

Thirty years of Bangladesh-Japan diplomatic relationship



HARUN UR RASHID

des's is US\$386.00 (1999-2000). Japan is one of the technology-advanced countries while Bangladesh is grappling to meet its national shortfall of energy. Japan has surplus of foreign currency and invests in other countries while Bangladesh needs direct foreign investment for its economic growth.

The formal diplomatic relationship between Bangladesh and Japan was established on 10th February in 1972 and the Japanese

fluency.

Even prior to independence in 1971, many businessmen from this part of the world established close relationships with Japanese businesses. Japan's presence was strongly felt in the territory, then known as "East Pakistan". The Japanese Consular Mission in Shantinagar in Dhaka was a great local landmark for the Dhaka peoples. The Mission had been engaged in promoting trade and

Japan took a favourable turn in 1977. A hijacked Japanese airliner landed in Dhaka airport (old Tejgaon airport) in October creating a crisis in Japan. Bangladesh handled the delicate situation very efficiently and Japanese government and its people were visibly impressed by the skilful handling of the situation by Bangladesh. When President Zia visited Japan in 1978, the passengers of the hijacked plane came to meet the President and thanked

have invested in Bangladesh and many Japanese companies have indicated their interest to the Board of Investment in Bangladesh. Japanese companies are reportedly keen to invest in setting up gas-based integrated power and fertiliser plant, power plants, and exploration of oil and gas. Japanese interests will put into practice once reforms in labour market, port infrastructure, road and telecommu-

eases Hospital in Dhaka.

Japan provides grants to many Non-Government Organisations (NGOs) in Bangladesh since 1989 and it is reported that as many as 65 NGOs in Bangladesh received financial assistance amounting to millions of dollars from Japan in projects for alleviation of poverty in the country.

Bangladeshi workers in thousands are being employed in Japan. Japan provides grants and scholarships to Bangladeshi students for higher studies in Japan. Many Bangladeshi are keen to work and study in Japan. Japanese martial art is getting popular in Bangladesh and a few Bangladeshi participated in international competition in martial arts in Japan with some measure of success.

Japan is a major donor country and one stark characteristic is that Japan never interferes in the internal affairs of Bangladesh. Japan is sensitive to the sentiments of Bangladeshi people and hardly shows off its "arrogance of economic power" to the people and government of Bangladesh.

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The frequent visits at the political level between the two countries are a testimony to the existing excellent bilateral ties between the two nations. Each head of the government from Bangladesh paid a visit to Japan starting from Prime Minister Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman who visited Japan in October 1973. It is reported that Prime Minister Khaleda Zia is likely to visit Japan in the near future while she travels to the Far East. Japan is no stranger to Bangladesh's Foreign Minister Morshed Khan who is able to speak Japanese with ease and

contact between people of the two countries. Often there were exhibitions in Dhaka of Japanese decorative art of flower arrangement known as "Ikebana" and people from all backgrounds used to visit and love the show. In Dhaka in the 60s, the restaurant "Sakura" (near Sheraton Hotel) became well known to Dhaka patrons for Japanese cuisine (sushi and tempura). So also were the 'Toyota' cars on the roads in Dhaka and major cities.

Soon after recognition of Bangladesh, Japan sent its special envoy Takashi Hayakawa to assess the needs of the new nation. Japanese experts were the first to submit a feasibility study of the Jamuna Bridge project in May 1973. In early 1974, a 50-member Japanese Economic Mission visited Bangladesh and many joint ventures were discussed.

Bangladesh's relations with

Bangladeshi officials and people for safety of their lives. It was an emotional meeting for many of the passengers.

The amount of trade between the two countries varies between US\$500-700 million dollars annually and the balance is in favour of Japan. During 1996-97 trade figures show that Bangladesh's export to Japan was US\$114 million as against import of US\$420 million from Japan. Bangladesh imports from Japan mostly raw materials for industrial use, equipment under development projects and manufactured items while Bangladesh's exports include shrimps, leather, foot-wear, jute products and ready-made garments. Bangladesh tea has lately made inroads into the Japanese market under a new brand name "The Star of Bengal". About 20 Japanese companies

nations and bureaucratic delay in Bangladesh are introduced with tangible effects.

Japanese Bank for International Cooperation (JBIC) is a key player in channelling development assistance to Bangladesh mainly in three components—grant aid, technical cooperation and loans. The total assistance under the three components reportedly stood around US\$2 billion during the period of 1992-97, of which one quarter in agriculture and fisheries, one quarter in social welfare and the rest in education and health care. Meghna bridge was built at the cost of US\$7.9 billion with Japanese assistance. This appears to be the single largest project with Japanese assistance anywhere in the world. Japanese assistance helped to establish the Institute of Cardio-Vascular Diseases and the Rheumatic Dis-

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Barrister Harun ur Rashid is a former Bangladesh Ambassador to the UN, Geneva.

