

# Why climate change mitigation matters for Bangladesh

## POLITICS OF CLIMATE CHANGE



SALEEMUL HUQ

**B**ANGLADESH'S leaders and people are perhaps amongst the most aware about the problems and risks of human induced climate change. The prime minister and many ministers are well aware of the dangers of climate change to Bangladesh, and all ministries are now taking actions to tackle climate change impacts in their own ways. This is equally true for our parliamentarians, our research community as well as NGOs, and certainly for the media. Perhaps the main stakeholder group that has not taken much interest, so far, is the private sector. Indeed, Bangladesh has not one but two major climate change funds that have already disbursed around half a billion US Dollars towards tackling climate change around the country.

This awareness of climate change is largely because of Bangladesh's vulnerability to climate change. Most of the actions have been undertaken to support adaptation measures to manage the risks of adverse impacts due to climate change, with only a few measures to reduce emission of greenhouse gases (GHG) by mitigation. While this has indeed been the correct approach for Bangladesh's actions at home, where adaptation is much more important than mitigation, I will argue here that in a global sense mitigation is in fact far more important than adaptation and further advocate that Bangladesh should redouble its efforts to get a global agreement that enhances mitigation efforts by all countries around the world.

**Synthesis Report of IPCC**  
The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) just recently released the Synthesis Report of its Fifth Assessment, which brings together the messages from Working Groups One (on climate science), Working Group Two (on vulnerability, impacts and adaptation) and Working Group Three (on responses), and completed the set of four reports of the IPCC's Fifth Assessment. The message from the scientific community is loud and clear, that GHG

emissions (and hence also global temperatures) continue to rise and if not brought down considerably will reach nearly 4 degrees Centigrade by the end of the century. This will lead to globally catastrophic levels of adverse climate impacts, to which not just Bangladesh but even the rich world will find hard to adapt.

Hence, the IPCC, quite rightly, advised that emission of GHGs needs to be phased out completely by the end of this century, if we wish to keep global temperature rise below 2 degrees Centigrade.

**Mitigation versus adaptation**  
The reason for this is that the lags in the global atmospheric and ocean systems mean that emission of GHG -- for example by burning fossil fuels like coal, petrol and natural gas -- into the atmosphere today will not actually cause the atmosphere to warm for

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many years. Hence, there is already almost 1 degree of global warming coming over the next two decades due to past emissions of GHGs, and is now inevitable and unavoidable. What is still avoidable are even larger temperature rises, which can be prevented only by mitigation in the longer term. In other words, while adaptation is necessary and must be done in the short to medium term, there is a limit to what can be achieved by adaptation, as it will never bring down the adverse impacts to zero. Only mitigation can bring down adverse impacts of GHGs to zero. Hence, by not emitting a ton of GHG the adverse impacts of that ton have been effectively brought down to zero. But, with even the most effective adaptation measures, there will always be some residual loss and damage.

Hence, while Bangladesh is right to focus more on

adaptation actions domestically, we also need to make much more efforts to persuade the rest of the world to take stronger mitigation actions than they are doing now.

**Climate change negotiations**  
The main arena where the global talks to combat climate change take place is the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), which is about to hold its 20th Conference of Parties (COP20) in Lima, Peru, in a few weeks time. This is expected to start the final round of talks toward a new globally binding agreement to be reached at COP21 to be held in Paris, France in December 2015. I have argued before that Bangladesh needs to follow the example of many developed as well as developing countries and appoint a full-time high level special climate change envoy to engage in these (and other) global talks in a concerted and strategic manner to ensure that we actually achieve an ambitious agreement in Paris next year. It is vital to Bangladesh's own longer term interests that we do so.

**Planning the future of Bangladesh**  
The government of Bangladesh is currently engaged in preparing its seventh Five Year Plan for the period from 2015 to 2019, and also preparing a one hundred year perspective plan called the Delta Plan with assistance of the Netherlands government. I would argue that while adapting to climate change at home should indeed be the priority in the next five year plan, as far the longer term is concerned it is far more important that the global temperatures be kept to 2 degrees, which requires action by other countries not by Bangladesh at home, (as no amount of adaptation at home will be enough to tackle a global temperature rise of four degrees Centigrade). However, Bangladesh can, and should, play a key role in persuading other countries, both developed as well as developing, to take the mitigation actions that will enable Bangladesh's domestic adaptation actions to be effective in the longer term.

