

## Asian Values and a timely lesson for Bangladesh

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Emerging economies of Asia and Latin America have experienced astonishing economic growth throughout the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s. Particularly, the so-called miraculous Asian growth has invoked intellectual exercises in both economics and geopolitics due to three main propositions as Krugman (1994) puts forward. First, there seems to be a major diffusion of global technology in progress and the western economies are losing their traditional technological and geopolitical superiority. Secondly, the global commercial hub will switch towards the Asian countries of the western Pacific. And finally, Asian success seemingly legitimizes the so-called Asian values, propounded by Lee Kuan Yew, prominent Singaporean former Prime Minister, that proclaims the authority of strong government over civil liberties. But to our unpleasant surprise, the whole optimism came on the verge of demise when the currencies of the region collapsed in July 1997 incepted in Thailand and subsequently followed through South Korea, Indonesia and Malaysia and the Philippines to a greater extent and Singapore, Hong Kong and Taiwan to a lesser extent.

On a broader scale there are three predominant schools of thought that can be reflected upon to explain the so-called miraculous growth in the East Asian context. The first school of thought dominated by intellectuals states that Asian growth is purely fundamental. Most notably, the World Bank study entitled "East Asian Miracle" (1993), Stiglitz (1998), Nelson (1993), Hobday (1995) attribute East Asian growth as a result of "accumulative efficiency factor". These economies saved more, invested more and attracted more foreign capital and as a simple consequence experienced high growth. According to them, Asian growth is the combination of good policy, good governance and a bit of good luck.

The second school of thought portrays Asian growth as a result of perspiration rather than inspiration. Krugman (1994) goes on saying "... the rapid growth in output could be fully explained by rapid growth in inputs: expansion of employment, increase in education levels and, above all massive investment in physical capital. Once those inputs were taken into account, the growth in output was unsurprising, to put it differently, the big surprise about Soviet growth was that when closely examined it poses no mystery". Thus diminishing return will eventually eat up the rapid development and there was no miracle in East Asia. Krugman reaches this conclusion based on the study of Total Factor

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Productivity (TFP) done by Young (1994). TFP explains the portion of growth due to economic efficiency and technical progress.

The last school of thought on which the article intend to focus is the most isolated class of intellectuals who describe the Asian growth as a product of Asian values or to put it simply, the Asian ways of doing things. Asian values such as respect for the strong government, social hierarchy and, collectivism are the key to the Asian miracle and proclaim superiority over predominant western values. The main proponent of this view was the former and founding Singaporean Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew and leading contemporary Asian philosopher Kishore Mahbubani. Later on the Malaysian strong man Mahathir Mohammad and most of the leaders of the ASEAN (Association of South East Asian Nations) countries implicitly supported the Asian value on various occasions.

This school of thought attributes Asian growth purely to the credit of the strong government policy as well as the ingrained cultural and political structure of the East Asian countries. According to Lee, market economy quickly devolves into a 'winner-take-all' society because of people's unequal abilities. This in turn lead to social tension and political instability. He criticizes the western model as "west wants to promote democracy and human right everywhere, except where it would hurt them, as in the oil rich Arabian Peninsula". Probably the most vocal proponent of Asian values and the fiercest critique of the west is Kishore Mahbubani, the top Singaporean civil servant. Coming from the Lee Kuan Yew school of thought, Mahbubani criticizes the West that in the past 30 years America has experienced a 560 per cent increase in violent crimes, a 419 per cent increase in illegitimate births, a 400 per cent increase in divorce rates, a 300 per cent increase in children living in single-parent homes and a drop of almost 80 points in Scholastic Aptitude Test Scores. He predicts that clearly

American society is breaking down and Western Europe is fundamentally unstable. The only alternative model for Asia to follow is the Asian model, which fits their society well.

The fact of the matter is that the East Asian miracle happened under the shadow of a strong government. To legitimize the role of a strong government, this class of intellectuals-cum-politicians bring the cultural factors and phenomena into the picture and describe Asian people as strong government loving community who sacrifice individual civil liberties for the collective betterment of the community.

Their endless effort to find the legitimacy of their strong role under the pretext of high economic success and Asian values paid the high price during the recent financial crisis in East Asia. Hundreds of financial institutions went bankrupt in the region, the poverty level has increased almost by 12 per cent in the region immediately after the crisis; it has left millions of people without jobs especially women, the youth and unskilled workers (almost 10 per cent of the work force in the region) which was virtually unknown to its people before the crisis; averaged schooling has dramatically reduced in the affected country, only in Korea (member of OECD) the drop out at the higher level of studies has increased by 36 per cent; the public sector subsidy has been dramatically cut putting the society under serious instability as it happened in Indonesia; the social tension stressed and suicide rate in the region has dramatically increased after the crisis. The contagion effect of the crisis was so alarming that at one point of time it seemed that the hay days for the world economy is over and worldwide financial meltdown is just forthcoming.

