

## Dengue spreading rapidly

### Raising awareness crucial

ACCORDING to the Directorate General Health Services (DGHS), Dhaka is under the threat of dengue fever, a potentially deadly fever. This season has seen 1,340 people fall sick of the fever with around 99 people admitted to various hospitals and four dying of the disease. What is alarming is that International Centre for Diarrhoeal Disease Research, Bangladesh (ICDDR,B) data points to a scenario where this season has witnessed the worst attack of dengue in the last five years. The dengue fever persists from June to October and patients suffer from both fever and severe bodily pain and headache, and contrary to popular opinion, the death toll is less than 1 percent.

However, two variants of dengue, i.e. dengue haemorrhagic fever and dengue shock syndrome can be fatal and it is necessary to make people aware of what to look for when a loved one falls sick. In the case of the former, there will be bleeding of gums or through the nose. Symptoms of dengue shock syndrome will be evident in sharp fall in water content in the body as a result of excessive bleeding, which will ultimately lead to a severe drop in blood pressure. Another fact that is little known is that patients who have suffered dengue once can suffer from it again. Hence it is imperative that health and city officials come together to formulate and disseminate an essential information package that could save lives and a lot of pain for city residents. Along with this, eradicating dengue mosquito infestations must be an ongoing drive by the municipal authorities.

## Chittagong's contribution to the economy

### Realise its potential

THE vast economic potential of Chittagong, a city with unique advantages of ports, roads and railways, largely remains untapped 44 years on, since our independence. The port city can well drive the economy to achieve the coveted middle income status and reach the target of USD 50 billion garment export, according to a leading economist.

Hosting about 40 percent of the country's heavy industries and the second RMG heartland, the commercial city has the potential to cement the nation's status, and one could argue, its future, with traditional and emerging sectors like tourism, shipbuilding and steel.

This extraordinary growth, however, has mostly been driven by individual entrepreneurs overcoming unplanned and inadequate infrastructure, energy shortage and most strikingly, the lackluster performance of its port.

There is room for improvement in the ways the Chittagong Port—which can become a bridge between ASEAN and SAARC—operates. Loading and unloading of cargo, reportedly, take a painstakingly long time with various 'hidden costs' adding to the woes of exporters. Business leaders are demanding a deep-sea port in Sonadia, off the coast of Cox's Bazaar.

Lessons could be learned from Singapore. Business communities have stressed the importance of financial institutions setting up head offices in the city making decision-making easier. Polytechnics could be established for skill-development. Chittagong needs an entrepreneurial ecosystem supported by the government where doing business will not be hindered by bureaucratic inertia.

## COMMENTS

**"US teenager arrested over clock mistaken for bomb"**  
(September 17, 2015)

Syed Najmul Hussain

While the boy should have been applauded for his creative feat, they locked him up! Funny indeed.

Ritzzy Bird

At the end of the day, this brilliant kid got attention, love and support from all over the world.

**"Govt aims to treble taxpayers by 2019"**  
(September 16, 2015)

Salahuddin Jamal

The government is focusing on trebling the number of taxpayers but doesn't bother about the loan defaulters.

**"4 held over medical admission question paper leak"**  
(September 16, 2015)

Sameena Hossain

We demand exemplary punishment to all the culprits involved in this disgusting practice.

## MACRO MIRROR



FAHMIDA KHATUN

NEW York is buzzing with hype and hope, as world leaders are about to gather here from September 25-27 to ratify another set of development goals for the next fifteen years. The journey of Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) ends this year and that of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) begins from next year. At the 70th anniversary of the UN, heads of states will formally adopt SDGs with the noble objective to fight poverty and address other challenges that we currently face. SDGs, with 17 goals and 169 targets, as opposed to only eight goals and 21 targets of MDGs, couldn't have been more comprehensive. Even though many called for 'smart development goals' with fewer but sharper, more detailed goals, experts and policymakers juggled for long before coming up with this long list of goals to confront the many global problems.

But as the autumn leaves will fade soon in New York, the real journey will just begin after the ink dries on SDGs. From 2000-2015, there has been reduction in poverty, increase in primary school enrolment, increase in number of girl students in primary schools, reduction in under-five mortality rates, decline in maternal mortality rates, fall in new HIV infections, higher access to improved drinking water and sanitation, and so on. Despite such successes, high inequality between the rich and the poor continue to persist. The UN's MDG Report 2015 shows that about 800 million people still live below \$1.25 a day and suffer from hunger. Each day, about 16,000 children die mostly from preventable causes before they turn five. Gender gap in poverty is very high. Challenges of climate change have

multiplied with increase in carbon emission. Vulnerability of people has increased, as more countries are affected by conflicts. On average, 42,000 people are forcibly displaced every day and compelled to seek protection due to conflicts.

