

## Boosting FDI inflow

### Infrastructure, financial reforms imperative

IN order to shore up economy, economists and financial experts at a discussion held recently have advised the government to set the task of inviting Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) on a priority basis. Actually, the issue has received a new significance in the changed context of big economies considering Bangladesh as an investment destination. At the same time, the country faces competition from the neighbourhood in terms of attracting FDIs. So, the emphasis has been laid on infrastructure development, cutting back on bureaucratic red-tape and financial sector reform.

But except uttering words of mere assurance, successive governments could not improve the investment climate by developing communications and power infrastructures with a matching supportive policy regime. Especially, bureaucratic tardiness, pervasive corruption and above all political unrest have worked to dampen the would-be investors' spirit effectively.

The government can ill-afford to let such a trend continue. It must get its act together and create conditions for foreign investors to choose Bangladesh as a lucrative investment destination.

As recommended by experts, as a precondition for attracting FDI, local investment must be boosted. At the same time, special economic zones have to be set up within the shortest possible time. For the purpose, it would be necessary to empower Board of Investment (BoI) so that prospective investors can bank on its service bereft of time-wasting bureaucratic tangle. Financial reform, especially, in the banking sector, have also to be carried out in tandem with the measures to facilitate investment, both local and foreign.

## Bangladeshis pay more

### Set guidelines for charges

WHY must Bangladeshi expatriate workers pay through the nose to secure foreign jobs? That is what the latest study by Refugee and Migratory Movements Research Unit (RMMRU) has unveiled. According to the report the average Bangladeshi migrant worker seeking employment in Qatar is paying US\$2,685 to the recruiting agency whilst a Sri Lankan worker pays half that much. This is like highway robbery. The scenario is more or less the same across the board for most international labour destinations for our workers. The fact is that our recruitment industry is largely unregulated and the authorities have little say in the manner in which workers are charged for foreign employment opportunities.

Looking at quality of services rendered by Bangladeshi workers, the study finds that skill levels of our workers are lower than those in major competing countries. Once abroad, Bangladeshi workers are also left at the mercy of employers whilst labour officers of other countries like Sri Lanka provide its workers with a wide range of facilities like protection from exploitation and other assistance.

While we profess our love for our expatriate workers and the precious foreign exchange they remit as a national effort, we do little to honour their sacrifice abroad. That our poor economic migrants are being fleeced is not an acceptable situation. The authorities need to set guidelines for fees and these have to be enforced so that greater numbers of people can avail employment opportunities in international labour destinations. A failure to do so will only be to

## 9/11's dangerous legacy

SHAHRIAR FEROZE

NEVER before the repercussions of a terror had attack inflicted such misery in the history of mankind. No, I am not talking about the victims of World Trade Centre, but about the ones who became prey to America's 'war on terror'. The 9/11 is perhaps the deadliest among all legacies that was intended for creating more global conflicts across the world.

Ask yourself, if you had ever known, heard or come across a disaster that would create and justify a rhetorical war under the 'war on terrorism' banner which is literally dispersed while whose criteria for inclusion is also unclear. It's all the battles under this 'war for terror' flag that has snatched away the lives of peoples at least ten times more than the collective number of who died on that ill-omened day of September. Not surprisingly yet this war is being used for justify unilateral preventive war, human rights abuses and other violations of international law. But the question is for how long will it continue? The question automatically arises since, enough abuse have been already recorded. By no means am I trying to say that terror acts should not be prevented but simply proposing to define this war more clearly than what it's now. Ironically, the war's euphemistic term under the Obama era has changed to 'Overseas Contingency Operation'- a term that is even more obscured.

This war wouldn't have existed if 9/11 hadn't occurred, but think deeply how much of global terrorism this war has actually prevented since its commencement? Little in fact and the truth is: if it was intended to fight terrorism than it had only fought against those terrorists who had conducted terror attacks on US subjects and interests. More to it is that this US-style Jihad on terror wouldn't have initiated even if a million had died on a terror attack in another country.