It unveiled that the strong government eventually degenerates into crony capitalism or plunders by myopic autocrats. The initial setup might deliver high investment but eventually market based efficient allocation of resources becomes far cry in the system of crony capitalism. And most importantly, it is very hard to change the

institutional structure of the economy once the initial crony capitalism (close link between business and politics) has been taken for granted. The classic case of such event is the transition of the former Eastern European blocks into market economy and the economic hazard of those countries went through.

What is most frustrating about that school of thought is that they failed to define what are their so-called Asian values and why Asian values didn't come to rescue when the crisis erupted in the whole region. No matter Taiwan, the Philippines, South Korea, India and Japan are firming the ground for liberal democracy and tremendous economic success, Lee Kuan Yew, Mahathir Mohammad and Kishore Mahbubani want to embrace the market but in their own way by protecting their cronies. The drawback of this class of intellectual-cum-politicians is their dramatic failure in providing a vision and ultimate direction of their society and how to unify the Asian society under a unique stream of values no matter what kind of ideological doctrine they subscribe to. A system of values dictates the ordinary business of life of the community. The big question remains unresolved, if the will of the people is being suppressed how can values be reflected into their daily transactions?

As a nascent democracy Bangladesh has few lessons to learn from the East Asian development story. First, the East Asian economies grew rapidly but in the whole process they failed to institute proper institutional reform, especially "will of the people" to ensure proper checks and balances in the economy which in turn aggravated asymmetric information and adverse selection in the market transactions. When market participants realized that they have been shrouded with mystery, lack of confidence with a great magnitude led to speculative run against those currencies and ultimate result was the crisis. Secondly, mere growth can bring temporary benefits but not permanent security to the people, which is a negative function of economic, social and political disruptions. The East Asian growth brought people material benefits but part of the growth premium was taken away by the crisis and it will continue unless the sources of disruption is eliminated from the system.

And here comes the ultimate lesson that the "will of the people" has a built-in mechanism that can check against economic misbehaviour and minimize the possibility of economic, social and political disruptions which has been proven in golden age of Europe and the United States. This very prime element was missing from East Asian crisis-affected economies and Soviet Union. Finally, for a healthy institutional development in a developing country like Bangladesh proper nurturing of democracy and suppression of undemocratic forces are collective imperatives.

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All health information to keep you up to date

### Know your medicines

#### Drug forms

Most drugs are specially prepared in a form designed for convenience of administration. This helps to ensure that dosages are accurate and that taking the medication is as easy as possible. Inactive ingredients (those with no therapeutic effect) are sometimes added to flavour or colour the medicine, or to improve its chemical stability, extending the period during which it is effective.

The more common drug forms are described in detail below.

**Tablet:** This contains the drug compressed into a solid dose form, often round in shape. Other ingredients are added to the powder before compression, often including an agent to bind the tablet together. In some tablets, the active ingredient is released slowly after the tablet has been swallowed whole, to produce a prolonged (sustained) effect.

**Capsule:** The drug is contained in a cylindrical shaped gelatin shell that breaks open after the capsule has been swallowed, releasing the drug. Slow-release capsules contain pellets that dissolve in the gastrointestinal tract, releasing the drug slowly.

**Liquids:** Some drugs are available in liquid form, the active substance being combined in a solution, suspension or emulsion with other ingredients - solvents, preservatives, and flavouring or colouring agents. Many liquid preparations should be shaken before use to ensure that the active drug is evenly distributed. If it is not, inaccurate dosages will result.

**Mixture:** A mixture contains one or more drugs, either dissolved to form a solution or suspended in a liquid (often water).

**Elixir:** An elixir is a solution of a drug in a sweetened mixture of alcohol and water. It is often highly flavoured.

**Emulsion:** An emulsion is a drug dispersed in oil and water. An emulsifying agent is often included to stabilize the product.

**Syrup:** A syrup is a concentrated solution of sugar containing the active drug, with flavouring and stabilizing agents added.

Tomorrow: More tips on medicines

## Growing human trafficking worries the SAARC Peoples' Forum

SHAHIDUZZAMAN

BLAMING food insecurity for growing human trafficking, SAARC People's Forum has urged all South Asian countries to make food security their priority. The call came from a 4-day regional conference titled "Security of Livelihood and Security of Movement" in Kathmandu capital of Nepal in December last year.