BOTTOM LINE

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Mob killing: A manifest mass aggression?

DR. SYED KAMALUDDIN AHMED

Thappened couple of times in recent days. It is not a new phenomenon. We have seen it happening episodically at different times over last three decades. It is mob killing on the streets, in the broad daylight and in front of hundreds of witnesses. The victims are almost always the snatchers; sometimes caught red handed, sometimes assumptive. Most of the time there was no inquiry or investigation, and there was almost never an arrest or trial for this brutal act of violence. Recently, there is an additional new transformation, that is to burn them alive. There were at least two such incidences over last few weeks. At least on one occasion, the victims were reported to be tied up to the vehicles they used, gas reservoir was opened and they were set on fire. Onlookers were curious, some were overtly happy cursing the dying victims and some were simply silent observers. There were no protests, no effort at least to save their lives nor was there any attempt to inform the law enforcing people. Law enforcers eventually arrived to finish the rest of the job, that is, to take the corpses to the morgues for postmortem examination. Even a nonjudgmental opinion often says that this law enforcing formalities has rather become a ritual, probably more than identifying evidences in favour of filing a case.

The snatchers who are caught red handed have definitely committed a crime and should receive exemplary punishment according to law of the land. I understand that there are different law enforcing agencies and there is learned judiciary. Ideally, the responsibility of deciding upon the extent of crime and its punishment should be left with them. It would be unfair if we do not sympathize with the innocent victims of snatching. Something should be done about it, for snatching is not always a snatching only, the victims are often shaken down to physical assault or even to murder. I

would never blame the mob participants in absolute terms neither have I any intention to critically discuss the dynamics of this street episodes, its consequences or how to prevent it. My effort in this brief note would exclusively be to look at this mob behaviour from a psychosocial perspective.

After those repeated incidents, a very few simple questions may be asked, 'why should it happen at all?', 'what are the causes?'. The commoner explanation of this violent behaviour is that it is the utter frustration emerging out of ineffective law enforcement, prolonged adjudication process and absence of any visible preventive action in favour of peace loving people. While this understanding is based on factual perception, from psychosocial point of view, the answers may not be that very simple. The underlying dynamics of mob behaviour, the initiating and facilitating factors, the reinforcers, human behavioural correlates and threshold measure of a particular stimulus all must be addressed with equal emphasis. One may call this particular mob behaviour an impulsive protest, a mob violence, an approved anarchy or a consequence of group or community frustration. In a simpler term, the psychosocial professionals may like to call it a manifestation of aggression, to be very specific, that of a mass aggression. Aggression as a behaviour pattern may be very context specific. In one particular circumstance it may be harmless or even may be helpful; in others, it is deleterious. The greater majority never views violent protests against

oppression and injustice, armed struggle for social and economic independence or against imperialistic state attitude as subversive violence. Rather, there is always a unanimity in justifying the causes, and yields in most of the cases may be pro-people.

Mob aggression may be manifested as a combine of similar pattern of individual aggressive behaviour or it may be displayed as expression of diverse human aggressive behaviour in response to a particular stimulus or context at a particular time. The psychosocial definition of the aggressive behaviour does not differ remarkably from that of legal definition. "Behaviour intended to cause physical injury to others" that is how it is defined by most of the psychosocial literatures. The definition is very descriptive again identifying the disparities in a behaviour but aiming at a single short-term consequence of harming others. Elaboration of underlying concepts of this definition reveals two aspects of the behaviour: the function and the process involved. There would be arguments whether behaviours like verbal abuse, social ostracism, oppression in work situation that do not really cause physical harm should be considered as aggression. These behaviours definitely affect self-esteem, social status and happiness of the victims leading to many psychological consequences. Therefore, aggression in a broader interpretation should encompass behaviours that leave possibility of injuring others in any form.

Since the beginning of human

race, men have been exploring their immediate environment to identify their friends and foes. It became necessary in order to find out the potential beneficial and harmful aspects of nature. If the conditions are not conducive to a favourable living, men tend to change it. The mechanism of this change are different according to context and at times, may culminate into an aggressive behaviour. Therefore, the aggressive behaviour is considered to be a phenomenon acquired over time in the course of 'fight for survival' and develops into maturity if it gives beneficial yield in case of their survival and sustenance. Thus this mob behaviour may be a reactive phenomenon in response to a threat, real or perceived, to their effort for survival and sustenance. Snatching may not be as strong a stimulus to incite such a violent reaction. But the crosscutting issues associated with this snatching or extortion like ineffective law enforcement or absence of state level protection, level of poverty, lack of access to deserving facilities and general dissatisfaction over things happening around them may have a cumulative effect that outweighs an expected and usual reaction.