Hence, investment in climate change diplomacy to persuade the rest of the world to take mitigation actions is as much a priority for Bangladesh as adaptation at home.

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# Will police reform programme be effective?

ALBAB AKANDA

**S**HORTLY before his death in 2008, the great historical sociologist Charles Tilly published *Democracy*, a short work synthesising his thoughts on democratic processes. Rereading Tilly and thinking about Bangladesh, I was wondering where Bangladesh is in the democratic scheme of things. There isn't much in our recent history that gives one a sense that we are well on the way to some oasis of democratic well-being. The legacy of a hard-won independence should have been steady progression not only in the economic growth that we are seeing courtesy of the resourcefulness of the Bangladeshi entrepreneur, but also toward a stable state with all of Tilly's elements -- breadth of participation, political equality, protection against state hegemony, and mutually binding consultations between state and citizens. Looking through Tilly's eyes, the state of democracy in Bangladesh is not well.

A few things seem to be detracting from our route to democracy, from recent elections that returned an absolute majority for the current government with half the seats uncontested, boycott by the opposition party, and unsurprisingly low voter turnout to the perception among many that there is a state machinery that works by intimidation and pervasive patronage system.

Citizens assume a right to protection of life, property and general well-being, which translates into having a police force that places trust as its prime operational principle -- a trust that the police will contain lawlessness, defend itself against political machinations, remain a bulwark against corruption, and provide institutional shelter against coercion and exploitation.

How far is that true? Judging from reports that place intimidation and exploitation right at the doorsteps of the Bangladesh Police, there is a fair way to go in re-establishing the spirit of moral and political independence that was so dramatically demonstrated in 1971's Rajarbagh defence. Police are seen by some as susceptible to corruption and political pressure at all levels of responsibility -- that may not change overnight, but democratic processes demand concerted efforts to contain corruption and political machination.

Does the Police Reform Programme (PRP) offer any hope? Despite the considerable funds that are going to Bangladesh Police coffers from donors, reforms continue to be much discussed, committees recommended *ad infinitum*, and reams of documents produced. Reform does not seem to be showing enough progress to build public confidence. The National Crime Prevention and Community Strategy points out that "Police services around the world must have effective relationships with those they serve." And that is the heart of the matter. Bangladesh Police needs to work with communities to fully serve those to whom it must be accountable.

The Bangladesh Police has traditionally worked with blinkered perspective -- respond to crimes, find the criminals, and deliver to the justice system, however that works. Political influence ensures that the "criminals" also include the innocent who don't meet partisan loyalties. There is even a Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) that reportedly takes the approach even further in eliminating criminals and innocents alike.

This needs to change. Aside from providing resources to build a modern professional force, we need a far higher level of responsiveness between police and community. We need a measure of trust, social cohesion and institutional effectiveness that does away with seeking recourse from a political patronage network -- even refocusing Rab, which may be better suited to continue its counter-terrorism role than taking on crime in general. Some time ago, senior management of the PRP noted that "people perceive the police as agents of the party in power and not of the State." Given the number of crime and violence -- incidents in which members of the current ruling party are alleged to have been involved, that perception remains -- a perception reinforced by such studies as that of the Asia Foundation, which in 2013 noted that there was no significant change in the perception that conflict, violence, insecurity and repression of civil liberties, including extra-judicial killings, still represented major issues for citizens.

The donors have stepped in with much-needed funds for police reform, reportedly over \$16 million disbursed thus far.

Accountability is the other side of the coin in the trust construct. The Bangladesh Police is inherently authoritarian, and with the cautious blessings of the political state, sees itself immune from accountability to the community -- there is even greater lack of accountability in Rab. We have some 11 Model Thanas, refurbished now. How well do they do on the community responsiveness front? Not too well, it seems, as some of the "Models" have been accused of criminality themselves. A recent Dhaka University study says that "the level of users' satisfaction with police services is highly satisfactory ... [and] ... most police officers are probably not corrupt" (curiously, all the interviews were at the police stations).