The forum leaders told the conference that the Mafia, which is deep-rooted in this region, smuggles women and children from one country to another taking the advantages of food insecurity, and the globalization process, unfortunately, is giving a further boost to this criminal business.

According to an estimate by International Organisation for Migration (IOM), the global trafficking industry generates up to \$8 billion US dollars, dealing a severe blow to human rights.

Millions of women across the world, especially in the poor countries, are being smuggled out of their homelands every year and children account for nearly two million of them. "The South Asia and Southeast Asia take the lead in the volume of trafficking in children for sex exploitation," according to a Situation Report published in India. End Children Prostitution in Asia Tourism (ECPAT), an international

organisations, revealed that there are over one million under-16 children in brothels across region.

Chadni Joshi, regional programme adviser of South Asia Region of the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM), in a report said, "most visible, and widespread is the trafficking of women and children for commercial sex exploitation.... It's not new if we look back at the history...the new thing is the unscrupulous and massive scale of the problem exacerbated by globalisation, modern technology of the developed countries and its link to a lucrative tourist and sex industry."

Bitterly criticising the policies of the South Asian governments on human rights and against trafficking, the representatives from the SAARC countries called for food diversification and restoring biodiversity, or else, they warned, it would be very difficult to stop trafficking and ensure security of the people's livelihood and movement.

Gabindra Sharma, a Nepalese researcher, said, "We have more than 5,000 bio-diversity and food diversification techniques, which are enough to face the aggression of multinational companies for marketing their genetic-engineering technologies in South Asia."

Farhad Mazhar of UBINIG, Bangladesh, who is also one of the organisers and policymakers of the SAARC People's Forum (SPF), said

**Leaders of this region are working in favour of the developed countries ignoring their respective countries' interests and this cannot go on. "The SAARC nations need to work more closely to protect their own interests.**

"Agents of the developed countries in the name of providing food security are trying to market their so-called genetically-engineered seeds."

"They must be stopped, we have a lot of examples that their genetic-engineering technologies and related-inputs did not help the poor. Rather, the poor people become poorer by using such technologies and we are losing the fertility of our land and greens," Farhad told the conference urging for steps to make the people of South Asia aware to start a movement to save their livelihoods.

Highlighting the problems and effects of trade liberalisation, Devinder Sharma, an Indian agronomist, said, "The problems caused by intensive agriculture have aggravated due to the effects of liberalisation. As the focus of agricultural policies shifts to agro-processing, foreign investment and export, the critical connection between agricultural production and access to food has been ignored. At a time when hunger is on the increase, cereals and meat produced by India's most fertile lands

are being used, not to feed its people, but to make pet food and whisky for foreign market". Devindra also pointed out that "the agriculture increasingly becomes industrialised, small farmers are uprooted from their land, and forced into swelling rank of landless labour and the marginalised urban poor."

Analysing the causes of trafficking, Gobindra Sharma displayed a map of Nepal and identified its food deficit areas. "These are the areas from where 4,000 to 5,000 women are trafficked out to various countries, mainly India, every year."

Palli Shree, a Bangladesh NGO, conducted a study on trafficking in 250 village of the country's several northern districts. Quoting statistics from the study, Shamim Ara, the chief executive of the NGO, told a workshop of the SPF conference that women and children from 9 to 30 years of age fall prey to human traffickers as the country's northern region has been a food deficit area."

advantage of it, the Mafia group lures young girls into their traps and smuggle them out of the country," she told the workshop.

Bangladesh is one of the human trafficking-prone countries of this region. "Some 300 thousand Bangladeshi children have been trafficked out to India and coerced into prostitution there," according to a report published by Bangladesh National Lawyers Association in 1998. It said, over the last five year 13, 220 children were trafficked out of the country and of them only 4,700 could be rescued.

Another report published by UNICEF in 1996 showed that 4500 women and children from Bangladesh were smuggled out to Pakistan every year.

According to the speaker, the problems faced by women and

children of this region are more or less the same in nature. Although it's difficult to gather the actual figures of the victims, it's widely believed that the number of the people being smuggled out of the country would be much higher than the reported ones.

Apart from food insecurity, according to Farhad Mazhar, there are more underlying reasons behind such smuggling and of them trade liberalisation and globalisation are prominent. Criticising the governments of this region, he said leaders of the developed countries ignoring their respective countries' interests and this cannot go on. "The SAARC nations need to work more closely to protect their own interests."

