

# The Daily Star

FOUNDER EDITOR  
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DHAKA SUNDAY MAY 31, 2015

## 'External factors' behind human trafficking!

### Denial cannot solve the problem

WE note with incredulity, that an official of the Bangladesh delegation at the 'Special Meeting on Irregular Migration in the Indian Ocean' in Bangkok has remarked that it is not poverty that primarily pushes people to fall into the hands of human traffickers. He alludes to mysterious 'external factors' without elucidating what they might be.

Such remarks make light of the hundreds of men, women and children who we know are economic migrants trying to escape the vicious cycle of poverty in their homeland. Nobody is denying that the country's growth rate has been fairly stable and that state efforts are being made to bring people above the poverty line. But to deny that it is the lack of adequate employment opportunities that drive thousands of our people to try to go to foreign lands in the hope of a better life is unacceptable. A dearth of job opportunities in the villages and farming crops often not paying off, prompts a large number of economic migrants to seek their fortune in foreign countries. The government's direct involvement in the recruitment process, keeping private recruitment agencies out of the picture, has not proved to be very successful. Rather, it has deprived a large number of job seekers from getting decent employment in countries that demand their labour. Most importantly, without accessible legal channels, many simple-minded villagers are lured by the false promises of human traffickers, taking treacherous journeys and ending up stranded in the seas or trapped in slave camps.

The government must abandon the ostrich approach and try to solve the problem by creating more jobs in the villages and allowing for an efficient recruiting system for legal migrants to take advantage of.

## Prioritisation of projects only on paper

### Expedite implementation on the ground

EVERY year's budget speech highlights certain priority areas. Yet we are dismayed to see that over the last six years, prioritised areas have remained largely unimplemented. One of these has been Public-Private Partnership, or PPP, which has only been talked about. The national coal policy has not been finalised over the last six years; law for financial reporting council has not been enacted despite being okayed by the cabinet a year ago. Indeed, going by what has been reported in a leading Bangla daily on May 30, many such other sectors that were supposed to be thrust areas for government action have not been addressed.

The snail's pace work on developing Dhaka's infrastructure including construction of roads, upgrading railway, the various flyovers under various stages of construction, drainage system – all remain in various stages of limbo. While these are the most talked about projects that have got stuck in bureaucratic delays, there are other ventures that have never seen the light of day. For instance, the metro rail project for which international financing has been available for some time now and yet no headway has been made since 2009. None of the special economic zones for foreign investment have been finalised or inaugurated. This year, authorities have finally taken note of the fact that these priority areas have remained unimplemented. The next logical step would be to remove the bottlenecks that perpetuate inaction so that we do not have to revisit another year spent in limbo on projects that can help the country's rapid development.

# US-CHINA-INDIA RELATIONS What it means for Bangladesh

MUHAMMAD AZIZUL HAQUE

ON the world's geopolitical stage, the US and China are the two topmost actors of the 21st century; and India is not trailing very far behind them. The USA is still the world's foremost economic and military power, with interests around the globe and an unmatched global reach. Its GDP accounts for close to a quarter of the world total, and its military budget is reckoned to be almost as much as the rest of the world's defence spending put together. And China, the country that has been a sustained sprinter in the global economic race for the last three decades, surpassed Japan (in February 2011) and became the second largest economy of the world, with much enhanced military might and global clout.

Although still far behind the US, in both economic and military terms, China is eyeing the number one position; and the US is evidently worried by China's speed. On the other hand, India is now a global economic power to be reckoned with, rivaling and competing economically, militarily and in other ways with her big and potentially menacing neighbour China – with whom it has serious territorial disputes and fought a war in 1962. In the international arena, India is continuing to gain more political clout and trying to secure a permanent seat in the UNSC.

In our world where every country is striving to protect, promote and multiply its own interests and influence in the international arena characterised by numerous, intertwining, conflicting and hugely complicated dynamics, the relations between these three major nations are quite expectedly complex and subject to change in regional and global scenarios.

What we discern in the relations of the three countries is two facets of their relationship with one another. One is that of intense and broad-based interaction and cooperation in

matters of trade and commerce, climate change, counter-terrorism, disarmament and non-proliferation, energy, security, education, health, science and technology, etc. for mutual benefit, while the other, which is thinly veiled, is that of intense competition and rivalry for more power and regional and global clout. That explains why the US has shifted its pivot in the Pacific Ocean toward Asia and why it is seen siding with Japan, Vietnam, the Philippines and other countries with whom China is facing ongoing disputes over some islands in the East and South China Seas.

Each of these three countries indispensably needs the other two as development partners. However, the challenge before them is to keep a tight lid on the tensions and disputes and the sense of rivalry between them (particularly between China and the US) and resolve the disputes through peaceful negotiations.

