross National Happiness

**Professor Selina Mohsin**



A country of rugged terrain sandwiched between China and India in the eastern ridge of the Himalayas, Bhutan has three different types of topography: the high mountains of the north, the central valleys and the Duras foothills. Difficulties of travel long made Bhutan an isolated state, but from the mid 1950s change began to accelerate, creating new challenges for its hereditary monarchy and its population of under one million.

Bhutan became the member of the United Nations in 1971. In 2008 the King held a first general election as part of a planned gradual transition to constitutional monarchy. In 2006 the King resigned in favour of his Oxford educated, 27 year old son. In 2013 a second election saw the defeat of the ruling party and a change of government.

Yet all was not well in this small kingdom. Towards the end of the 19th century, Nepalese workers were brought in, first to cultivate unpopulated areas of the south west and later as workforce for road construction. They became a sizable minority, still unregistered and distinct. In 1958 they were allowed to become citizens if they could prove 10 years residence. The process proved so chaotic that few had become citizens by 1975 when a plebiscite in neighbouring small Sikkim, where Nepalese migrants had become the majority of the population, ended its Wangchuk monarchy. Sikkim was absorbed into India. This shocked the Bhutanese, fearing that their own independence and culture could similarly be lost. They began a 'One nation one people' campaign, demanding traditional Bhutanese dress and culture. This in turn provoked demands by the Nepalese for local autonomy. The result was tension and conflict. Many Nepalese began to leave the country and others were forced out, including some who possessed proper citizenship certificates. Neither India nor Nepal would admit them for settlement and by 1996 there were 107,000 Nepalese refugees in UNHCR camps, over the Nepal border. Amnesty International and others raised serious concerns over human rights issues in southern Bhutan. Fortunately in recent years 60,000 Nepalese have been admitted to the USA and also Canada, Australia and some EU countries have taken around 10,000 refugees each. UNHCR hopes before long to be able close the remaining camps.

Although now, after years of suffering, something of a rare happy ending for the Nepalese refugees, this whole episode cast a shadow over Bhutan, particularly as the Nepalese had been in Bhutan for decades and with much the same Himalayan culture as the Bhutanese themselves. Yet, in other respects Bhutan has been and remains a model of social progress and of intelligent gradual adaptation to modernity. Its aim of 'Gross National Happiness', stressing spiritual and material balance and concern for the environment, is admired throughout the world. Bhutan's fears of being swamped by immigrants and of loss of identity were at least understandable, especially after the takeover of Sikkim, and by no means unique. Population pressures, migration, competition for land are all too common problems in South Asia, as elsewhere. Policies born of fear, or of disregard for the rights and fears of others are everywhere all too likely to bring discrimination and violence. Civil wars in Sri Lanka and Myanmar have been tragic examples. North east India's seven states and, in Bangladesh, the Chittagong Hill areas have also seen conflict.

Bhutan has another important aspect which has the potential to be as much a problem as it is an opportunity. That is its geographical position as a small state and population between rival giant powers, India and China. In 2012 the Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao and Bhutan's Prime Minister Thinley held meetings on the sidelines of the Rio +20 Summit. They brought the sensitive and challenging issues of Bhutanese foreign



policy into focus. Bhutan had no formal diplomatic relations with its great neighbor, China. There was a still unresolved border dispute between the two countries and this meeting was the first between the two heads of government. Their discussion included Bhutan's bid for a non-permanent seat on the UN Security Council. Prime Minister Thinley confirmed Bhutan's desire for formal ties with China and to settle border disputes, increase economic relations, trade cooperation, cultural exchanges and related affairs. As a follow up of this meeting in Rio, the Chinese Vice- Foreign Minister visited Thimpu, the capital of Bhutan in August 2012 and Bhutan imported buses from China.



India was alarmed. It had developed close trade relations with Bhutan. It had helped build roads and hydro electric dams from which power sales to India provided a major part of Bhutan's revenue. Now India's dominant position seemed threatened. The Indian Ambassador to Bhutan, P.K. Varma, was forced to resign due to his failure to prevent Bhutan developing friendship with China. It is thought that the next Indian Ambassador, V.P. Haran played a critical role in the surprise 2013 victory of the opposition Peace and Democratic Party (PDP) over Druk Phuensum Tshogpa (DPT) of erstwhile Prime Minister Thinley. India had withdrawn much needed gas and kerosene exports and subsidy to Bhutan just before the election, along with other covert threats. The ruling DPT party lost against the opposition pro-India PDP which had been heavily defeated in 2008. India's claim that the withdrawal of its gas and oil subsidy was "purely" a commercial decision was met with deep scepticism among many Bhutanese.

How far will India go to preserve its dominant position in Bhutan? It has a lot at stake. Bhutan is not only, like Sikkim, a buffer area between India and China. It is also crucial for defence of the Siliguri corridor, a thin stretch of land along Bhutan's southern flank that connects India's northeastern states to the rest of India. Militant groups of eastern India, like ULFA, often take refuge in Bhutan and India requires assistance from Bhutan to bring them out in the open. There is also the factor of Bhutan's enormous hydroelectric potential, in which India is investing heavily. Yet India must also have respect for Bhutan's sovereignty. Both India and China need Bhutan as a true buffer zone. Rivalry in trade and influence is unavoidable but any attempt by either to take effective control of Bhutan, in addition to their existing border disputes and tensions, would be to risk outright war – a war that could well be far more catastrophic for both sides than that of 1962 and that neither wants.

Meanwhile, Bhutan is again doing well, after the economic crisis of 2013. High end tourism is flourishing, more hydro-electric projects are coming on stream and the latest Asian Development Bank report praises the current 5 year plan's focus on improving agriculture, which still employs 56% of the workforce and remains largely at the subsistence level. India would do well to continue as a development partner but to step back from temptations to interfere in Bhutan's internal affairs.

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***Professor Selina Mohsin, Former Ambassador of Bangladesh.***

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## Mutual interests underlie a strong China–Pakistan relationship

Ghulam Ali

China seems to have abandoned its cautious approach to relations with Pakistan and has adopted a policy of active and deep engagement. This new approach will most likely increase Beijing's influence in Islamabad.

During Chinese President Xi Jinping's visit to Pakistan in April 2015, China announced US\$46 billion worth of investment in the China–Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC).

This ambitious mega-project intends to link China's Kashgar to Gwadar Port in Pakistan through a network of roads. Both sides are also planning railways, pipelines and fibre optic networks. This is the largest deal in the history of two countries. If the implementation of the CPEC moves smoothly, China may double its investment.



Pakistan Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif (L) shakes hands with the visiting Chinese President Xi Jinping in April 2015

Pakistan has been going through an unabated challenge with terrorism and chronic political instability. Yet, China still decided to undertake this mega-investment, which shows its deep stake in Pakistan. The changing geopolitical environment might shed a light on this audacious decision.

The gravity of world politics is shifting from the West to Asia, with China at its centre. This has increased competition between the US (the established superpower) and China (the rising power) who are both seeking to gain a strategic foothold, especially in the Asia Pacific region. The US's 'pivot to Asia' strategy, intensifying territorial disputes in the South China Sea and a resurging Japan under Prime Minister Shinzo Abe are all ringing Chinese alarm bells.

China is looking for allies in the region, and finds Pakistan is its most reliable partner. This relationship is grounded in geographical proximity, common security outlooks toward the region and 'trust' built over decades. China is also motivated by a desire to help Pakistan restore its 'glorious' past.