Transparency International has reaffirmed its finding that law enforcement remains as a corrupt sector in Bangladesh's public administration. As we continue to provide sorely-needed resources to Bangladesh Police, we also need to establish accountability, create transparency, depoliticise the system, and instil a far greater sense of community in the institution. Integrity, public trust, community, and shared commitment -- those are the democratic elements that must be the driving goals for the PRP.

The writer is a former employee of Asian Development Bank.

# US midterm elections: Rout of the Democrats

ZIAUDDIN CHOUDHURY

**T**HE midterm US elections have yielded results that were largely anticipated, but not as devastating as they turned out to be for the Democrats. They have lost their hold on the Senate by losing seven seats (the House of Representatives was already under Republican control), taking Republican controlled states to thirty two out of fifty. Democrats also lost out to Republican contenders for governors in six states. The results have been so upsetting with so many states turning red (Republican) that it makes the Democratic Party, for now at least, the minority party. Is this upset a referendum on incumbent President Obama and his policies, a repudiation of the Democratic Party by the voters, or an upsurge of conservative politics to trump the so-called moderate policies pursued by the current US administration?

The answer is as complex as the question itself. The mid-term US elections (they are called mid-term as they are held between two presidential elections) are held to elect all 435 members of the House of Representatives, one third of the Senate, about a third of the governors of fifty states and state legislatures, and other local offices. Unlike in a presidential election, where voter choice is limited to one out of two (in rare cases three) candidates from the two major parties, the midterm elections for Congress, governors, and local legislatures are contested by a plethora of candidates, and voter choices are for as many offices.

While much of the contest and choice is from the two major parties, the issues on which the candidates fight for votes vary widely -- from national to local economy, employment, social welfare, health, environment, law and order, and what have

you. Larger national issues and policies do have a great bearing on these elections, but they are conjoined with the individual candidate's appreciation and empathy with local problems. Therefore, although the elections are fought on a party basis, the final choice is on the voters' assessment of the candidates' past performance, contribution to local causes and their capability to deliver in future.

Long before the midterm elections the media and political pundits had been predicting a democratic blowout,

skill in resolving the problem or countering the Congress on this issue.