Thanks to the continuous rise of many Asian countries over the last few decades, especially that of China and India, there has been manifold increase in the use of the Indian Ocean shipping lanes and in the strategic importance of the Indian Ocean. It is through the Indian Ocean that China, India and other countries of the Far East, Southeast Asia and South Asia get their supplies of fossil fuel from the Persian Gulf states. So, both China and India are vying with each other for strategic control of the Indian Ocean for their own reasons. And with the containment of China policy in its mind, the US seems to be in the process of shifting a pivot of their defence machinery to the Indian Ocean too. With proper strategic and military control upon the Indian Ocean, it could, if need be, try to choke China's oil supplies from the Persian Gulf and cut off its (China's) growing trade and economic linkages with Africa.

Being aware of such possible anti-China moves by its rivals and enemies under a war situation, China is trying to mend and strengthen its ties with the countries of

Southeast Asia (despite disputes with a few over some islands) and with the strategically located countries on the Indian Ocean Rim and island nations in the Indian Ocean. Besides, China is now vigorously pursuing implementation of the '21st Century Maritime Silk Road' and is trying to simultaneously develop its overland connectivity with the West and Central Asian countries by reviving the ancient Silk Roads (new Silk Road Economic Belt) in order to curtail its dependence on ocean routes.

As a consequence of the above, Bangladesh's geopolitical significance has substantially increased in recent times for China, India as well as for the US. Against that backdrop, we are witnessing increased interest of these countries to expand and deepen their bilateral relations with Bangladesh. All the three countries are very important development partners of Bangladesh and she highly values her relationship with each of them. While Bangladesh should continue to further bolster its cooperative relations with each of them for mutual benefit, she should gingerly balance her ties with them and avert entering the geopolitical orbit of any of them, in order to avoid undermining her relations with either of the other two as well as to be sure she is not getting unnecessarily embroiled in others' disputes and rivalry.

Bangladesh should build up its bilateral ties with China, India and the US from a non-aligned standpoint and in such a way so that her relations with each of these countries prove significantly beneficial to her and they find in Bangladesh a useful partner-in-development. By casting her dices with tact and acumen and keeping her national interests above all internal domestic political divisiveness, Bangladesh can make use of the commonality of those countries' good relations with and goodwill for her to her advantage.

The writer is a former Ambassador and Secretary.

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# The Fourth Industrial Revolution

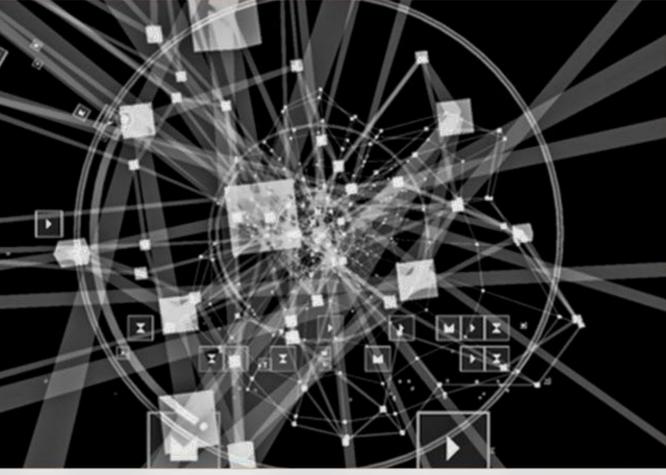
MOHAMMED MUNIRUZAMAN

IMAGINE a typical day's workload – morning starts with having breakfast, transporting ourselves to work, checking our mail, making decisions mostly in the corporate world on the basis of information surfed from the internet and other embedded systems. The end of the last century and the beginning of the 21st century witnessed phenomenal progress in artificial intelligence (AI), cloud computing, computer network with associated apps, social network, sensors and smart phones, large data gathering, storing, retrieving and analysing capabilities. Without even realizing it, we are undergoing a silent revolution where most of our activities are dependent on human-to-machine interaction.

The First and Second Industrial Revolutions (IR) relieved workers from mundane repetitive manual labour to mass machine production. The first IR was triggered by the Scottish mechanical engineer and innovator James Watt in collaboration with Englishman Matthew Boulton, as they perfected the steam engine by 1778. By then new chemicals and iron products had made their entry into the commercial world and the use of these products spread to other parts of Europe and North America. The second IR grew to include chemical industries, petroleum and various petroleum based products. The automotive industry had matured by then and a new revolution began with the large scale introduction of electricity. Hydroelectricity escalated industrialisation of European countries which had very little or no natural resources of their own.

The Third IR is said to have taken place in earnest between 1950 to 2000 when computers (discovery of transistors in 1947 played an important role) revolutionised the way we work, play, perform calculations and track events. Not only had computers begun taking over and controlling production processes, they also began to make a mark in our

homes. The change from an analog mechanical and electronics technology to digital technology was a quantum jump in the Third IR that marked the beginning of the Information Age. Crucial to the revolution were the mass production of digital computers, cellular phones and the availability of the internet. Home computers, time sharing, video games, digital cameras, digital recordings, industrial robots had by then become commonplace. By the 90's, the



World Wide Web (WWW) had connected almost every country through the internet. By the end of the century, cell phones, text messaging, HDTV became standard transmission broadcasting formats. By 2010, websites and social networking became standards in digital communication. Cloud computing had entered mainstream, and it is envisaged that within a few years tablet computers and smart phones will exceed all other electronic gadgets.