China and Pakistan's interests are converging in the changing geopolitical environment. Beijing wants to assert its sphere of influence in South Asia, the Middle East, get an access to the Indian Ocean and beyond. China also needs support against separatism in Xinjiang and is seeking to develop its Western region. To achieve some of those objectives, China has unveiled the One Belt, One Road project that will ultimately connect it with over 60 countries. Under this project, China will build a web of networks such as the Bangladesh–China–India–Myanmar Economic Corridor, the Silk Road in Central Asia, the 21st Century Maritime Silk Road and the CPEC.

The CPEC is the flagship of these projects. It acts as a bridge between land and sea, involves only one other country (Pakistan), and gives China the quickest route to the Indian Ocean and beyond. The CPEC will complement China's desire to modernise its Western region and deal with separatists in Xinjiang. For the terrorism-hit Pakistan, the CPEC could bring huge investment, infrastructural development, China's political and diplomatic support at international fronts.

China's economic assistance is also backed by strong defence ties. Within days of Xi's visit, China announced the supply of 50 JF-17 aircraft, jointly produced by China and Pakistan. The two sides have also finalised the largest defence deal for either side: six Chinese nuclear-capable submarines worth US\$4–6 billion. China has already become Pakistan's largest arms suppliers and meets over 50 per cent Pakistan's weapons needs.

China's renewed engagement with Pakistan is not directed against India as is generally perceived. That might be Pakistan's wish, and the concern of some Indian and Western spectators, but it does not seem to be China's intention. Since the late 1980s, Beijing has separated its relationship with Pakistan from its relationship with India. China deals with each country independently. China looks at South Asia from a long-term perspective, and is not focused on the Indo–Pakistan rivalry. A stable South Asia and improved India–Pakistan relations will also serve China's interest more than any other big power! .

Based on its geo-strategic location, Pakistan has acquired a new importance in Beijing's long-term strategy. This can be seen in China's bold investment in mega projects and burgeoning defence ties between the two nations. Given the high stakes, this will likely increase China's influence in Pakistan. Unlike in the past, Beijing may now take stand on issues affecting its interests.

At the same time Islamabad is cognisant that in the wake of a partial withdrawal from Afghanistan, relations with the US may enter into another phase of uncertainty. Islamabad has thus shown alacrity in intensifying ties with China, especially through a commitment to the early implementation of the CPEC. This deep congruence of mutual interests guarantees a durable Sino–Pakistani relationship into the future.

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## Vietnam and US deepen ties 20 years after normalisation

Murray Hiebert



The 7 July visit to the White House by Vietnam's Communist Party chief Nguyen Phu Trong signaled just how far the United States and Vietnam have come in the past two decades in moving beyond their 'difficult history', as President Barack Obama put it after their meeting. The leaders discussed how they would advance ties between the two countries in areas ranging from economic and political relations to security and education cooperation.



The meeting between Obama and Trong was timed to coincide with the 20th anniversary of bilateral relations between these former battlefield enemies. The visit also took place during the 40th anniversary of the capture of US-backed South Vietnam by communist forces and celebrated just how far the two countries have come in reconciling their differences.

Economic relations have blossomed since normalisation, with two-way trade topping US\$36 billion last year, up 12-fold since 2001 when the two countries signed a bilateral free trade agreement. Today both countries are part of the negotiations for the 12-country Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) trade agreement in which, once completed, Vietnam is projected to be the biggest winner. The country now exports more to the United States than any other country in Southeast Asia.

Political and security ties between Vietnam and the United States have come a long way since the two countries normalised relations. Since then, they have stepped up high-level visits and launched regular political, security, and defence dialogues to tackle outstanding issues. During a visit to Washington in July 2013, Vietnam's president and his US counterpart laid the groundwork for a comprehensive partnership between the two countries. They agreed on nine areas of cooperation including political and economic relations, security ties, human rights, and cooperation on tackling environmental issues.



Human rights problems in Vietnam are among the most difficult between the two capitals and have the potential derail the increasingly warm ties. Freedom of expression and religion have improved markedly over the past two decades, but the Vietnamese government does not tolerate actions that it believes challenges the political supremacy of the Communist Party of Vietnam and regularly detains bloggers and dissidents who challenge the party's position. The US State Department believes about 110 are being held at this time.

Over the past decade, the two countries have taken tentative steps to deepen military relations. They hold annual defence talks that explore issues such as search and rescue, peacekeeping, demining, military medicine, and environmental security. In October 2014, Washington partially lifted its ban on arms sales to Hanoi, which had been maintained since the end of the war due to human rights concerns. This move allows Vietnam to purchase equipment such as radar and Coast Guard vessels for maritime domain awareness. Part of this warming of military ties has no doubt been driven by tensions in the South China Sea as China, Vietnam's nominal communist ally, has stepped up its aggressiveness since 2009 in pressing its nine-dash line claim over much of the strategically-important sea. China has from time to time cut the seismic cable of Vietnamese oil exploration vessels and arrested Vietnamese fishermen around disputed islands. Tensions escalated in May 2014 when China moved a deep-water oilrig into an area Hanoi considers to be part of its exclusive economic zone.

Despite the tensions with China, Vietnam has moved gingerly in expanding its naval cooperation and military ties with the United States, even though the US military would be ready to deepen cooperation much more quickly. Part of this seems to be due to concerns among Vietnamese leaders about prompting countermeasures from China, with which Hanoi shares a land border and several millennia of history. People-to-people ties between Vietnam and the United States have been at the forefront of efforts to boost bilateral relations. The 16,500 Vietnamese students studying in US universities in 2015 make them the largest grouping of Southeast Asians studying in the United States. Washington has begun to clean up some of the sites polluted with dioxin, the contaminant in Agent Orange that the US military used in Vietnam and is linked to cancer and birth defects.

Completing the TPP trade agreement was one of the top agenda items when party chief Trong met Obama in Washington. Vietnam is looking for more access to the US market, particularly for Vietnamese garment exports, while the United States is looking for guarantees from Hanoi that it will grant workers freedom of association outside of the Communist Party umbrella.

The Vietnamese leader witnessed the signing of a raft of business deals, including the sale of Boeing airplanes to Vietnam. He also observed the signing of an agreement granting a license for the establishment of an independent Fulbright University in Vietnam that will be allowed to use its own curriculum. US and Vietnamese officials signed other agreements during the visit ranging from the avoidance of double taxation to cooperation in international peacekeeping and boosting Vietnam's civil aviation safety.

The geopolitics of the South China Sea have driven these two erstwhile foes closer together in recent years. Hanoi would like the Washington to totally lift its ban on lethal weapons sales and for Obama to visit Vietnam when he travels to Asia in November. Whether either happens will depend at least in part on the two countries' ability to resolve their differences and complete the TPP trade pact in the weeks ahead and Washington's perception that Hanoi is granting its citizens increased freedoms even as it prepares to hold a party congress early next year.

