

A mutual opportunity

BOTTOM LINE



BARRISTER HARUN UR RASHID

SUJATA Mehta, Indian Ministry of External Affairs Secretary (Multilateral and Economic Relations), is expected to be in Bangladesh from April 5 to 7. Mehta is expected to discuss the ongoing development partnership and economic cooperation with Bangladesh. She is also scheduled to meet different ministers and



Sujata Mehta, Secretary of External Affairs Ministry, India.

hold discussions with Economic Relations Division of Bangladesh as well. The visit has provided an opportunity to focus on a few issues of economic cooperation (and others) such as review of the implementation of projects under Indian supplier's credit and ways to reduce the huge trade deficit of Bangladesh.

Bangladesh is also likely to focus on the status of the second line of credit (LoC) support from India as repeatedly requested by the Foreign Minister of Bangladesh at the joint consultative meeting with this Indian counterpart last year.

After the visit of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina to New Delhi in 2010, cooperative efforts continue from both sides to implement many programmes in economic, social and infrastructure, especially under the supplier's credit of \$1 billion loan to Bangladesh by India (out of which \$200 million was later converted into grants to be used for construction of Padma Bridge).

Bangladesh has reportedly received only \$173.58 million out of the \$800 million Indian Line of Credit (LoC). In the last four and a half years, seven out of fifteen projects were reportedly completed with two more projects nearing completion. Both sides apparently blame each other for the slow process of completion. Bangladesh is not happy at the progress of implementation of the projects, but at one stage Indian authorities had reportedly expressed dissatisfaction over the slow rate of implementation of four projects and had urged the Bangladesh government to expedite the implementation.

According to the progress report, the total cost of implementation of these 15 projects is \$986.95 million, of which \$751.95 million will be allo-

cated from LoC, and \$235.00 million will be funded by the Government of Bangladesh. However, two projects out of the fifteen have been revised and the project costs too have increased. In order to meet the additional cost of the two projects, the total figure of the LoC may exceed \$800 million. In the last LoC Review Meeting held in Dhaka on February 22 of this year, the Indian side assured Bangladesh of extending the ongoing LoC up to \$862 million.

With regard to trade deficit, during 2013-14, Bangladesh imported goods worth \$6.2 billion from India via official channels, while Bangladesh exported goods worth about \$456.63 million (much less than previous years). In addition, unofficial imports from India are reportedly about 1.5 times more than official imports. (Moreover, it has been reported that in 2013, Indians in Bangladesh officially repatriated about \$5 billion to India and continue to do so).

Researchers in both countries have found that Bangladesh has a potential export market of \$2 billion in India. Although India has granted Bangladesh duty free access to all items except tobacco and liquor, there exist several types of state duties that discourage Indian importers to buy goods from Bangladesh. Furthermore, Bangladeshi exporters often face serious problems because of the non-acceptance of

test certificates issued by Bangladesh Laboratory for certain products like soaps, jamdani sarees, and RMG and food products. In the absence of testing facilities in the locality, the samples are sent to far away laboratories (even to Chennai) and such lengthy processes impede the growth of Bangladesh's trade with India.

To reduce the trade gap, researchers have made some suggestions: (a) India should recognise the principle of asymmetry and non-reciprocity in trade with Bangladesh (b) there should be liberal rules of origin (c) removal of para-tariff and non-tariff barriers, and (d) export quality Bangladeshi products should not be in India's negative list. This will hardly dent its \$450 billion import basket in 2013-14.

Furthermore, trade complementarity can be developed by vertical specialisation through production sharing and gradual integration of Bangladesh's economy with that of northeastern states of India. For better business cooperation, India and Bangladesh may sign an Investment Promotion and Protection Agreement and Double Taxation Avoidance Agreement.

It is hoped that given the state of existing bilateral relations, India will take concrete steps to strengthen further economic cooperation with Bangladesh for the mutual benefit of both countries.

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

A moment of introspection for BNP

MOZAMMEL H. KHAN

IN my article for *The Daily Star* (January 27, 2015), titled "War for democracy: For the people or on the people", I concluded with these words: "The BNP-led alliance's war for democracy has turned out to be not for the people but on the people." No matter how one looks at it, it would be unrealistic to disagree that the alliance's so-called movement has not only failed, but has boomeranged. The people of the country have seen many political movements in the past, but never before have they experienced such kind of brutality, in terms of arson attacks by petrol bombs inflicted on the ordinary people. The victims include a two-year old Mariam, an 85-year old Taher Ali and a pregnant Shirin Aktar, who was burnt to death with her unborn child while she was on her way to work on a four-wheeler.