Against the backdrop of current reality, there are enough reasons for saying that the abuse of this war has actually become a prime reason for fundamentalists and fanatics for carrying out even more intensified acts of horror. With Over 6,000 US soldiers killed in wars in Afghanistan and Iraq followed by a damaging over-reaction is America really winning the war it was meant for? Domestically it may have winning but on a global perspective it allowed the Taliban to regroup in Afghanistan that has strengthened Al-Qaida's positions even further. And evidently the US military's unbeatable trademark has also vanished by the success with which rag-tag groups of guerrillas have defied and aggravated it in some parts of Afghanistan and middle-east.

The bottom line is we aside the all Americans condemn and mourn for what had happened on 11 September, but the legacy of a vicious continual warfare born out of it must come to an end; its struggle against terrorism must be re-defined.

The writer is Current Affairs Analyst, The Daily Star.  
E-mail: shahriarferoze@gmail.com

# Enlarging terrorist footprints in South Asia

STRATEGICALLY  
SPEAKING



Brig Gen  
SHAHEDUL ANAM KHAN  
ndc, psc (Retd)

ZAWAHIRI has got the alarm bells ringing in the region with his latest announcement expressing his intention to set up base in India of his terrorist organisation. And if reports regarding the IS' attempt seeking inroads into South Asia are true, then the South Asian countries, particularly Bangladesh, are looking at a very real threat to the region that has felt only the tremor and not the blast of full grown terrorism, the kind of which some parts of the world has witnessed, particularly after 9/11, and are still enduring.

It is after substantial gap that Al-Qaeda has made any comment on its future plans, to enlarge its focus and direct it towards the subcontinent. His comments are interesting and raise several questions. One should be as much interested to learn about the purpose of the public articulation of the terror group's future projects as much as the compulsions behind the expressed plan --- of turning its gaze towards the other countries of South Asia. Why would a terrorist organisation expose its operational strategy when doing so would only allow the targeted countries to take countermeasures and thus defeat its objective? And this is where we should start our inquiry into the whys and wherefores of Zawahiri's announcement.

Al-Qaeda is a composite of many subgroups of affiliates that have, in some cases, broken off from the main body for several reasons. One being that it was becoming increasingly difficult to maintain adequate and effective control and command of the affiliates that are spread over more than 30 locations in several regions of the world. Another being the falling out of some of its affiliates with the Al-Qaeda core group due to regional and local compulsions and clash of interests, as is the case with the Islamic State (IS) which has detached itself from Al-Qaeda and is now operating independently in Syria and Iraq.

So what should one make of the recent Zawahiri announcement? There is logic in the initial comments of the Al-Qaeda watchers who felt that the move was to reinvigorate the core group and in particular replenish the void left by the departure of many of its rank and file who had chosen to join the splinter groups. But it is also because the terrorist group wanted to reassert its presence to the international community. Admittedly, although it still presents

significant threat to US interest, Al-Qaeda's activities had been dwindling over the last several years, more so after the IS broke away from Al-Qaeda in Iraq in 2013. According to an expert writing in The Guardian in August 2013, "Al Qaeda leadership is a shattered remnant, reduced to begging funds and munitions from local allies and with its most capable members heading to Syria. But western analysts say the group retains the ability to regenerate quickly and dangerously and its ideology remains a potent threat around the world, as the closure of US embassies across the Middle East this week shows." Its recent announcement, given the reaction in Delhi and Dhaka, bears out this statement.

It is pertinent to ask if the establishments in these two countries have gone into an overdrive with their reactions after the Zawahiri broadcast. For good reason the reactions in Delhi and Dhaka have been different. Predictably India went into a state of alert at national level, and that which perhaps helped nab four IS contacts in India while they were crossing over into Bangladesh. However, by generating the type of reaction in these two countries, particularly the media reaction in Bangladesh, the Al-Qaeda has achieved its first objective

- a very wide publicity and attention. The question is how will the terrorist group implement its plan in the rest of South Asia, its presence being already there in Afghanistan and Pakistan?

One should point out that the problem evolving from the announcement for India and Bangladesh are very different. In India their target is the minority which the Al-Qaeda feels is in distress. It is to the majority in Bangladesh that the terrorist organisation has addressed its message. Our approach to the issue would therefore be differently nuanced.