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## Agriculture and Nutrition Linkage for Bangladesh

Dr. Debashish Chanda



Agriculture is one of the most important drivers of Bangladesh's growing economy; the country is self-sufficient in food; and agriculture contributes 21% to GDP. On the other hand, Bangladesh accounts for 6% of global underweight and is ranked 57 in the Global Hunger Index. 76.54% of the population lives on less than \$2 a day and 29% lives on less than \$1.25. Malnutrition in Bangladesh is still alarmingly high. Bangladesh Demography and Health Survey (BDHS) 2014, as well as National Micronutrient Survey 2011-2012 suggest that, like poverty, malnutrition and

micronutrient deficiency are linked with inadequate availability, accessibility, affordability and equity in food value chain. Women including pregnant and lactating mothers, children under 5 years and adolescents in the bottom two quintiles ('poorest and poorer') and people living in rural and slum areas have very high rates of malnutrition and micronutrient deficiency. The survey shows that stunting is 36%, wasting is 14% and underweight is 33% among children under 5 years of age and only 44% of young children receive adequate complementary food.

Rice dominates the daily diet with per capita per day intake of 416 gm. Poor dietary diversity and low intake of animal-source foods contribute to malnutrition and micronutrient deficiency in spite of growing agricultural productivity in the country. Significant gaps still exist between agriculture and nutrition programs especially at the policy level even though food and nutrition policy activities directed toward improvement of the nutritional status of the people of Bangladesh began in the 1980s. We therefore need to rethink the opportunities of enhancing nutrition through agriculture by involving all sectors related to agriculture, health and nutrition. After ICN2 (Second International Conference on Nutrition, Rome, 19-21 November 2014) it is now well recognized that agricultural development is not only important but also essential for improving nutritional status of people. Agriculture and nutrition linkage has become an emerging area for research and policy in all developing countries especially in countries like Bangladesh.

There are two basic ways of improving nutritional status of people: 1) natural food based approach and 2) supplementation or fortification of food which, while based on natural foods, provides supplementation with different micro nutrients through the agricultural value chain. Both approaches can be implemented simultaneously since it is difficult to achieve significant success with one alone.

Supplementation or fortification programs can be country or location specific depending on the prevalence of acute malnutrition in certain groups of people; or market-based approaches might target specific groups of people. Some programs can be mandatory for all – for example salt iodization - but others like fortification with iron and zinc may be targeted to particular population groups. These approaches should be well researched and verified by the researchers and endorsed by the policymakers before scale up for the whole population.

In Bangladesh some approaches are already scaled up all over the country. Salt iodization is the most widely accepted. Fortification of edible oil by vitamin A has become mandatory and is likely to be scaled up country-wide within the next year. A number of programs are underway to fortify rice with zinc and other micronutrients; micronutrient powder supplementation also is a comparatively easy and cheap way to provide improved nutrition to vulnerable groups but faces some challenges and is opposed by some organizations that are supporting exclusively natural food based approaches to improve nutrition.



On the other hand a totally food based approach is neither affordable nor accessible to most of the population living in poverty given the high price of foods, especially animal based, as well as fruits and vegetables. Most poor people get their calorie intake from the staple food rice which is over-polished and lacking nutritious elements. If nutrition is supplied mainly by rice then it must be fortified by micronutrients to fulfil essential nutrition requirements of the poor. Bangladesh currently has some programs on this issue, such as the Nutritious Rice Value Chain project implemented by the Global Alliance for Improved Nutrition (GAIN) in partnership with Bangladesh Rice Research Institute (BRRI). This project consists of improving the nutritional content of rice by fortifying it with zinc at soaking stage. Harvest Plus is also working with bio-fortified zinc rice and WFP with Nutri Rice.

The alternative, to inspire rural people to grow their own vegetables and raise animals to escape the malnutrition cycle requires additional investment which is not always available. Homestead gardening and small scale fish farming are increasingly challenged because of ever growing overpopulation and continuous decrease of agricultural land in Bangladesh. Other constraints include lack of quality seeds, fertilizers and fingerlings; it is also difficult to sell produce in the villages or take it to market. The only positive outcome is home consumption, which can obviously improve nutritional status but this is not enough because most households require extra money for their survival; men are migrating to city/urban areas for work. In this situation the only way out is women's involvement in agriculture which can give them an excellent success in homestead gardening at household level and at same time give scope to their men working in other areas for extra income. But to achieve success in marketing fruits and vegetable produced at household level we need to develop the total value chain from input supply to market, develop collection centers, and improve postharvest management system, transportation and market linkages.

In view of the above it is not possible to improve nutritional status with only a single program; programs should identify underlying determinants and challenges for improving nutrition like poverty, illiteracy, poor hygiene, access to drinking water and sanitation along with the health awareness. Awareness building and behavior change communication should be conducted in all areas of intervention and should be facilitated by trained health and nutrition workers. Strong media and civil society engagement will also accelerate the process of improving nutrition. Collaboration among different ministries will play a key role in this movement by inter linkage among ministries of agriculture, food, health and family welfare, particularly at the community level. Multi stakeholders' platform including public and private sectors and NGOs should work together to achieve success on this nutrition agenda. More value should be added from policy level by mainstreaming nutrition across all related programs and a special fund should be allocated for nutrition programs in the national budget.

All agricultural programs from now on must be nutrition-sensitive and agriculture should be nutrition-smart agriculture. Based on the current situation of agriculture and nutrition we can suggest some policy level interventions for our country's nutritional improvement, as follows:

1. Develop agricultural value chain for improved nutrition based on the needs of population;
2. Bio-fortification or micro-nutrient fortification (supplementation) of staple food should be country/location specific;
3. Increase food safety activities, create awareness about food safety to prevent food contamination and food borne diseases; this should be included in the primary education program;
4. Develop integrated agriculture, health and nutrition programs for better linkage development of these sectors; can be included in public-private-community partnership;
5. Bring all relevant sectors (cross cutting) under improved nutrition agenda; nutrition agenda should be included in all development projects;

6. Increase awareness on food and dietary diversity among women and children through training, mentoring, counselling; can be included in local NGO programs, community clinic and ICT (Information Communication Technology);
7. Social Behavior Change Communication (SBCC) on nutrition agenda can be included in all programs of rights based and faith based organizations;
8. Strengthen purchasing capacity of the poor to increase accessibility to diverse food; nutrition agenda can be included in the M4P (Making market work for the poor) programs;
9. Convince farmers to grow more nutrient-rich crops e.g. fruits and vegetables; give incentives at the initial stage to inspire them;
10. Increase programs on homestead gardening, poultry/livestock rearing and hatchery business to improve nutritional status from growers' level;
11. Include nutrition agenda in all government programs of concern ministries and allocate individual budget for nutrition programs;
12. Follow the nutrition movement recognized internationally and work together with them (SUN, UN-REACH, etc.); Take advantage from the ICN2 declaration to attract donors for better investment in this sector;
13. Facilitate women empowerment, increase women involvement in agriculture sector and more income generating programs through women entrepreneurship development;
14. Work closely with food product manufacturers to include nutritional improvement agenda in to their products;
15. Include nutrition security in all agriculture, food security and livelihood programs.

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## Chinese Neighbourhood Diplomacy: Afghanistan, Xinjiang and Central Asia

**Dr. Kemel Toktomushev**



News emerged that one of the most prominent peace envoys of Afghanistan held two-day long secret talks with former Taliban officials in the Chinese city of Urumqi. Taking into account the official unveiling of the Silk Road Economic Belt initiative in Kazakhstan in 2013 by President Xi Jinping, such developments underscore the willingness of the Chinese leadership to play a more prominent role in the region. Indeed, it appears that neighbourhood diplomacy is becoming a foreign policy priority for official Beijing.