In one psychosocial view, human beings, like other living organisms, possess a fighting instinct, and the aggression to cause physical injury to others originates from this instinctual drive. This instinct becomes functional in presence of a relevant stimulus of sufficient strength. Therefore, mob violence may be a cumulative instinctual drive stimulated by existing non-reaction to a visible crime. The drive is further strengthened by aggression expressed by some other members of the mob and a phenomenon like 'snowballing of commission' or 'simulation of models' happens. Participants at that moment may not understand the consequences or benefit they may have out of their action. In this view, the aggression is an inevitable phenomenon; it only need a stimulus of sufficient intensity to become manifested.

Aggression sometimes emerges from external circumstances that result into frustration, shame, pain and repression. These conditions may cause enough motivation to inflict injury to the people responsible for such conditions. In this view, the aggression may not be inevitable, but a given situation may lead to its expression depending on the character and intensity of the situation. Snatching may not be as strong a stimulus to incite such a violent reaction. But the crosscutting issues associated with this snatching or extortion like ineffective law enforcement or absence of state level protection, level of poverty, lack of access to deserving facilities and general dissatisfaction over things happening around them may have a cumulative effect that outweighs an expected and usual reaction.

Aggression may be a social learning, so may be the mass aggression. In general, the learning becomes well ingrained if it is properly rewarded. According to the understanding of learning, aggression may not be a built-in component of human behaviour, rather it may be a usual consequence of a social situation where such a behaviour is rewarded or anticipated to be rewarded. Therefore, in this perspective, aggression may be a multi-factorial condition and its expression depends on different or a combination of variables. The nature and intensity of aggression will depend on the nature and intensity of different variables. Here the aggressive behaviour principally rests on at least three factors: past experience, specific circumstances and needs or outcome expected by an individual or a group from their action at that particular moment. If past experiences even though rewarded but could not meet the expectation, the aggressive behaviour may be more intensified or take different shape and course of progression. Burning the snatchers alive, as reported in the media, may be a consequence of this intensified or differently shaped aggressive behaviour.

Aggression, in many circumstances, is accommodative. But group and community aggression is manifested when their essential requirements for a healthy living are compromised. This manifestation again depends on strength or resources available within the group or community to deal with the given circumstances of deprivation. Therefore, it may be said that the mob behaviour we have seen over time may not be a phenomenon generated overnight. May be people tried to accommodate, used up all their resources to deal with the circumstances and all adaptive mechanisms may have been exhausted. This failure to accomplish minimum requirements for a purposeful living may have crossed

their maximum tolerance threshold leading to an apparently seditious and defiant behaviour.

Aggressive behaviour, in general, is not indiscriminately directed. It is directed to a real or perceived threat from an individual or a group. Here in these cases of mob killing, the snatchers may have been perceived as a symbol of all miseries, unhappiness and helplessness. Therefore, stringent enforcement of existing laws against snatching or extortion may have some immediate effect but may not resolve issue of mob violence of this particular kind. It would be relevant to mention some of the issues revealed in psychosocial research if one really wants to address the matter from a prevention perspective. Population overgrowth in a group or community and competition for limited resources, along with other social difficulties, increases the expressive violence among the community members. Inappropriate motivation to establish dominance over others individually and in a group may be manifested by group violence or mass aggression. Aggression is the ultimate mechanism for taking control over valued resources.

There are epidemiological findings suggesting that severe and prolonged poverty is among many causes of individual or group aggression. A motivation to resolve lingering societal problems may have symptomatic expression as violence. Lack or absence of diversified experiences both rewarding and non-beneficial may restrict one's social learning where aggression as a basic instinct may have its own dominance. Deprivation in rights to express and to receive appropriate feedback to one's emotional needs may result in improper emotional catharsis in the guise of aggression. There are many other issues that may have overt or covert relationship with human aggressive behaviour. Now the question is, are not those cross-cutting issues very much in existence in our society at this moment?

Can we ignore all those occurrences of mob killing as isolated incidences or simply as people taking law in their own hands out of frustration? The answer is probably 'no'. This mob killing and societal indifference towards the happening may only be rarer symptoms of a very common disease where causative factors are widespread in the society. It needs a thorough investigation to confirm the possible diagnosis and develop an intervention plan. Then only the social conscience, policy people, implementation experts and majority of consumers of social norms would be able to identify their own role to stop this undesirable group behaviour.