News Network



### BCIC Tender Notice

বিদ্যুৎসিঁড়ি পণ্য শিল্পায়নে জাতীয় অগ্রগতির প্রতীক

Managing Director, Bangladesh Insulator & Sanitaryware Factory Limited, Bux Nagar, Mirpur, Dhaka invites sealed tender in two envelope system for supply of 300 MT Lime Stone (Body) against Tender No. 1102. Tender documents will be available from (i) BCIC, 30-31, Dilkusha, Dhaka, (ii) BCIC, 6, Agrabad, Chittagong & (iii) BISF at Tk. 50/-. Tender will be received upto 11:00 AM on 14-02-2001 of BCIC Head Office & BISF and opened immediately thereafter. No tender documents will be sold on the date of opening of tenders.

BCIC-1219-21/1/2001  
DFP-2012-24/1

G-217



### Bangladesh Railway Project Management Organisation Corrigendum to Tender Notice

No-ENC/E/TB-Tender/1-2001(1) Date:21.01.2001

The tender schedule for earth filling in the railway embankment from the own land of railway/from the source of contractors to construct rail link from Tarakandi to Bangabandhu Jamuna Bridge as circulated through the tender notice of this office No-ENC/E/TB-Tender/1-2001 dated 16.1.2001 can also be purchased from the office of the Divisional Commissioner/Dhaka and Chittagong and tender schedule can be submitted in the said two offices.

Other terms and conditions of tender notice will remain unchanged.

Rail/B/12  
DFP-2393-28/1  
G-238

Engineer-in-Chief/Project  
Bangladesh Railway  
Chittagong

## Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh

Office of the Executive Engineer  
Dhaka Public Work Division-2, Dhaka

### Auction Notice

No 72/2000-2001

Sealed quotations are invited from interested candidates for selling in auction the undermentioned infrastructures fell into the layout of the building to be built on the area of Nakhalpara MP Hostel Bhaban and the acquired land to the north side adjacent to Prime Minister's Office to the north side for removing a three storied building for constructing buildings under said project. a) North-west wing, south-west wing, north-east wing, mid wing with north-south stairs; two rooms each on both sides, a total of 4 rooms (three storied building) of Dhaka Nakhalpara MP Hostel Building SR No-30/S-2 dated 23.8.2000 (Group 1). b) Part of members' building fell into the layout for converting part of Nakhalpara Members' Building into community centre (presently being used as the dining, kitchen, Namaj Ghar, residence for superintendent) SR No- 31/S-2 dated 17.9.2000 (Group-2) (c) The three-storied building situated on the land acquired to the northern side of the Prime Minister's Office at Tejgaon in Dhaka Holding No 757 (SR No 5/S-3 dated 13.4.2000 (Group-3). Quotations will be received in the reserved box at the office of the undersigned and Dhaka Public Works Division-1/Metropolitan Public Works Division/Arboriculture Public Works Division/Eden Public Works Division, Dhaka on 13.2.2001 till 12-00 Noon and will be opened the same day at 12-15 PM (before them if anyone remains present). The name of the building to be auctioned will have to be mentioned on the sealed envelope.

- 10 (ten) per cent of the quoted cost as the earnest money in the form of CD, TC, Pay Order or Bank Draft from any scheduled bank in favour of the undersigned will have to be submitted by the participants in the quotation with the tender. Otherwise, quotation will be regarded as rejected.
- Each set of quotation, schedule and other terms and conditions can be purchased on payment of Taka 50/- (fifty) (non-refundable) from the office of the undersigned and the Executive Engineer, Public Works Division-1/3/4/City/Eden Building/Mohakhali/Motijheel/Azimpur/Medical/Sher-e-Bangla Nagar-1/2/3/Mirpur/Savar/Public Works Resources/Maintenance & Arboriculture Public Works Division everyday during office hours till 12.2.2001.
- The building including the infrastructures can be seen before depositing the auction quotation by contacting the Sub-Divisional Engineer of the Public Works Sub-Division-2 under this division till 11.2.2001. No objection regarding this will be acceptable later.
- The authority reserves the power to accept or reject any or all quotations without assigning any reason.
- After 7 (seven) days of getting the approval of the quotation of the highest tenderer, the rest of the 90% (ninety) per cent of the total quoted money in the forms of TC/PO/CT/DD from any scheduled bank of Bangladesh will have to be deposited to the undersigned. Otherwise, the security money will be forfeited. The tenderer will have to remove all materials after demolishing the buildings from the place of work within 45 (forty-five) days of getting the work order.
- The highest tenderers will have to deposit at the rate of 3% (three per cent) as the income tax and the rest 90% (ninety per cent) in the form of TC/PT/DD from any scheduled bank of Bangladesh with the highest quoted cost. Otherwise, the security money will be forfeited.
- The quoted rate will have to be written legibly in figures and words in the specific place of the tender.

Executive Engineer

DFP-2052-24/1  
G-232

Dhaka Public Works Division-2  
Dhaka

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