As news agencies reported, this secret meeting took place on May 19-20, 2015, in the capital city of the Chinese restive region of Xinjiang. Mohammad Masoom Stanekzai, a close confidant of Afghanistan's President Ashraf Ghani, led the Afghan delegation. The other side of the table was represented by Mullah Jalil, Mullah Abdul Razaq and Mullah Hassan Rahmani, former members of the old Taliban government in Afghanistan currently residing in Pakistan. People familiar with this meeting confirmed that the secret talks were also attended by Chinese officials and representatives of Pakistan's spy agency Inter-Services Intelligence directorate.

Such behind-the-scene politics demonstrate that Beijing is willing to undertake the role of mediator in Afghanistan and accelerate regional efforts to bring all engaged parties to the negotiating table. It has been long assumed that China established and maintained direct links to the Taliban prior to the Operation Enduring Freedom. In December 2000, the then Ambassador of China to Pakistan Lu Shulin met with Taliban's supreme leader Mullah Omar in Kandahar to lobby the Taliban leadership not to support Uighur separatists and ensure the Afghan soil is not used for any destabilisation in Xinjiang. It also appeared that official Beijing was willing to buy peace with the Taliban through economic programmes. There were some contested reports that China has signed a memorandum of understanding on economic and technical cooperation with the Taliban leadership in Kabul in 2001, whilst the delegations of Chinese and Afghan businessmen paid reciprocal visits to Afghanistan and China respectively. Of course, these developments were voided after the events of 9/11, and Beijing preferred to distance itself from Afghanistan.

Nonetheless, as recent developments reveal, Beijing is still interested in the stability of Afghanistan, especially after the withdrawal of American troops. The main Chinese interests are yet limited to Xinjiang. Xinjiang or officially the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region is the largest administrative division of China that borders eight countries including Afghanistan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan. Xinjiang is home to approximately ten million Uighurs. In the 1990s, following the collapse of the USSR, Xinjiang experienced a surge in national sentiments amongst the Uighurs, which were suppressed by official Beijing. Hereafter, the restive region of Xinjiang has emerged as an infamous news headliner. The region became subjected to a number of brutal attacks carried out by Islamic militants, whilst official Beijing also continued a hard-line security policy to suppress such extremist movements.

In this regard, it becomes apparent that apart from economic reasoning, the Central Asian vector in the Chinese neighbourhood diplomacy is motivated by security rationales. Beijing fears that Central Asia can be used as a fertile ground to breed instability in neighbouring Xinjiang. Such thinking may explain why Beijing decided to play a more visible role in Afghanistan. In fact, Afghanistan is also often portrayed in the Central Asian political discourses as one of the greatest sources of regional instability. These views rest on the premises that there is allegedly a trend of Muslim radicalisation in Central Asia, although it is difficult to cross-check this claim, since there is no reliable open data on the magnitude of Islamic

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extremism. Furthermore, according to the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, nearly a quarter of the heroine produced in Afghanistan is trafficked north to Russia through Central Asia. The existence and durability of such drug trafficking routes further contributes to Afghanistan's negative image of an exporter of instability.

Accordingly, both the Chinese and Central Asian leadership appears to be interested in regional peace and de-escalation of conflict in Afghanistan, especially taking into account the Chinese commitment to invest nearly \$40 billion into the Central Asian infrastructure through its Silk Road Economic Belt programme. It is yet unclear how far Beijing is willing to go in brokering peace in Afghanistan. In a similar vein, it is unclear what role Afghanistan will play as part of the Silk Road Economic Belt initiative. However, what is certain is that the Chinese engagement in Afghanistan and Central Asia will only grow, although the Chinese non-interference foreign policy principle will prevent Beijing from being as assertive in the region as the USA or Russia is.

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## Changing world order

### “Will there be a role for New Asian-African Partnership?”

Munir Zaman and Sadeq Khan

On April 22 this year, a meeting of Asian and African nations in Jakarta to mark the 60th anniversary of Bandung conference that made a developing-world stand against colonialism and led to the Cold War era's non-aligned movement called for a new global order that is open to emerging economic powers and leaves the "obsolete ideas" of Bretton Woods institutions in the past. Among the leaders listening were Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe and Chinese President Xi Jinping.



## New global economic order sought

At the opening of the conference, Indonesian President Joko Widodo, the conference host, said that those who still insisted that global economic problems could only be solved through the World Bank, International Monetary Fund and Asian Development Bank were clinging to "obsolete ideas".

"There needs to be change," he said. "It's imperative that we build a new international economic order that is open to new emerging economic powers."

The IMF and World Bank were at the center of the post-World War 2 monetary order created by the United States and Europe at the Bretton Woods Conference in New Hampshire in 1944. Widodo made no mention of the China-backed Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB), but was presumably referring to it when he talked about the necessity of "a new international economic order that is open to new emerging economic powers." Indonesia is one of nearly 60 countries that have offered to be founding members of the AIIB. The United States and Japan have conspicuously withheld their support behind the bank, but Germany, U.K., France, Australia have come forward to join it.



Chinese President Xi Jinping, architect of AIIB and the Belt and Road Initiative, told the conference that "a new type of international relations" was needed to encourage cooperation between Asian and African nations, and said the developed world had an obligation to support the rest with no political strings attached. Japanese prime minister Shinzo Abe simply nodded to the new assertion of Afro Asian will by saying: Japan had pledged, "with feelings of deep remorse over the past war", to adhere to principles such as refraining from acts of aggression and settling international dispute by peaceful means.

Zimbabwean President Robert Mugabe told the conference that Asian and African countries "should no longer be consigned to the role of exporters of primary goods and importers of finished goods". He called it a "role that has historically been assigned to us by the colonial powers, starting from the days of colonialism".

The world order has changed dramatically since nearly 30 heads of state gathered in 1955 in the Indonesian town of Bandung to discuss security and economic development away from global powers embroiled in the Cold War. Together they accounted for less than a quarter of global economic output at that time, but today they contribute to more than half of the world economy. Of the Bandung countries, China and India are now themselves at top tables in the Group of 20 and wield significant economic power. Indonesian President Widodo said the group may be meeting in a changed world but still needed to stand together against the domination of "a certain group of countries" to avoid unfairness and global imbalances.

### **Vulnerability of the current financial order**

The "obsolete ideas", as referred to by Indonesia President Widodo, of the Bretton Woods institutions dominated by the United States and Western Europe, of their later Asian adjunct the Asian Development Bank by accommodating Japan, China and South Korea, are in fact facing grave challenges in the European Union's Eurozone crisis in Portugal, Spain, and particularly in Greece as well as potentially in Italy and possibly even in France, more than they ever did in Asia or Africa. During the Asian financial crisis in 1997 on the thresh hold of the new millennium, only Malaysia opted out of IMF prescriptions to chart a course of its own for economic recovery. Other countries of Southeast Asia including Indonesia put their own people to tremendous hardship, mass unemployment and bankruptcy for years before they could return to normalcy. The question arising now during the Eurozone crisis is whether a generational suffering austerity and sacrifice of financial sovereignty is worth the "possible" recovery of a nation's creditworthy status in the eyes of its richer partners who have turned masters of the European Union by virtue of the key to the Eurozone's coffers in the European Central Bank. The 2008 global financial crisis had meanwhile exposed the vulnerability of the global financial order to the extent that it is not fiscal indiscipline or structural weaknesses only of a national economy that leads to crises as suffered by Asian tigers in the 1997-99 or being suffered by southern states of the Eurozone after 2010 onwards, but a much deeper malaise in the world financial order.