It would be erroneous to think that Zawahiri's pronouncements portend a cataclysm for us in the near future. But there is a proviso - to thwart Al-Qaeda advances inside our territory there must be an absence of such condition as could be exploited by Al-Qaeda.

What the intelligence agencies in our country should be looking for now is to assess the likely ways Al-Qaeda might operationalise its newly announced plan. I am inclined to think that it would not consider undertaking any action that would disturb the generally peaceful situation in Bangladesh. But whatever way Al-Qaeda may chose as a means of ingress into this country their success would depend on the degree of local support and sympathy. It is the level of support and the sympathy for this group is what the agencies must unearth.

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## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

letters@thedailystar.net

### Traffic rule violation by the powerful

Thanks for the excellent front page report and photos published in your esteemed newspaper on September 2, 2014. I wish the influential people



PHOTO: RASHED SHUMON

violating the traffic rules read this. I wonder how an army vehicle takes the wrong side of the road just to avoid traffic jam. Can any civilian dare to drive in the wrong side in the cantonment area? The same can be said about our political leaders who give a damn about the traffic rules and get away with police protection. Even the buses carrying university students (mostly DU and JnU) very often use wrong sides to avoid jam. These things happen before the eyes of the traffic police, but they can't do anything as the violators are so powerful.

These shameless influentials should be ashamed of themselves.

Shafiqul Karim  
Dhaka

### Raising awareness against drowning

Bangladesh is a land of rivers and ponds and so deaths by drowning are very common in rural areas. The victims are mostly children and this happens as they are left unattended. This can be prevented if people become aware and keep toddlers away from water. The local schoolteachers can be given the duty to make village people aware of this. Raising awareness can gradually reduce the number of deaths by drowning.

Shafkat Rahman  
BIAM Laboratory School  
Dhaka

### No streetlight near National Heart Institute

As I was passing through the area at night, I was surprised to see there was no light at the entry gate of the National Heart Institute, Shyamoli, Dhaka. Imagine a panic-gripped person with chest pain reaching the gate of National Heart Institute in the middle of the night. He may have a real heart attack if he encounters snatchers at the hospital gate, as the area remains totally dark at night. This is very likely to happen in Dhaka at midnight. Can't our government arrange streetlight for these areas including the gate of one of the most important hospitals of the country?

Khandaker Zia Hasan  
Special Correspondent  
Weekly Jogajog Canada

### Comments on news report, "Dhaka quits UN race for Tokyo," published on September 7, 2014

#### Adnan Samdani

As someone who was privileged to be there in New York in 1998 when we won our UNSC seat for the second time, I was so looking forward to Bangladesh's third time opportunity of getting UNSC seat. Now, I know for sure I won't get this opportunity during my lifetime. To make it more painful, Bangladesh's decision to withdraw came without a word of discussion, neither was the public consulted. We never knew a decision like this was taken with even minimal of consultation with the ministry of foreign affairs. No summary ever was prepared or placed before the cabinet.

For last ten years Bangladesh accumulated a good number of reciprocal support arrangement securing support from countries like Australia and a good many others. Second, it is Bangladesh's rightful turn in the Asian group. We are competing, after 15 years, only for the second time, while Japan is competing for the 11th. Bangladesh is sure to get support of China, as opposed to Japan, and thereby, through Chinese help, would have secured the support of most, if not all, of African countries.

#### Moazzem Hossain

A very good diplomatic move by Bangladesh.

#### Adnan Samdani

Really...how? What did we get? Just tell me a dollar worth that we got during this visit. Japanese PM just reiterated what they were saying for last one year. Has Japanese PM offered us to build a bridge over Padma or Meghna or a new port or even a culvert? Has he offered to take source workforce that Japan would need in thousands to build infrastructure as they prepare for Tokyo Olympic 2020? Could anyone cite a precedent where a sovereign state voluntarily gave up their contest in UNSC ever?

#### Dev Saha

Under the circumstances Bangladesh did the right thing. We quit the race and chose aid, investment and technologies from the third largest economy. This is a win-win deal for both countries.