

BOTTOM LINE

# APEC Summit: Making Russia's presence felt



BARRISTER  
HARUN UR RASHID

RUSSIA, which hosts its first annual Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) summit on September 8-9 in Vladivostok, is seeking to assert its presence in the fast-growing region of Asia-Pacific during troubled European economic times. To host the event, Russia has reportedly invested about \$20 billion in building two bridges spanning the Vladivostok port, an airport terminal and a new airport rail link.

To be a member of APEC a country must be in Asia and share borders with the Pacific directly or indirectly through sea, such as Indonesia, Malaysia and Singapore via Malacca Straits and Thailand through the Gulf of Thailand. As of now, APEC has 21 members.

APEC countries represent 55% of world's GDP and 40% of world's population. Five of the world's six biggest standing armies and four of the world's eight declared nuclear powers cluster around the table. Furthermore, around the APEC table are also six of the world's ten biggest carbon-emitting countries.

APEC Forum was an initiative of Australia's Labour Prime Minister Bob Hawke in 1989, in which 12 countries participated. His successor Paul Keating elevated it to summit level in agreement with President Clinton, and the first summit was held in 1993. It meets every year.

APEC was founded on economic cooperation and not on the basis of

nation-state, which is why Taiwan and Hong Kong are members. There is a moratorium on new members but some countries including Australia want to get India as a member. Some countries oppose India's entry because India cannot claim to be a Pacific country given its geography.

APEC provides an opportunity for Asia Pacific leaders to meet with each other beyond bilateral visits. This year, because of US presidential election in November, President Obama is not scheduled to attend.

Its main agenda is trade and economic cooperation and includes secu-

monic interests," said Gennady Ovechko, Russia's envoy to APEC.

Key members of APEC include China, with whom Russia has built close relations, and Japan with whom Russia is embroiled in a territorial dispute (Kuril Islands). But the Kremlin is hoping for major economic gains by playing a bigger regional role.

Other issues may dominate the deliberations of the Summit. The first is how to handle China's assertiveness in the region, which has been a major concern to many of its neighbours. Currently, the US, Japan and Australia have a security alliance.

Beijing visit is to calm down the concerns of China because of robust strategic presence of the US. During her Pacific Islands trip, Hillary Clinton is quoted to have said that the South Pacific was big enough for both the United States and China.

Analysts say both countries could play a role in contributing to stability and prosperity -- rather than conflict -- in the resource and trade-rich Asia Pacific region. Some strategists suggest that a new forum consisting of the US and representatives from countries of East Asia and North Asia could be set up for addressing the central issues affecting regional security and economic cooperation

Furthermore, APEC is an economic forum where India is missing. That is why two other forums in the region have cropped up. One is the Asean +3 (Japan, China and South Korea) group and the other is East Asia Summit with Asean + 6 (Japan, China, South Korea, Australia, New Zealand, and India). In 2010, the East Asia Summit invited the US and Russia to join the group.

Russian territory extends from Baltic Sea to the Pacific Ocean, and Russia claims to be both a European and an Asia-Pacific power. "Holding the summit in Vladivostok is a symbolic choice," said Dmitry Trenin of the Carnegie Moscow Centre. "It's a sign not just of a desire to increase the quality of life on Russia's eastern borders but also a desire to consider its eastern territory as an interface between Asia, the Pacific and Russia."

The writer is a former Bangladesh Ambassador to the UN, Geneva.

*"Holding the summit in Vladivostok is a symbolic choice," said Dmitry Trenin of the Carnegie Moscow Centre. "It's a sign not just of a desire to increase the quality of life on Russia's eastern borders but also a desire to consider its eastern territory as an interface between Asia, the Pacific and Russia."*

ity, climate change and energy. Since 9/11, counter-terrorism also has become an important agenda item. Business leaders of the member countries discussed major global and regional issues and recommended plans for action to the political leaders on September 2.

Russia is looking to diversify its exports of natural resources at a time when the expanding Asian economies are hungry for oil and gas imports. "Russia's share in total regional (Asia-Pacific) trade is around one percent. Clearly this neither corresponds to Russia's political profile nor its eco-

The second issue is how to turn China's entry into the strategic environment of Asia Pacific into a positive factor. Some commentators state that the US should have a regional security policy through which China may contribute to security and stability in the Asia Pacific region.

In her meetings in Beijing on September 4 with senior Chinese officials, including President Hu Jintao, although the US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton reportedly raised issues of competing territorial claims in the South China Sea, analysts suggest that the over-arching reason for Clinton's

**Dr. Badiul Alam Majumder, General Secretary, Sushashoner Jonno Nagorik (Sujan) and Mahmudur Rahman Manna, former Organising Secretary of Awami League and Co-founding Convener of Nagarik Oikya, give their instant reactions to the The Daily Star on the BNP Chief Whip's comment on BNP's not attending Parliament.**

## 'It is a ridiculous statement'

BADIUL ALAM MAJUMDER

This is a ridiculous statement. They are elected to represent the people in the parliament. They are committed to the people to do so. Now, they are violating their constitutional obligation by not attending the parliamentary activities. There can be no excuse for their not being in the parliament. The parliamentarians must perform their responsibilities.