That malaise is of vulnerability to currency manipulations, whims of portfolio investment withdrawal from capital markets, futures speculation, subprime trading and other forms of financial transactions in the global system unrelated to production and real wealth creation. An inevitable contributory factor to that malaise is the ever-growing gap of earning capacity and consumer spending between the rich and the poor in national economics and between rich countries and poor countries internationally.

### **Signs of failing Pax Americana**

2008 global financial crisis also coincided with signs of another fundamental paradigm shift in the emerging world order. The signs indicated the failure of Pax Americana that the neo-con strategists of USA sought to impose on the international community by virtue of overwhelming superiority and global reach

of its soft and hard-power maneuvers. 2010 onwards it became crystal clear that American superpower drive to tame Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya, Yemen or Syria had ended in a mess in North Africa and parts of Central Africa, and spread fratricidal warfare and instability throughout Middle East.

NATO attempts to surround Russia and clip the latter's wings to reduce it to a toothless regional power has only succeeded in consolidating the pride of Russians and in turning Russian aspiration from European integration to Asian access, and for increased military maneuvers and defence spending. Crippling US and European sanctions against trade and financial transactions with Russia has been hurtful but unsuccessful in cowing Russian spirit. Russian annexation of Crimea, albeit endorsed by a referendum of Crimean population, remains essentially condoned in public mind of Asian peoples and also largely in Europe and Latin America. It passes as Russia's self-defence requirement in consequence of U.S. "self-defence" rhetoric applied to crushing offensives of missile and drone attacks on defenceless people in distant lands suspected of sheltering extremists, resulting in so-called "collateral damage" of innocent lives and limbs including those of women and children. Ukraine stalemate with bloody and ruinous effects is continuing, and disgruntled sections of the population of Southern Europe along the Mediterranean, apart from the Balkans, are increasingly getting tired of European centralism and inclined to Russian overtures.

At the end of Cold War and through the triumphal days of Pax Americana, having allowed Russia the concession of Russian-majority parts of Georgia to secede and a tacit understanding in the Organisation of Security and Cooperation in Europe not to press with NATO expansion eastwards next to Russian borders, USA sought and obtained Russia's cooperation in US globalisation agenda, US war on terror and US enforcement agenda of nuclear non-proliferation. As such the Group of Seven richest nations overseeing the world financial order had co-opted Russia as the eighth member forming G-8. Russia went along with US imposition of no-fly zone and bombardment of Libya leading to elimination of Gaddafi, but put its foot down when US-led Western coalition, with Saudi-led Arab support, started aiding an armed rebellion there that later turned its guns around to occupy much of Iraq and establish its hold on northern Syria to establish a Caliphate in the name of Islamic state of Iraq and Al-Shams or the Levant (ISIS or ISIL). Earlier, Russia has successfully persuaded US and UN to accept the surrender and disposal of chemical weapons in possession of Syria and prevented direct US or UN military intervention on the ground that those weapons of mass destruction were likely to be used in the civil war raging in Syria. Now, a US-led coalition with reduced number of European participants and active Gulf Arab participation with tacit Russian consent are carrying on sporadic bombardment of ISIL positions (Turkey joining them also of late in retaliation of terrorist attack on Kurdish anti-ISIL activists on Turkish soil in the border of Syria).

### **Contradictions Compounded in the global theater**

Meanwhile both the strategic and the economic scenarios were undergoing profound changes around the globe. The combination of global financial crisis, the fatigue of long war-drawn war on terror, the chaotic aftermath of military intervention in Iraq, Libya, & Syria further destabilising Middle East and Africa, where trouble spots had remained simmering in Somalia, Nigeria, sub-Sahara Africa, Central African Republic, Male, and so on, and ineffective air-operations in Yemen sheltering al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula was telling on the psyche of US administration. Iran had withstood years of UN and US sanctions, and as in Afghanistan, Iran-backed militia in Iraq & Lebanon, Syrian Government and Yemeni. Houthi stood against ISIL extremists as virtual allies of US-basked military maneuvers. Russia had become cash-rich as oil and gas prices surged after the global economic crisis, and as such more assertive in its opposition to NATO expansion in Eastern Europe. In the changed circumstances, U.S. and European leaders hit back by engineering an uprising to oust a pro-Russian regime in Ukraine leading to a pro-NATO government in Kiev. But secessionist pro-Russia provincial governments in Ukrainian territory further east along the Russian border raised flags of rebellion. A vicious civil war that ensued is still carrying on

sporadically along a cease-fire line negotiated by OSCE, after the shock of hundreds of Dutch and Australian lives lost in the downing of a Malaysian passenger aircraft caught in an as-yet unexplained attack in the air-route crossing the skies of the conflict zone. Russia is now named by USA and its European allies in NATO as a threat to European security, and has been rendered a pariah state in Western markets by US and European sanctions on trade and financial dealings. Fall in oil and gas prices by US fracking-produced shale-oil entry into the world hydrocarbon market hit the Russian economy hard. The sanctions regimes on Iran and Russia imposed by Western powers have thus resulted in the building of a contra iron-curtain by the West, and has revived Cold War mentality if not Cold War practices as such. America on the other hand, the Bolivarian states had come together to assert Latin American way of socially bound state protected capitalism averse to Western transnational corporate invasion of global capital.

### **BRICS weighing on G-7 command**

In this climate of US superpower policy of exclusion and increasing trend of multipolarity in international relations gnawing at the vitals of Pax Americana, it was not surprising that within the Group of 20 significant voices in the global economy, the traditionally dominating G-7 group of richest nations, i.e. USA, Japan, Germany, UK, France, Canada and Italy found a new bloc of 5 emerging large economics pro-active in the world market, i.e. Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa, nicknamed BRICS appeared as a balancing force, and in due course set up a transcontinental New Development Bank seeking to make some difference in the world financial order and provide more impetus to the development dynamics of newly industrialised nations and their neighbourhood. In the Asian theater meanwhile, Russia and China along with a number of Central Asian states formerly belonging to the Soviet Union formed the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation whose access to Central Asian, Russian and Iranian oil fields provided energy security along with territorial continuity of the bloc. That continuity has been buttressed by an elaborate network of connectivity by rebuilding a “Belt” of old Silk Roads as well as revival of old oceanic trade routes of China as 21st Century “Marine Silk Road”. This “Belt and Road” initiative of China, announced as a comprehensive global access and connectivity strategy by China’s President Xi Jinping in October, 2013 in his address to the Indonesian Parliament, followed by his call for an initiative to negotiate and establish a Free Trade Area of Asia and the Pacific (FTAAP) during last APEC summit in November 2014 in Beijing obtained support from most Asian leaders. The “Belt and Road” and the “FTAAP” initiatives of China have in fact overtaken similar initiatives by USA, for (1) a Silk Road Act tabled in 1999 for US involvement in aiding connectivity and growth in Central Asia, which failed to obtain follow-up funding from the US Congress, as well as (2) a Trans Pacific Partnership (TPP) across Pacific Ocean littorals for common market connecting select nations in Southeast Asia, East Asia, the Americans and Australasia, launched in 2005. Negotiations for TPP proved long drawn and difficult, as its draft agreement was designed for common market leadership of transnationals (not of participating officials government or of a commission representing participating governments like in European Union) and retained strict intellectual property rights and high tech advantages for the transnationals. As such China was excluded. Congressional approval of the initiative was also pending. The US Congress has recently approved TPP at last.