Time and again it is being said that unless port services improve and are made economical, producers of goods and other services cannot produce at competitive costs. Time and again it is being said that that unless port services improve and are made economical, producers of goods and other services cannot produce at competitive costs. To improve the situation, privatization of port services has become essential. To what extent and in what fashion privatization is needed are being discussed. A seminar organized by the Ministry of Shipping on the subject was held on August 20, 2001. Recommendations made in the seminar have not been made public. But time is high to get to work.

In the seminar I asked a paper presenter of CPA whether his administration was agreeable to a scheme of conversion of CPA into a public limited company where the government would hold 51 per cent shares and the public 49 per cent. I also said that his paper describing the areas of private participation had laid such conditions which made CPA the sole decision maker. Earlier the issue was discussed between me and President of Chittagong Chamber of Commerce and Industry when I visited him to interview for a report on my profession. In a situation where CPA lists the areas in which there can be private participation, but organizational structure of CPA remains unaltered, and the key of igniting the engine of privatization remains solely with CPA, no privatization worth its name takes place.

There is nothing to be apprehensive of anything, if CPA is turned into a public limited company where government will hold 51 per cent shares. Sector corporations in this country have some enterprises of this type. The corporations have also enterprises whose shares are fully vested in the government. I found the former group of companies to function better than the other. There has never been any insurmountable difficulty between the two sets of directors in operating the enterprises of the former group, one

O F the two most criticized businesses in which the government is engaged, one is port. In matters of port services, the name of Chittagong Port Authority (CPA) comes first, because 70 per cent of import cargo of Bangladesh land at this port. A few years back World Bank found that servicing a container in this port costs the importer US\$400, whereas the cost was 220 to 240 US dollars in some nearby ports.

There has been so much complaint against the functioning of CPA that the container terminal project proposed by SSA at the mouth of the river Karnaphuli has drawn welcome from some quarters. One will not be surprised if the mood of welcome has also grown in a section of officials of CPA. The section feels that it will get relief from undue and unethical pressures that it undergoes constantly from different quarters. Purchase of a dredger during 1988-1989 and a tug boat in 2001 by CPA, the latter reported in a recent white paper, are examples.

Time and again it is being said that unless port services improve and are made economical, producers of goods and other services cannot produce at competitive costs. Another role-playing ministry did not support the procurement offer. The things that happened in succession were -- the offer lapsed, three of the four existing equipment went out of order, demand for equipment became so acute that Ministry of Shipping asked CPA to allow port users to bring their own equipment for use; users brought their equipment, but for some of them it became a noose around their neck later, because they were not allowed to operate their equipment. Had directors from the public been in the board of CPA, at least the last thing would not have happened.

The proposal of restructuring only one department in CPA, Accounts and Finance, passed by the board and submitted to the government in 1986 was given a burial. Some express mental agony for this. What part of services should go to the private sector and when should be left to be decided by the board of port? What is happening now is playing a game of "hide and seek". To transform the idea of privatization into action, those who want it will have to be at the table where decisions are taken. Otherwise deliberations in seminars will remain wrapped up in seminar paper folder only.

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Dr. Rubaiul Murshed

All health information to keep you up to date

Arsenic: Facts and figures

Bangladesh is experiencing the largest mass poisoning of a population in history. The scale of this environmental disaster is greater than any seen before. It is beyond the accidents at Bhopal, in 1984, and Chernobyl in 1986.

Statistics:
The ground water, the main source of drinking water in Bangladesh at present, is contaminated by naturally occurring arsenic in 59 out of Bangladesh's 64 districts and an estimated 24 million out of the country's 127 million people are affected. 2.8/1000 people self reported having arsenic related similar skin lesions. Nowhere in the world has ground water consumption exposed such a large proportion of the population to a potential health hazard.

History of discovery in Bangladesh:
* Problem of high levels of arsenic was first detected in 1993. In Chapainawabganj district following reports of contamination in the adjacent districts of West Bengal, India.

* In WB, first reports published in 1983, and by 1988 massive contamination was confirmed.

Arsenic around the world:
There are examples of geologic arsenic contamination in other parts of the world, Argentina, Chile, China, India, Mexico, Thailand, the USA, but they are relatively site-specific and affect a limited number of people.

Character of arsenic:
Arsenic is a metalloid chemical having both metallic and non-metallic (semi-metallic) characteristics. Manifestations range from skin lesions to cancers. To date in Bangladesh, the emphasis has been on skin manifestations, however, there is emerging literature to suggest that other systems are being affected.

At present:
There is no well-defined and unanimously accepted clinical criterion for diagnosing arsenicosis in Bangladesh. There are also social and cultural factors that cause hindrance to detection and management of arsenicosis.

Practiced at this moment in Bangladesh:</