Silicon Valley is known in the world over as the Mecca of high technology industry and hundreds of tech startup companies. The Valley gained its fame possibly with the introduction of the IBM PC in early 1980. The leadership of

Stanford University and its graduates along with Stanford University Research International and its affiliates have helped shape Silicon Valley, at least in the preliminary stages, to attain its present status.

As of 2013, tech industries employed close to 250,000 IT workers. We all remember the dot-com bubble of 1995; Silicon Valley was considered the center of that bubble that collapsed in 2000. After the collapse, industries diversified to software and operating systems, although

semi-conductors still remain the region's major economy. Hundreds of leading high tech companies have their headquarters in Silicon Valley. Some of the famous ones are: Intel, Google, Facebook, Cisco System, Hewlett-Packard, Oracle Corporation, Apple Inc., eBay, ScanDisk, Yahoo etc. Those with significant presence are: Actel, Asus, Nokia, Olivetti, Panasonic, Paypal, Dell, Fujitsu, Sun Microsystems etc.

We had the privilege of visiting Stanford University and some of the high tech companies headquartered in San Jose, Santa Clara, Palo Alto, Menlo Park as well as San Mateo, last year. It was an unforgettable experience (reminded me of a similar experience when

I was a research faculty at Tsukuba Science City near Tokyo in Japan). It was here that we were first introduced to the Fourth Industrial Revolution, a concept that envisages the merger of physical and digital worlds – the Cyber Physical Systems (CPS).

Within this framework, all activities of human as well as manufacturing and production will be managed by the CPS. The German industrial juggernaut in a report (Industries 4.0 Working Group) published in 2013 predicted a "fourth industrial revolution, one which promises to dramatically transform the workplace and make the entire world revolve around you". The German Government accepted the "High Tech Strategy" and is working towards its implementation. The USA also established the "Industrial Internet Consortium" in 2014 and industry giants as General Electric, AT&T, IBM and Intel are its active member. The fourth IR is a huge leap forward, particularly for industries where all innovations, performances and production will be managed by smart devices.

3-D printing is also expected to heavily influence manufacturing. The ABI Research Institute predicts that by 2020, 30 billion devices from a ballpoint pen to a Luxury Sea Liner will be connected with the internet. The fourth IR is truly a global phenomenon that is already evolving and both industrial nations and emerging economies like Bangladesh will seek further automation to strengthen its industrial base with the integration of Information Technology (IT) and Operational Technology (OT).

Bangladesh has a very vibrant IT sector where more than 20,000 people are employed. This sector, with a huge pool of young, energetic and talented people, is already serving both domestic and international clients. The government also recognised it as a thrust sector and plans on extending tax benefits to IT related services.

The writer is Professor of Physics, Jahangirnagar University, and a Fellow of the Royal Astronomical Society, UK.

## About Social Business



I don't argue for transforming or replacing the conventional business. My argument is based on two basic features of human beings: selfishness and selflessness. Every person has both in him. Today selfishness rules the world because economic theory is based exclusively on selfishness of human beings. Selflessness has no scope to express itself in the business world because of the theory.

I am arguing for redesigning the theory to give proper place to selflessness. Social business is a business based on selflessness. Both businesses, selfish business and selfless business, will co-exist. The same person will be engaged in both businesses. It will be a free choice of individuals. It will transform the world. I am not arguing for banishing selfishness from the theory.

I am urging all business owners to create social businesses 'alongside' their conventional business. It is about discovering our own ability, as individuals, to solve human problems in a sustainable way.

Nobel Laureate Prof. Muhammad Yunus on The Daily Star Editor's Commentary published on May 29, 2015.

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

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### Plight of trafficking victims

The recent discovery of mass graves in Malaysia and Thailand shocked us deeply. It must be grinding poverty that compelled these unfortunate people to undertake such desperate journeys. It is imperative on the part of the government of the respective countries to address and solve the issue. And it is high time Bangladesh government did something to rescue its people and rehabilitate them.

Zabed Wali  
Chittagong

### US military joined the search to save migrants at sea

It is gratifying to learn that the US military has joined the race to search and save thousands of Myanmar and Bangladeshi migrants stranded at sea. They reportedly began maritime surveillance flights off the west coast of Malaysia to help locate the migrants believed to be trapped on boats at sea with no or little food and drinking water.

It is sincerely hoped that the United States and other countries will help rescue and rehabilitate the migrants stranded at sea.

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### Thanks to BPSC

It is praiseworthy that BPSC is going to publish the 36th BCS circular soon. This news has made thousands of candidates hopeful. The gap between the 34th and 35th BCS preliminary test was almost two years. Such a big gap is unexpected and disconcerting. We hope that BPSC will accelerate the process of BCS examination. On e-mail

PHOTO: AFP