### **G-2 balancing moves in Asia**

The TPP initiative is a soft power counterpart of USA’s strategic rebalance or pivot in Asia Policy. That policy with unassailable superiority of naval power, mobility and presence of US fleets in Indo-Pacific theatre as much as in other oceans around the globe has been tempered by the knowledge of Chinese capability of stealth missile attacks from the latter’s Pacific coasts and roaming submarine in Indo-Pacific waters. There is also latent US recognition of China’s “peaceful rise” policy, notwithstanding China’s land and sea border disputes with some of its neighbours. There is a common desire between China and the USA to maintain peace and stability in Asia Pacific and Indo-Pacific theater so that the growth dynamics in this

region is not disturbed and may in turn help stabilise the global economy. As such, a cautious but useful G-2 relationship has developed between China and USA, with significant impact on and essentially related to Asian rise. ASEAN countries which learnt many lessons from the Asian financial crisis of 1997-1999 has been playing an eminently catalytic role through its many initiatives like APEC, EU-Asia Dialogue, ASEAN+3, East Asia Summit etc. in expanding scopes of dialogue and maintaining benign spirit of regional backing to G-2 cooperation. Indonesia with strong endorsement from Singapore, has been playing a pivotal role in maintaining that ASEAN spirit. Advocacy of the same was clearly spelt out in the Keynote address by Lee Hsien Loong, Prime Minister of Singapore at the Shangri-La Dialogue 2015 organised by International Institute of Strategic Studies. We reproduce below relevant parts of that speech:

*“50 years ago, in 1965, it was the height of the Cold War. The two major camps in the world, led by the US and the Soviet Union, defined the global strategic landscape. There were non-aligned countries, like India and Indonesia, but these two main opposing camps faced off against each other worldwide, and in Asia the conflict manifested itself in the Vietnam War and in the tensions, the frozen conflict, in the Korean Peninsula.”*

*“Today it is a different strategic landscape. The Cold War is long over; the Soviet Union has dissolved. Russia continues to participate in this region, but its focus is in Europe and its near abroad, which means Central Asia and Eurasia. And in Asia, the key players are the United States and China.”*

*“The US remains the dominant Pacific power. PACOM and the US 7th Fleet are a powerful force in being, and a key factor for peace and stability in the region. America's core interests in Asia have not changed, and that is a stable region that is open to do business with all countries, and a regional order that enables all major powers to engage constructively in Asia.”*

### **G-2 competition different from Cold War rivalry**

*“Meanwhile, China is building up and modernising its armed forces. President Xi Jinping has declared that China will be a maritime power. Already it has one aircraft carrier; it is building a second one. Last week China concluded its first-ever joint naval exercise with the Russians in the Mediterranean Sea. So far, China's rise has been peaceful, within the established international order; and the key to this peaceful rise continuing is the US-China relationship.*

*The US-China relationship is fundamentally different from the US-Soviet relationship of old. It is not a zero-sum game. There are elements of competition, but many interdependencies and opportunities for mutual benefit. China is America's second-biggest trading partner – the biggest is Canada – and it is America's largest foreign creditor: it owns lots of US Treasury securities. America is a source of technology and ideas for China; many, many promising young Chinese study in the US, 250,000 of them, including many children of the elite. Each needs the other's cooperation to tackle global problems, whether this is nuclear proliferation or global warming.*

*All Asian countries hope that US-China relations will be positive. No country wants to choose sides between the US and China. And we are glad that successive US administrations and successive Chinese leaderships have engaged, worked together and managed the problems which have come up between them, despite nationalistic pressures on both sides and inevitable tensions from time to time.*

*So, when the US and China both say that the broad Pacific Ocean is vast enough to embrace both China and the United States, we read that as a good sign, provided by ‘vast enough’ they mean that there is space all over the Asia-Pacific for both powers to participate and to compete peacefully and to work out problems constructively.”*



## **New models of co-operation amongst major powers**

*“One model of competition is where major powers strengthen their influence within a set of international rules and norms, and we can see this in how China is actively deepening its cooperation and making friends all over Asia, through the 2+7 cooperation framework which they designed with ASEAN, through the One Belt, One Road and the Maritime Silk Road initiatives which they are promoting with all of their neighbours, land as well as sea. One of China’s major projects is the AIIB, the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank. Clearly the AIIB will enhance China’s influence in the world, but it also meets a real and urgent need for infrastructure development and capital in the region. And it is a way China can participate constructively in the international order, together with other countries, partners in the AIIB. And this is similar to how Americans and Europeans influence the IMF and World Bank, and how Japan plays a major role in the ADB, the Asian Development Bank. It is legitimate, it is constructive, and that is why Singapore gave its support very early to the AIIB idea, and why many countries have since welcomed it and joined as Prospective Founding Members, not only Asian countries, but also Britain, France, Germany, Italy, Australia and others considering.*

*Similarly, the US is giving substance to its rebalancing towards Asia by increasing engagement, and one major initiative is the TPP, the Trans-Pacific Partnership. President Obama has personally pushed the TPP hard with the negotiating partners. Every time we meet him for APEC meetings, he has a side meeting and we discuss the TPP. The administration needs to obtain Trade Promotion Authority (TPA) from Congress before we can settle this matter, because without TPA no country will close the trade negotiations with the US. A TPA bill has now passed the Senate, and now it is before the House. Obtaining congressional approval for trade-negotiating authority is always a messy and mysterious process, so all the TPP partners are watching this closely and we are praying that Congress passes the TPA legislation in a satisfactory form and in good time.”*

## **Superpower game to corner China**

*“And there is clearly a competitive dynamic here. It is an open secret that the US had reservations about the AIIB and discouraged its friends from participating, and on the TPP, some observers believe that the rules are being crafted to raise the hurdle for China to join. I am quite sure that is not the thinking of all the TPP members, although China, as a matter of fact, is not yet ready to join the TPP yet. But speaking as an Asian country and a participant in both the AIIB and the TPP, Singapore hopes that eventually China will join the TPP and the US and Japan will join the AIIB.”*

*“Japan has not joined the AIIB, but recently it announced a US\$110 billion plan for public-private assistance for infrastructure development in Asia. Most Southeast Asian countries want Japan to play a more active role, but they do not want to get embroiled in rivalry between China and Japan.”*

*“The East Asia Summit – the EAS – now in its tenth year, is also an ASEAN initiative. It fosters an open regional architecture because its membership includes not just East Asian countries, but also India, Australia and New Zealand, Russia and the United States. With this broader membership the EAS ties together the two sides of the Pacific and reduces the risk of an East Asian bloc forming which might split the Pacific down the middle.”*

## **Out of the Cold War to the new world**

*“Asia is peaceful and prosperous. We have successfully navigated a major transition out of the Cold War. A new international order is taking shape, not without problems, but basically stable. Fifty years from now,*



*... my optimistic hope is that a stable regional balance will continue to exist. ASEAN should be an effective and relevant actor. I expect that the US, China and Japan will remain major powers, and India will play an increasing role in the region. I hope that we will continue to have an open global system of trade, investment and economic cooperation. Certainly I hope that there will be free trade in the Asia-Pacific, instead of the current alphabet soup of trading arrangements. There is no road map to such a happy scenario. The future is not a straight-line projection of the past. ... step by step we will build confidence and trust and maximise our chances that the next 50 years will be stable, prosperous and an upward path."*

Evidently, there is a strong drive and desire amongst ASEAN nations for a smooth and relatively peaceful transition from destructive Cold War rivalries to a prosperous and accommodating New World Order. As such, ASEAN is playing a significant role in bringing regional and global leaders together and developing diverse frameworks of international cooperation. The ASEAN drive and desire for negotiating peace all around is patently missing from many parts of Asia and Africa. Historically speaking, it was Asian-African leaders of Panchsheel (Five Principles in China, Pancasila in Indonesia) declaration and the Non-aligned movement that made signal contributions to peaceful coexistence and detente during Cold War. India and China, parties to the Panchsheel Treaty, are now themselves players in the Big Powers' game and seekers of multipolarity. It has thus fallen on Indonesia, also an emerging naval power and economic heavyweight in the ASEAN, to pick up the gauntlet for New Asian-African Strategic Partnership as heir to the Cold War time Bandung Conference.