"I only see a bleak future as I belong to a poor family which is run with the little money I earn by driving a truck," lamented Arman, lying on a bed in the Burn and Plastic Surgery Unit of the Dhaka Medical College and Hospital. While talking to reporters, the 45-year-old man said he had two young children and a pregnant wife. "I may pass a day without having any food but what will happen to my children and my pregnant wife?" he demanded. "Leaders of both the major political parties sleep happily in their warm and cosy living rooms but we lose everything and pass our days in pain and suffering. Please, do something to stop such inhuman acts. It is unbearable," says Arman.

Every sensible human soul of the nation will empathise with the sufferings of the countless victims of these attacks, except for the leader under whose leadership the so-called movement is being instigated. People in general, except for a few so-called pro-BNP intellectuals, will have a sigh of relief the moment this so-called movement meets its natural death. The BNP intellectuals, who are still trying to show a brave face by putting the responsibilities squarely on the shoulders of the government, are blind to the realities. A human rights activist, whose organisation inflated the number of casualties in hundreds and thousands during the Hefajat movement, wrote an article for the DS, castigating the death of two opposition activists at the hands of law enforcing authorities. He, however, made no mention about the arson victims whose future will remain the same no matter which political group occupies the helm of the state.

In any pluralistic society, a big political party can never be destroyed and no one should be writing a eulogy for it. When a party faces a serious setback due to its policy, the leadership of the party calls it a day, making room for a new leader to reformulate the policies, to recuperate from the setback and regain lost ground. While Bangladesh cannot claim to be a perfect democracy, it is more so to do with its two major political parties, both of which barely have any democratic practice to elect its leaders. It is more so for the BNP. Although, heredity plays an important role, more or less, in the political arena in every republic of the world, in recent times only two 'democratic' countries publicly declared heirs as the leaders of the state. And they are the Democratic Republic of North Korea and the Democratic Arab Republic of Syria. It is needless to say how 'democratic' those two countries are and what kind of democratic freedom the citizens of the two republics are enjoying.

Bangladesh has been added to those 'democracies' wherein the name of the next Prime Minister was proudly declared by his party. It was the senior vice president of BNP, whose picture hangs along with those of his late father and his living mother in BNP offices around the country. This is an unprecedented phenomenon even in Bangladesh, where two families have been ruling for the majority of the time since the country's inception. Even in England, the picture of the heir to the British throne is never hung beside the picture of the Queen mother.

BNP can only bank on the short memory of the public to make a comeback in the near future, thanks to their current insensitive and violent war on the people. If one looks at the history of nations that liberated themselves from colonial domination, very few had the parallel of such massive support of its people as enjoyed by the liberation movement. However, the basic difference is that the other nations were able to hold on to the values and virtues that worked as the principal guiding force towards achieving freedom, while Bangladesh miserably failed to hold onto them. While the liberation war should have been the rallying point for the unity of the nation, it has become the dividing line between the two political camps.

Yet there are many front ranking leaders of BNP who truly believe in the values on which the nation was created. But they are afraid of falling from grace of the supreme leadership if they openly voice their beliefs. Before joining the BNP or when they quit the party, these members have no qualms to come to terms with the truth of history.

Many of the BNP leaders are capable of leading the party and the nation. It is high time for the BNP protagonists to ponder about the change of leadership not only to help the party to regroup but to create a platform alternative to AL. This would allow the party to join the chorus for the trials of war criminals, an issue that has occupied the centre-fold of the nation's psyche. Thereby, they would be able to disassociate themselves from Jamaat-e-Islam, which has its inseparable, ideological mooring aligned with the current leadership of BNP.

The writer is the Convener of the Canadian Committee for Human Rights and Democracy in Bangladesh.

Unlimited solar electricity from outer space!

ABDUL MATIN

IT is amazing to watch how apparently small scientific inventions of the past turned into multibillion dollar industries later. The first electric light was created by Sir Humphry Davy in 1802 by passing a current through a platinum strip. It did not last long but heralded the beginning of the

Guglielmo Marconi improved it further and patented it in 1897 for commercial purpose. Today, electromagnetic waves are used in radio, television and many other forms of communications including satellite or space communications. Electromagnetic wave based communications constitute one of the largest industries in the world.

The Wright brothers' first flight in a gasoline-powered, propeller-driven

inventions plus many others when I read a recent news piece under the headline: "Wirelessly transmitted electric power in Japan." Japanese researchers have successfully transmitted electric power wirelessly to a pinpoint target using microwaves, an advance technology that brings space-based solar power closer to reality. According to Japan Aerospace Exploration Agency, or Jaxa, the researchers were able to transform 1.8 kilowatts of electric power into microwaves and transmit it with accuracy into a receiver located 55 meters away. In an experiment conducted in Hyogo prefecture in western Japan, the microwaves were successfully converted into direct electrical current. The experiment was the first of its kind in the world to send out high-output microwaves wirelessly to a small target, a Jaxa spokesman said.