They should place their demand of caretaker government in the parliament. Every issue they are fighting for in the street, every issue they are raising to the media or to foreign embassies, like law and order situation, government repression, price hike, corruption, unstable situation in educational institutions and so on, should be raised in the parliament because parliament is the forum where all the parliamentarians should be equally treated. They have the right to protest in the streets but attending parliament is their obligation.

I must tell you that Awami League did the same thing in the past that BNP is trying to do now. This culture has been created for a long time. It must be changed.



## 'He has confused us'

MAHMUDUR RAHMAN MANNA

The opposition chief whip has confused us with the demand for caretaker government because BNP has been demanding a neutral government during the interim period. There cannot be a caretaker government like before as the justices of the Supreme Court are unwilling to be involved in it. BNP should lay out their framework of interim government, and then there can be discussion on that.

Civil society and concerned citizens have been asking for participation of opposition parties in the parliament for long time. There are many public issues, like Hall-Mark scam, electricity price hike, etc. that should be addressed in the parliament. But we do not see opposition party there. They have failed to represent the people in the parliament, which is why they are not getting support from the people.

Strong opposition means that government will consistently take them into consideration in any decision making for their public support. I think BNP should attend the parliament and raise their demands there, along with their activities out of the parliament.



## The New York Times EXCLUSIVE

# Can Hezbollah survive the fall of Assad?

HANIN GHADDAR

THE Syrian government has tried many times to transfer its crisis to Lebanon, but it has failed to cause a real explosion that would lead to another Lebanese civil war. It has, however, succeeded in inciting small outbreaks of violence that have pushed the country to the verge of a breakdown for the past 17 months.

Clashes in the northern Lebanese city of Tripoli between Sunnis and Alawites have intensified in recent days -- but this time the Lebanese army intervened to stop the fighting.

Something fundamental has changed: The Shiite militant group Hezbollah, long Syria's powerful proxy in Lebanon, has become a wounded beast. And it is walking a very thin line between protecting its assets and aiding a crumbling regime next door.

It seems that the Lebanese army has finally received political cover, mainly from President Michel Suleiman and Prime Minister Najib Mikati, to confront Hezbollah and its allies and to put an end to the violence. Recently, 18 armed men from a family with links to Hezbollah were arrested by the Lebanese army. Two

trucks and a warehouse full of weaponry were confiscated.

This arrest is politically significant. It means that the Lebanese prime minister and president are no longer willing to jeopardise stability in Lebanon by giving Hezbollah full cover, as they have usually done since June 2011, when a Hezbollah-dominated government came to power. Indeed, Syria is losing sway in Lebanon, and Hezbollah no longer exercises the same level of control over state institutions as it once did.

Today, Hezbollah is regarded by the Arab street as an ally of a dictator who is killing his people. Losing regional popularity is one thing, but losing its constituency at home is something Hezbollah cannot tolerate. Parliamentary elections are scheduled for 2013, and Hezbollah prefers not to take any risks. It will do whatever it takes to maintain its control in Lebanon. So will Iran. Iran is doing its utmost to prolong Mr. Assad's rule in Syria, and it would likely do much more to hang on to Lebanon. Tehran can't afford to lose both.

The erosion of Hezbollah's control started with the arrest on August 9 of Bashar Assad's friend and adviser, the former Lebanese information minister

Michel Samaha, in connection with a seizure of explosives that were to be used in northern Lebanon. Lebanese authorities jointly charged him and the Damascus-based Syrian national security chief, Gen. Ali Mamluk, with plotting "terrorist attacks" and the assassination of political and religious figures in Lebanon.

While none of Syria's allies in Lebanon spoke in defense of Samaha, a reaction came from the street a few days later. A Shiite family whose son was abducted in Syria began a wave of random kidnappings of Syrians; rioters blocked the road to the Beirut airport; dozens of Syrians were abducted, and their shops were vandalised.

The political storm that followed Samaha's arrest subsided immediately. Hezbollah did not comment on the arrest, but in a speech following the events, its chief, Sayyed Hassan Nasrallah, told the public that he and his party were incapable of controlling the street, hinting at more chaos to come.

Meanwhile, the Lebanese government, which is still dominated by Hezbollah, has failed to address several basic domestic issues like public services and security. Many communities,

including Shiites in the south and in Beirut's southern suburbs, have taken to the streets in the past few months to protest increasing power outages.

Assad may not yet realise that he is a dead man walking, but Hezbollah does. That does not mean, however, that the party will change its stance on Syria as the Palestinian militant group Hamas has done. If it did, it would lose its supply lines from Iran. So Hezbollah's main objective is to avoid a full explosion before the parliamentary elections. After all, an election victory would allow Hezbollah to maintain its political control over Lebanon democratically, without having to resort to arms. Tehran would also prefer to avoid any war that would force Hezbollah to get involved -- namely, a war with Israel. That could lead to the party's losing both its weapons and its supporters.