### **New Asian-African Partnership**

About the same time as the TPP initiative was mooted by the United States, in April 22–23, 2005, Asian and African countries renewed their longstanding solidarity at the 2005 Asian African Summit in Jakarta. The 2005 Asian African Summit yielded, inter-alia, the Declaration on the New Asian African Strategic Partnership (NAASP), a “shared earth” spirit on climate change Tsunami, Earthquake and other Natural Disaster. The NAASP pledged political solidarity, economic cooperation, and socio-cultural relations, within which governments, regional/sub-regional organizations, as well as peoples of Asian and African nations might interact. The 2005 Asian African Summit was attended by 106 countries, comprising 54 Asian countries and 52 African countries.



Image Credit: Asian African Conference Indonesia 2015

Indonesia and South Africa have co-chaired the NAASP since 2005. In its capacity as a co-chair from Asia, Indonesia has played an active role in the development of the NAASP. During 2006-2011, Indonesia had carried out 26 programs within the framework of the NAASP, such as the NAASP-UNEP Workshop on Environmental Law and Policy held in 2006, Asian African Forum on Genetic Resources, Traditional Knowledge, and Folklore in 2007, and Apprenticeship Program for Mozambican Farmers in 2010.

In addition, Indonesia hosted the NAASP Ministerial Conference on Capacity Building for Palestine in 2008 in which 218 participants from 56 countries and 3 international organizations took part.

Commitment to the development of the NAASP has also been shared by other NAASP countries, such as Malaysia which conducted Training Course for Diplomats in 2007 and Training Course in Disaster Management in 2008 while China held the 5th Training Program for Staff from African Chambers in 2009 and the China-Zambia Trade and Investment Forum in 2010. The NAASP Senior Officials' Meeting (SOM) was in Jakarta, October 2009 discussed 8 Focus Areas of Cooperation namely Counter Terrorism, Combating Trans-national Organized Crime, Food Security, Energy Security, Small and Medium Enterprises, Tourism, Asian African Development University Network, and Gender Equality and Women Empowerment. A number of Asian countries, such as Bangladesh, China, Japan, Filipina, and Thailand, have demonstrated their willingness to be the Champion Countries in the aforesaid areas of cooperation concurrent with their counterparts from African countries.

### **Model for the changing world order**

Meanwhile, Indonesia is the Champion Country from the Asian region, along with Algeria from the African region for the counter-terrorism area of cooperation. Indonesia, along with other NAASP member countries, shared common concern to the fact that Palestine is the only participant of the 1955 Asian African Summit which has not enjoyed full independence. Indonesia, South Africa, and Palestine are mandated to supervise and facilitate the NAASP member countries in the implementation of programs within the NAASP capacity-building for Palestine framework. Indonesia plays its role as coordinator for Afghanistan, Azerbaijan, Bangladesh, Brunei Darussalam, China, Filipina, India, Iran, Japan, South Korea, Cambodia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, Pakistan, Singapore, Sri Lanka, Syria, Thailand, Timor Leste, and Vietnam. The NAASP remains an important and potential forum of cooperation among countries in the two continents. In a changing world, certainly the NAASP, like any other international forum, is called upon to address the challenges of today. The cause of freedom and independence remains a top priority for NAASP. Amongst others, the issue of stability, as well as welfare of Asian and African peoples is the main theme of cooperation that brings the two continents together. Thus "a new type of international relations" is being designed and put into practice by the NAASP to create a model, if not a motor for the changing world order.

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## In search of a regional ‘solution’ to Southeast Asia’s refugee crisis

Dr. Antje Missbach

It took the foreign ministers of Malaysia, Indonesia and Thailand more than 10 days to finally come to a joint agreement that would allow the rescue of thousands of dehydrated and starving Rohingya and Bangladeshis who had been drifting in the Andaman Sea for weeks.



While Acehese fishermen rescued hundreds of people — against the orders of the Indonesian military — to bring the number of Rohingya and Bangladeshis that reached Indonesia to about 1300, another 1700 or more managed to reach Malaysia, mainly on the island of Langkawi. There are an estimated 8000 or more people still adrift in the Andaman Sea and the Malacca Straits, unable to disembark.

The sudden influx had been caused by crackdowns on trafficking networks in Thailand, spurred by revelations of dozens of ‘death camps’ and ‘slave camps’ in Thailand’s lower south, where the bodies of more than 26 migrants from Myanmar and Bangladesh were discovered on 1 May 2015.

Alarmed by the first arrivals on 10 May 2015, the three countries stepped up maritime patrols. Instead of allowing people in dire need to land, their boats were pushed back to sea after being provided with food,

water and fuel to continue their journey.

Each government claimed its country was not the desired destination of these boatpeople. This deadly ping-pong continued for a week, despite harsh criticism from the United Nations and its High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and the international community, which warned that further delays would turn these boats into floating coffins.

On 20 May, the three foreign ministers finally pledged to take in 7000 boatpeople and allow them to be processed in their respective territories under strict conditions. Indonesia and Malaysia have offered only 'temporary shelter provided that the resettlement and repatriation process will be done in one year by the international community', who must take on all financial responsibilities.

The UNHCR offices in Kuala Lumpur and Jakarta are already overburdened with refugees and asylum seekers. The average waiting time in Indonesia, from registration to first interview, ranges from six to 17 months. Resettlement often takes even longer given the few spots available for recognised refugees residing in Southeast Asia. Resettlement options have further decreased since Australia announced that it would no longer resettle refugees who had registered at the UNHCR in Jakarta after 1 July 2014.

Turkey has pledged US\$1 million to explore ways of organising a humanitarian aid operation to reach the Rohingya and Bangladeshis stranded at sea. The Philippines, the US and Gambia have indicated they might be willing to accept recognised refugees for permanent resettlement. But Australia has categorically ruled out resettling any Rohingya and Bangladeshis from this current group.

While asylum seekers and refugees in Indonesia wait for designated housing, Indonesia's Vice President, Jusuf Kalla, has resurrected a mothballed plan to house asylum seekers and refugees on an uninhabited island somewhere in the archipelago while they wait to be processed. This plan is not exactly new and, for many good reasons, the previous governments decided not to implement it.

Given the mixed experience with the detention island of Galang — which served as a transit point for Indo-chinese refugees awaiting resettlement under the so-called Comprehensive Plan of Action (CPA) between the late 1970s and the mid-1990s — Indonesia had refrained from reviving such an option.