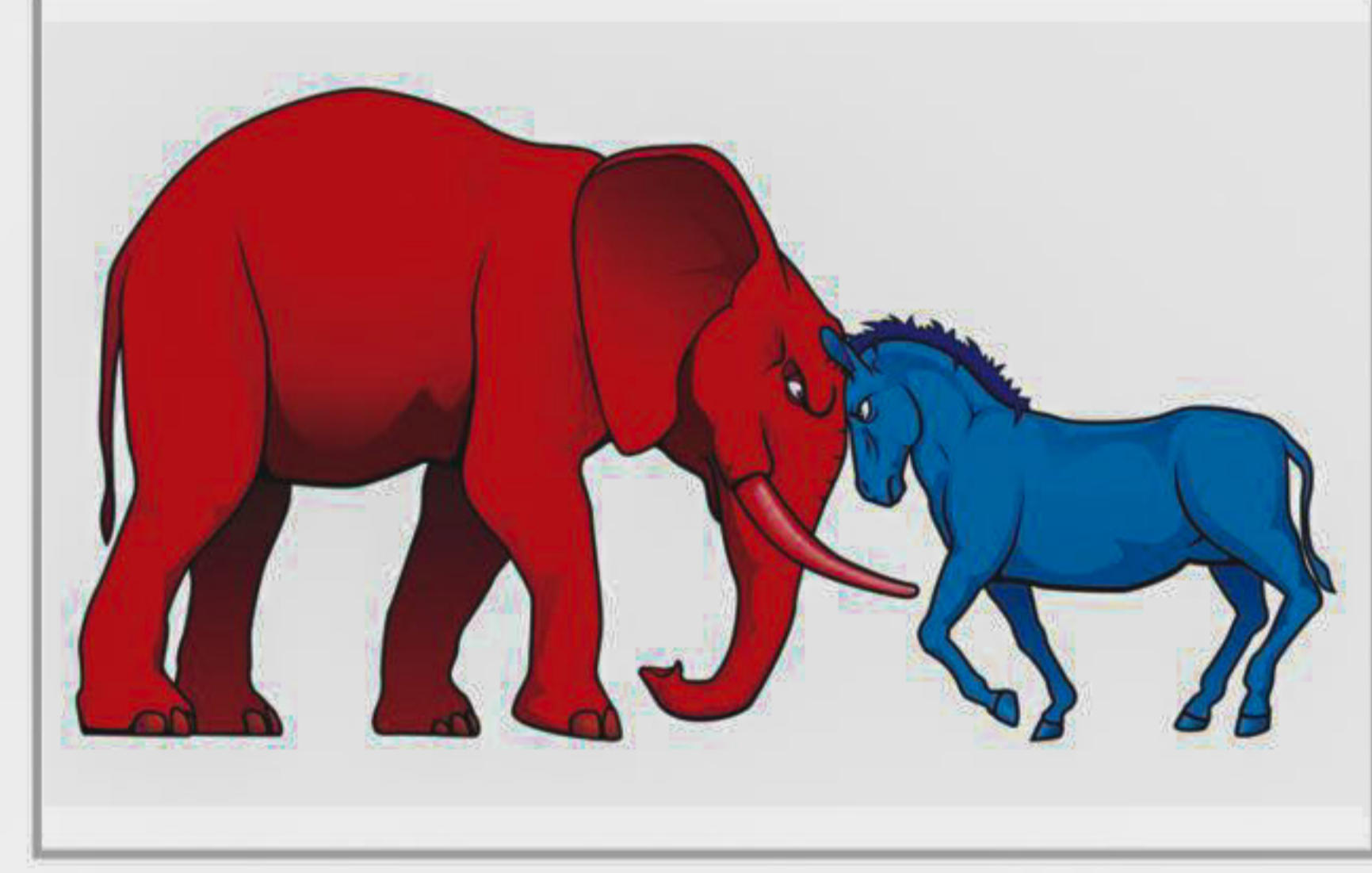
The midterm elections were held against this negative background, much of which the Republicans used to their advantage. However, the election results this year are no more a reflection of voters' dislike of Obama and his policies than their dislike of status quo. Typically, voters have turned against incumbent legislators in the last three midterms. In the early nineties (Clinton period) they turned a Democratic majority into Republican;

about equal to Democrats (both around 36%). So the question is, why this Democratic debacle despite the equality in terms of percentage? One answer is that the overall turnout was 39%, 6% less than 2010, all due to less Democratic Party participation. So why did the Democrats stay away from the elections? Was it because they no longer liked Obama, or because they became cynical about the whole process? It appears the answer lies partly in less than enthusiastic response by the young Democrats, and the Hispanics. Both of these groups, who were largely responsible for Obama's victory in 2008, had become disenchanted. Economy was the major reason for both groups, and the immigration reform debacle for the Hispanics. They abstained from voting, and some of them jumped ship. Otherwise, the debacle for the Democrats could not have happened only with determined Republican awakening.

President Obama, who has been described by some of his critics as too-cool-to-rule, may have to bear some responsibility for this debacle. This may be due to his seemingly less forceful leadership, both domestically and globally. He may not agree, but critics will point towards him as a principal losing factor. Only history will judge what, and if at all, he has to blame for this. But meanwhile, he has to work with a Congress that will not look favourably on him.

There is, however, a ray of hope for the Democrats even in this whitewash of the party. The midterm Democratic loss might be a good thing for the party in the presidential election. If the tradition of the US voters' predilection for one party for the Congress and another party for the White House holds, the Democrats may hope to see one of their own occupy that House in 2016. But one never knows.