Hezbollah has an interest in keeping the violence at a simmer for the moment, but the longer Assad stays, the greater the risk that sectarian tensions will boil over in Lebanon.

The writer is the editor of NOW Lebanon.

©New York Times. Distributed by the New York Times Syndicate.

## IN MEMORIAM NATIONAL PROFESSOR MOHAMMAD IBRAHIM: A believer in change

MUHAMMAD ABDUL MAZID

NATIONAL  
Professor  
Mohammad  
Ibrahim (1911-1989)

was a celebrated physician, a gifted teacher, a talented organiser and a great reformer. His contributions in the field of medicine in general and diabetes in particular have been nothing less than phenomenal. He spent the major part of his life in government health services in key positions.

Dr. Ibrahim was the founder of Diabetic Association in Dhaka (1956) and in Karachi and Lahore, West Pakistan (1964). He realised that diabetes is a disease where not only doctors but also patients should be involved in the treatment. He termed it socio-medical care. Although the real extent of the problem of diabetes was not evident in our part of the world, he could foresee the present picture at that time and organised a group of social workers, philanthropists and professionals. With their help he established Diabetic Association of Pakistan on February 28, 1956.

Diabetic care was started in a tin-shed building at Segun Bagicha with only 23 patients. Dr. Ibrahim's motto was "No diabetic patient should die untreated, unfed or unemployed even if she/he is poor." So, he gave primary care to the diabetic patients free of cost. Even rich patients were not allowed to pay for primary diabetic care, but they could donate money to the Association. The funds were raised through motivation programmes.

He established the Bangladesh Institute of Research and Rehabilitation in Diabetes, Endocrine and Metabolic Disorders (Birdem) at Dhaka in 1980, where the out-patients centre of the Bangladesh Diabetic Association was shifted to. The institute is housed in two large buildings, named the Ibrahim Memorial Diabetes Centre after his death in 1989. To develop trained and specialised manpower, he also established an Academy in Birdem for postgraduate education in diabetes, endocrine and metabolism.

Birdem has been acclaimed as a model for South East Asia. In recognition of its innovative, extensive and high quality service it was designated in 1982 as a "WHO-Collaborating Centre for Developing Community-oriented Programmes for Prevention and Control of Diabetes." It is the first such centre in Asia.

Dr. Ibrahim was aware of the quality of the service provided to the patients. He used to tell patients: "We are grateful to you for giving us the opportunity to serve." Deep empathy and compassion were characteristics of his dealing with patients, especially those who were poor and in pain. He also motivated other doctors to serve the patients with empathy. He included social welfare, health education, nutritional education and rehabilitation in the diabetes healthcare delivery system. He always believed that an institution achieves its goal and excellence neither by bricks and mortar, nor by machine or metal, but by its human resources. He spent all his life in developing talented human resources.

For over three decades, Dr. Ibrahim raised awareness about diabetes through free-of-cost quality services, health education, and motivation. He also established the Bangladesh Institute of Research and Training for Applied Nutrition (BIRTAN) and Rehabilitation and Vocational Training Centre (RVTC) in Dhaka to develop low-cost nutrition, and to give vocational training to poor and unemployed diabetics.

He also set up a family planning section at Birdem for motivational work. His involvement began as a founder member of the Family Planning Association of Bangladesh, which first started its programme in the mid-fifties. He made an impact as the adviser to the president, with the rank of minister in-charge of the Ministry of Health and Population Control, Social Welfare in the mid-1970's. He was instrumental in formulating the population control policy of the government for the first time and introduced the National Population Council.

Following the guidance and philosophy of its founder the Diabetic Association of Bangladesh has upheld its motto that in Bangladesh no diabetic should die untreated or unfed, even if he/she was poor, and that all people shall be provided with affordable health care service. The Association has set some targets and objectives as its mission. These include, inter alia, providing total healthcare including prevention, control and rehabilitation for all diabetics through different institutions of the Association; expanding these services to provide affordable BADAS healthcare through self-sustaining centres of excellence; developing human resources; creating specialized, quality manpower (physicians, technicians, nurses, etc) of high ethical standards for manning these institutions; developing leadership in healthcare through dedicated and transparent management system; developing industries for diabetic and health foods; and manufacturing medicines. Diabetes care centres have been established in and around Dhaka and also all over the country with local entrepreneurs. Now there are 60 branches in district headquarters and 5 sub-affiliated centres at the upazilla level.

Dr. Mohammad Ibrahim died on September 6, 1989. His death anniversary is observed as (Diabetic) Service Day (Sheba Divash) to endorse and honour his great contribution to socio-medicare services.

The writer is Chief Coordinator, Diabetic Association of Bangladesh. E-mail: mazid1273@hotmail.com