Therefore, SDGs require far more attention from policymakers to prevent them from failing to meet the desired objective. With new challenges and vulnerabilities, such as migrants flocking from war affected zones to safer places, religious extremism spreading rapidly, continued economic uncertainties and the rise of climate vulnerabilities, the task of making a poverty free and sustainable world does sound utopian. Therefore, prompt actions will have to be initiated for the implementation of SDGs once the dust settles in the UN building.

For poor countries, implementation will be harder than before. SDGs have included 'means of implementation' with all good intentions. But the ambition of "revitalising global partnership" sheds doubt, particularly in view of the experience of MDG 8, which is the least fulfilled goal. The recently published MDG Gap Task Force Report 2015: Taking Stock of the Global Partnership for Development by the UN reveals areas where advanced countries could not fulfil their commitments. Delivery of overseas development assistance to LDCs in 2013 was only 0.10 percent of the Gross National Income of developed countries against the UN target of 0.15 to 0.20 percent. The non-completion of WTO's Doha Round and refusal of some countries to give duty-free market access to products of LDCs, lack of progress in transfer of technology from developed countries to LDCs and limited efforts towards supporting poor countries to overcome their infrastructural and other constraints to improve exports are frustrating.

Despite low level of commitments from the international community, the success of MDGs in many countries raises the question as to whether countries would have achieved the same progress even in the absence of MDGs. And the answer is

overwhelmingly 'yes'. This is because countries where MDGs have been successful are the countries which were already striving for poverty reduction and achieving other social objectives on their own. Bangladesh, which is a stellar performer in achieving several MDGs, is a case in point. Much of this was possible due to the country's policies and strategies reflected in various development plans, including the five year plans which the country had already been implementing since its early years. It also has dedicated programmes to fulfil those policies. The role of NGOs in delivering health and education services to rural areas and raising awareness of people, and the work of micro-credit organisations in supporting the poor, particularly women for income generating activities, complemented government's initiatives. Of course, external support was needed. But the MDG experience of Bangladesh indicates huge shortage of funds as well. From 1990-2013, Bangladesh received \$1.68 billion annually as ODA on average, as opposed to the required \$3 billion per annum to attain MDGs.

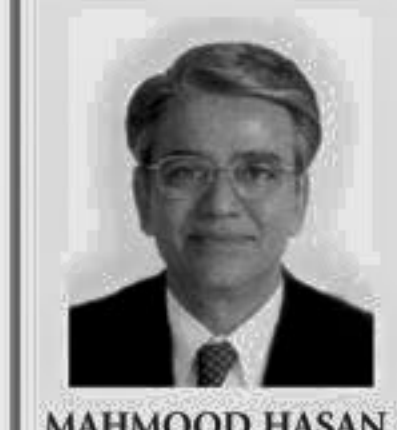
But still setting goals is not bad. It makes us work towards achieving them. It also shows how we perform vis-à-vis the goal. Though the success of MDGs in Bangladesh reiterates the importance of national commitments, awareness and coordination across various government bodies remain problematic. The Planning Commission has led MDG implementation, but appreciation from other ministries, departments and agencies has been less than expected. Also the sense of ownership over MDGs and its implementation among relevant ministries remained low. There should be programmes to enhance wider public awareness and involvement in the SDG implementation process. Rather than involving a set of hand-picked people, multi-stakeholders, including NGOs, CSOs and the private sector, should be involved in the process of implementation.

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# UN-sustainable development goals

## FROM A BYSTANDER



MAHMOOD HASAN

AS the time frame for the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) draws to an end in December 2015, the United Nations is about to adopt a new set of goals known as the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), under the theme of "Transforming the World". The process of drawing the new goals began with the UN Conference on Sustainable Development in Rio de Janeiro (Rio+20) in June 2012. The Open Working Group, with representatives from 70 countries, was set to prepare the draft proposals while a series of "global conversations" were also conducted by the UN in different countries to identify the priority areas.

The 70th United Nations General Assembly went into session on September 15, 2015. The General Assembly will adopt the new set of development goals at the Sustainable Development Summit scheduled to be held from September 25-27. Developing nations are expected to frame policies based on SDGs and allocate funds in such a manner that by 2030 poverty can be eliminated.