This is a major breakthrough, perhaps as exciting and promising as any of the inventions I mentioned above. When exploited commercially, both the amount of energy and the distance of journey will expand exponentially with time. This invention is likely to begin a new era of generation of unlimited electricity in the outer space using solar energy which will be transmitted wirelessly in the form of microwaves to individual houses or load centres on the planet. It is not difficult to visualise innumerable solar power plants in outer space circling the earth in geostationary orbits, about 35,000 kilometres from Earth, and transmitting electrical energy in bulk quantities with pinpoint accuracy and without any impact on the environment. There will be no need to operate fossil

fuel based power plants which have been polluting the environment and causing global warming. Similarly, there will be no need to mar the aesthetics of our countryside with thousands of miles of transmission and distribution lines.

We will need just an antenna or a satellite dish on our roofs to receive the microwaves direct from one of the solar panels in the outer space. We will also need a device for conversion of the microwaves into electrical power to illuminate the houses, to run the air-conditioning systems and to operate the electrical appliances. Since the sun does not set in the outer space, the space-based solar panels will be able to generate electricity without any interruption and without being affected by weather conditions. The plants are likely to have a long operating life and will have no fuel cost and practically no operation and maintenance cost. The main cost will comprise of the initial investment in launching the power plants into space. If it is possible to bring this cost to a reasonable level, the space based solar electricity is likely to be economically competitive with other forms of electricity in course of time.

When it will happen is anybody's guess but researchers at Jaxa "are aiming for practical use in the 2030s." We must remember that scientific and technological developments are taking place at a much faster rate than ever before. No one should, therefore, be surprised if electricity in commercial quantities begins to flow from outer space in a matter of decades!

The writer is a retired nuclear engineer.



Space-based solar power PHOTO: WIKIPEDIA

light bulbs. Indian physicist Jagadish Chandra Bose, born in what is now Bangladesh, first demonstrated the wireless transmission of electromagnetic waves in Kolkata in 1894. It travelled only a few yards through a couple of walls. Bose was least interested in patenting or commercialisation of his invention. He made his invention public for the benefit of humankind. Italian inventor

plane took place near Kitty Hawk, North Carolina, in 1903. It lasted only 12 seconds and covered a distance of 120 feet. Today, a large commercial aircraft can carry over 850 passengers and fly non-stop 15,700 km. On an average, 20,000 commercial planes fly every day and carry an estimated 4 million passengers. This gives an idea about the size of today's aviation industry.

I could not fail to remember their

QUOTABLE Quote

Happiness is not something ready made. It comes from your own actions.

Dalai Lama

CROSSWORD by Thomas Joseph

ACROSS

- Fellow
- Catalan painter
- Misses
- Tidy up
- Omen
- Playing marbles
- Clash
- Vicinity
- Constant yakker
- Omens
- Relay section
- Wed in haste
- In the middle or
- Cut off
- Scary shout
- Seventh Greek letter
- Comic strip worker
- Farm units
- Refinement
- Research site
- Disadvantaged group
- Relaxed
- Toy on a string
- Grands, e.g.
- Gumbo veggie
- Magnitude
- Manipulative one

DOWN

- 11 "You know you want to!"
- 5 Took, as an exam
- 11 Center of activity
- 12 Scalpy pet
- 13 Vicinity
- 14 Constant yakker
- 15 Omens
- 17 Relay section
- 18 Wed in haste
- 22 In the middle or
- 24 Cut off
- 25 Scary shout
- 26 Seventh Greek letter
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- 32 Refinement
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- 43 Gumbo veggie
- 44 Magnitude
- 45 Manipulative one

CRYPTOQUOTE

FVVCKIA NJO YCPKNLF NKF JCI FJCLM DBIMCPI EPKECAF NJO OBKFYIBJ.

-- ZCMJ V. GFJFFOU

Yesterday's Cryptoquote: THE FRAGRANCE OF FLOWERS SPREADS ONLY IN THE DIRECTION OF THE WIND. BUT THE GOODNESS OF A PERSON SPREADS IN ALL DIRECTIONS. -- CHANAKYA

Yesterday's answer

C	O	P	E	S	C	R	A	P	S
A	H	O	Y	T	A	I	P	E	I
R	I	T	E	A	R	D	E	N	T
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T	E	N	E	T	S	T	R	E	X

BEETLE BAILEY by Mort Walker

WHO SENT YOU FLOWERS? THE CARD SAYS, "YOUR SECRET ADMIRER"

BEAUTIFUL FLOWERS! THE TROUBLE IS, KILLER'S THE ADMIRER WHO CAN'T KEEP A SECRET

HENRY by Don Trachte

SHOE REPAIR CLOSED FOR THE DAY DEPOSIT SHOES BELOW