Despite its many shortfalls, the CPA is now increasingly promoted as a potential blueprint for a new regional 'solution'. In many regards, the CPA was the first regional 'solution' for refugees from Southeast Asia and beyond, as it generated cooperation between the country of origin (Vietnam), the transit countries (Malaysia, Hong Kong, Indonesia and Thailand) and the resettlement countries (the United States, Canada, France and Australia).

Long before the current emergency, regional talks about regional 'solutions' were omnipresent. The search is one of the key tasks for the so-called Bali Process, a voluntary forum co-chaired by Indonesia and Australia. The 45-member forum includes the UNHCR and the IOM, as well as a number of observer countries and international agencies.

But definitions of what could constitute a regional solution are still vague. It seems everybody has a very different understanding of it. To a number of countries in the region — particularly Australia — it supposedly means refugees should be resettled anywhere in the region, except Australia.

Along with these diverging views, collaboration and a multilateral approach — as demanded by the Bali

Process — have been overshadowed by Australia’s unilateral decision-making and bilateral agreements to transfer refugees to countries such as Nauru, Papua New Guinea and now Cambodia.

It is tempting to join the vociferous calls for regional ‘solutions’ — as Indonesia, Thailand and Malaysia have been making for some time. But before doing so, it might be worth asking what a ‘solution’ means for each of them.

Does it mean preventing asylum seekers from leaving their countries of origin and preventing them from coming to Indonesia, Thailand, Malaysia and Australia? Or is it a rather long-term process to provide better protection for asylum seekers and refugees in the Asia Pacific region?

If the ‘solution’ is merely to stop the irregular flow of asylum seekers in the region, it would be seriously impaired from the start. Not only would it be naïve to believe that human mobility outside managed migration schemes could be fully prevented, it would also put the lives of many who may have to flee persecution in the future in great danger.

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## THE 70TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE A-BOMBINGS

August, 2015 marks the 70th anniversary of the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

### ***‘This is what I saw’: Hiroshima survivor recounts ‘hell on Earth’ sixty-nine years later***

There is a cane by her front door and, beside it, a walker. Setsuko Thurlow is almost 83 years old and a recent back injury has bitten into her mobility. Her gait is unsteady, but her memory and her fighter’s spirit — she loves a good debate — are undiminished by age and the nagging aches. Just beyond the front door is a study. It is filled with books and a computer that Ms. Thurlow openly resents. “I am not good with the computer,” she growls. “I have to write everything down, longhand, and then send it by fax machine.”

Ms. Thurlow has been writing a lot lately, as she always does this time of year, staying up into the week hours, alone, to think and write and remember, to weep for the dead. She was 13 on Aug. 6, 1945, a cracker-jack smart Grade 8 student at an all-girls school in Hiroshima, and one of the few among her age cohort selected for an essential wartime duty: decoding messages from the front at Hiroshima’s Japanese army headquarters. “I was good with numbers, but I hated doing it,” she says. “I remember leading a group of 30 girls my age. We were all chosen for the work. We met at Hiroshima train station. It was a Monday morning, our very first day. “We [marched] to the gate of the army headquarters — left-right-left-right-left-right — and saluted the soldiers. Major Yanai had an assembly and gave the girls a pep talk. He said this is the day when you start proving your loyalty to the Emperor, and your patriotism, and we all said at once, ‘Yes sir, we will do our best.’ ‘This was at 8 a.m. At 8:15 a.m. I saw a bluish light flash through the window, like a thousand camera flashes. Then my body started floating through the air. There was a total stillness and, later, I could hear my girlfriends whispering, ‘God help me. Mother help me.’

That day, 69 years ago, the United States dropped the world’s first atomic bomb on Hiroshima. American military planners selected the city for destruction because it was a strategic target. But locals knew it as a place full of wives whose husbands were away at war, of young children and men too old or too young for the fight, and of grandparents tasked with helping out with the grandchildren. The largely civilian death toll was 140,000. Imagine Moncton, N.B., disappearing in a flash of blue light. Almost the entire school-age population of Hiroshima was clearing fire lanes at Ground Zero at 8:15 a.m. Most were killed instantly. Many simply vaporized. They were there. They were gone. (Ms. Thurlow’s sister-in-law, a teacher, was overseeing the work. Her body was never found).

Ms. Thurlow's job decoding messages put her 1.8 kilometres from the bomb's epicenter. Her job ever since has been telling the story of what happened that day. The retired social worker speaks at conferences worldwide. She may be moving more slowly, but she is not slowing down. (James Thurlow, her husband, was a high school history teacher in Toronto. He died in 2011.)



Setsuko Thurlow, 82, a Hiroshima survivor and Disarmament Educator, poses for a portrait at her home on August 1, 2014 in Toronto ON

Ms. Thurlow lost consciousness after the blast. The next thing she remembers is a soldier's voice imploring her to hurry, to keep pushing at the debris and moving toward the light. "By the time I crawled free, the building was on fire," she says. "I saw two other girls come out. All the other girls were burned alive. Although it was morning it was so dark, like twilight. It was spooky. And in the darkness, as my eyes got used to it, I could see everything was destroyed. "A soldier told us to head to the hillside, outside town. I could see objects moving in the dark. As they drew nearer I could see figures, supposedly human beings, but they didn't look like human beings to me. They looked like ghosts. "Their hair was standing on end — I don't know why — and their eyes were swollen shut from the burns. Some peoples' eyeballs were hanging out of the sockets. Some were holding their own eyes in their hands. Nobody was running. Nobody was yelling. It was totally silent, totally still. All you could hear were the whispers for 'water, water.'

"How do you describe a hell on Earth?"

Ms. Thurlow was the youngest of seven children. Most of her family members were out of town when the attack came. She reached the hillside and found a field littered with the dying and the dead. There were no doctors, only the cries: "Water, water." Her parents found her the next day. They were unscathed. But her older sister, Ayako, and four-year-old nephew, Eiji, were badly burned. Swollen and near death. She remembers the heat — "like an oven," — radiating from her sister's body. Ayako was a mother and, when she spoke, all she could express was her guilt: Her baby was burned. How could she let that happen? How could she tell her husband? "It was awful," Ms. Thurlow says, her voice trailing off. "It is not easy to carry these memories. And as the anniversary gets nearer, it becomes harder. I get agitated. I cry, especially late at night, I cry.

"We Hibakusha [atomic bomb survivors] lead a double life. You can't constantly be thinking about it. But there are moments when you have to deal with your own memories, and do something constructive with them. And what does that mean? It means you have to never let what happened happen again.

"This is why I talk about it. This is why I tell my story. This is what I saw."

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*Courtesy: National Post, Toronto, Canada.*





1.		CYPRUS
2.		LEBANON
3.		ISRAEL
4.		PALESTINE
5.		JORDAN
6.		SYRIA
7.		KUWAIT
8.		BAHRAIN
9.		QATAR

9.		UAE
11.		GEORGIA
12.		ARMENIA
13.		AZERBAIJAN
14.		KYRGYZSTAN
15.		TAJIKISTAN
16.		NEPAL
17.		BHUTAN
18.		BANGLADESH

19.		THAILAND
20.		LAOS
21.		VIETNAM
22.		CAMBODIA
23.		SINGAPORE
24.		TIMOR LESTE
25.		BRUNEI
26.		SOUTH KOREA
27.		NORTH KOREA