In short, the 17 goals are: i) ending poverty; ii) ending hunger; iii) ensuring healthy lives; iv) education to all; v) gender equality; vi) ensuring clean water and sanitation for all; vii) access to energy; viii) ensuring full employment; ix) sustainable industrialisation; x) reducing inequality within and among nations; xi) safe human settlement; xii) ensuring sustainable production and consumption; xiii) combating climate change; xiv) sustainable use of marine resources; xv) protecting terrestrial ecosystem; xvi) justice for all and accountable institutions; xvii) strengthening global partnership.

What is striking is that the new set of 17 goals has 169 targets while the eight MDGs had 21 targets. Many countries are doubtful about implementing so many goals with so many targets. It would be difficult for resource-poor nations to take up all the goals at the same time and follow up on their implementation. There is a belief that more goals mean more aid-money. Though this is fallacious, developing nations generally lobbied for more goals with the hope that they will get more money.

The most important element missing in the SDG discourse is the issue of funds. Who will finance it and what is the amount that will be needed over the next 15 years? According to estimates, to lift one billion people out of poverty (living on \$1.25 per day), i.e. SDG 1, would cost around \$65 billion each year for the next 15 years. The total amount of funds to make all 17 SDGs achievable would be between \$2 and \$3 trillion each year for the next 15 years. Evidently, developing countries will not be able to find such enormous funds from within their national incomes. The rich countries will

have to help with official development assistance (ODA). SDGs will indeed be an expensive endeavour.

Unfortunately, developed countries have been showing signs of aid-fatigue. Advanced economies may not be keen to dish out such enormous amounts every year. Only the Nordic countries and United Kingdom have lived up to the commitment to give 0.7 percent of their Gross National Income (GNI) as ODA. United States and other developed economies are still lagging far behind.

Tax revenues of a country play the most important role in development programmes. Almost two-thirds of the funding came from internal revenues of countries during the implementation of the MDGs. The remaining one-third was covered by ODA and private financial flows.

hoped to reform the culture of tax abuse, clamp down on illegal funds transfer, reduce the burden of debt, and stamp out corruption. The conference concluded with participants expressing confidence that financing SDGs will not be a problem. Sadly, the reality is different.

Even if one assumes that the missing financial link has been bridged, can the developing world meet the 169 targets by 2030? Wars, unstable political situation, unequal social structures, diseases such as ebola and low economic development may not allow developing nations to initiate some of the SDGs. Moreover, the absence of democracy, human rights and justice in many developing nations are impediments to SDGs. Besides, climate change may be the biggest challenge to many developing countries. Coping with natural



Tax evasion by multinational companies and big businesses is a major problem that many developing nations find difficult to curb. Global corporate tax regimes are even worse and are full of loopholes. Multinationals easily circumvent local tax regulations of developing countries where they operate. Besides, massive transfer of illegal funds from developing countries to banks in developed countries has stifled development efforts in many developing nations.

To address this particular missing link, the Third International Conference on Financing for Development (IFFD3) was held in Addis Ababa from July 13-16, 2015. The conference in its resolution expressed hope that rich countries will live up to their commitment to allocate 0.7 percent of GNI as ODA. It

disasters may drain whatever limited resources they have, leaving the fulfilment of SDGs for a later date.

The underlying base of the SDGs is industrialisation, which will generate employment, thus income and consumption (Goal 12). Industrialisation is welcome, but it is not a benign solution, unless climate friendly technologies are invented.

Many experts have dismissed the SDGs as unsustainable. A close examination of the goals would reveal that they are lengthy and quite cumbersome. Some of the goals are vague and unrealistic, several are debatable. Monitoring 169 targets will certainly be difficult. Fewer focused goals would probably have been more realistic.

The writer is former Ambassador and Secretary.

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

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### "As the tables turn"

I was a bit surprised by the above writing of Mr. Adnan R Amin published in TDS on September 17, 2015. He eulogised the student movement against VAT on tuition fees of private universities as non-violent. I wonder, how? If you hold somebody by the throat and stop his flow of blood to the brain, would you call that non-violent? Students occupied the main arteries of Dhaka city for three consecutive days taking people hostage by

stopping their movements.

Consider the sufferings of the people mentioned here: patients whose movements to the hospitals were stopped for hours, passengers to the Dhaka airport who missed their flights and thereby missed business and social commitments and of course, inconvenience for commuters to reach their workplace. Consider the perils of women who were on the move. And you call it non-violent!

Bazlur Rahman  
Uttara, Dhaka

### Midday meal for schoolchildren

A large number of children from poor families come to school without having a proper meal. If the government provides midday meal for free in the government schools, it will enhance the enrollment rate as well as reduce the dropout rate. We hope the government will do this to encourage the children from poor families to come to school regularly.



Zabed Wali  
Chittagong