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blaming it on Obama's falling popularity, ineffectiveness in global leadership, and failure to bring about a spectacular turn around in the economy. (Ironically, even though the overall economy has grown it has not benefited the bottom of the population, people Obama espoused for in his election.) The much touted health care reform has not been able to placate a good number of people despite its generous subsidies and other benefits. The immigration reform has stalled, disappointing its advocates, and Obama has not shown much tactical

in early 2000 they turned Republican majority into Democratic; and now they have again turned the table. If the anger was only against Obama, voters in six states (including Maryland) would not have brought in a Republican governor, nor would they have brought in seven Republican governors. The voters just wanted to change the incumbents.

There are also other stats that partly explain the Republican success. This mid-term more Republicans voted than in 2010 (by about 6%), although the percentage of Republicans voters was

**QUOTABLE Quote**

*Set your course by the stars, not by the lights of every passing ship.*

Omar N. Bradley

## CROSSWORD by Thomas Joseph

- ACROSS**
- 1 Bean-bearing tree
  - 6 Fragrant wood
  - 11 Potential oak
  - 12 Un-escorted
  - 13 Formal marches
  - 15 Ready to go
  - 16 Period
  - 17 Came together
  - 18 Stately home
  - 20 -"Yippee!"
  - 23 Turn red, maybe
  - 27 Brute
  - 28 Newborn's need
  - 29 Floor models
  - 31 Dome-shaped home
  - 32 Safari sighting
  - 34 Go downhill
  - 37 Pitcher's stat
  - 38 Gehrig or Brock
  - 41 Losing candidates' speeches
  - 44 Concerning
  - 45 Draw out
  - 46 Leases
  - 47 Like some messages
  - DOWN**
  - 1 Toppers
  - 2 Plot unit
  - 3 Eccentric fellow
  - 4 Curved path
  - 5 Eventually
  - 6 Pollux's twin
  - 7 Yale student
  - 8 Downfall
  - 9 Writer Rice
  - 10 Take a breather
  - 14 Heir, at times
  - 18 Power provider
  - 19 Fab four drummer
  - 20 Antique
  - 21 Garden tool
  - 22 Lazy fellow
  - 24 Buddy
  - 25 Punk rock offshot
  - 26 Fresh: Prefix
  - 30 White sale buy
  - 31 "Hold on!"
  - 33 1040 org
  - 34 Wound reminder
  - 35 Japanese beef center
  - 36 A party to
  - 38 Clamorous
  - 39 Formerly
  - 40 Previously owned
  - 42 Director's cry
  - 43 Wedding words

**CRYPTOQUOTE** 9-15  
UJVVTHTB WJT ZAFM SQ ZVF GVF GSFGTAHT VFM DTIATHT. AW GVFVGJATHT.  
- FVOSITSF JAI

**Yesterday's CRYPTOQUOTE:**  
DEFINITENESS OF PURPOSE IS THE STARTING POINT OF ALL ACHIEVEMENT.  
- W. CLEMENT STONE

## Yesterday's answer

T	A	S	K	A	N	E	W		
P	I	N	O	N	B	E	R	E	T
A	N	G	L	E	S	T	R	A	Y
R	E	E	V	E	S	A	L	P	
S	A	L	E	L	E	A	N	T	
E	R	A	L	E	N	G	T	H	
P	E	E	V	E					
G	R	O	O	V	Y	D	E	B	
C	H	E	E	S	E	L	I	V	E
H	O	G	S	I	E	V	E	S	
A	U	G	E	R	A	G	E	N	T
P	L	A	T	O	G	U	S	T	S
S	E	A	T	O	P	T	S		

## BEETLE BAILEY

by Mort Walker

LOOKS LIKE GARGE GETS ROUGH EVEN WHEN HE DANCES

I KNOW

THAT'S WHY I DANCE AT A SAFE DISTANCE

## HENRY

by Don Trachte

WINDOW SHADES

WHIRR-R

**A XYDLBAAXR is LONGFELLOW**  
One letter stands for another. In this sample, A is used for the three L's, X for the two O's, etc. Single letters, apostrophes, the length and formation of the words are all hints. Each day the code letters are different.