

Border killings

Why can't they be stopped for good?

After a somewhat lull of several months since June we are alarmed at the number of Bangladeshi casualties, particularly in the last fortnight, caused by BSF firing. This situation, in spite of the commitment of the BSF to bring down the border killing figures to zero, is a dampener in the otherwise best of relationships that the two countries have had for a long time.

The issue has featured at all levels of bilateral meetings between the two countries and specific assurances were given by India that killing of Bangladeshis at the border would be stopped. We were also given the assurances that the use of lethal weapons would be abjured. Just this Wednesday a Bangladesh-India DC-DM Joint Conference was held in Bangladesh to discuss ways and means to bolster border relations, and regrettably, some of the killings had occurred only a day after the said conference was held.

It is difficult to accept the BSF argument that the firings are in self-defence since none of the victims have been found ever to be in possession of lethal weapons on them. At least in one instance recently, as reported in the press, the BSF had trespassed into Bangladesh and carried out the shooting on Bangladeshis injuring four. In some cases, victims' bodies bore marks of torture which suggest that they were apprehended before being disposed off summarily by the BSF.

We feel, given the state of good neighbourly relations between the two countries, the leash should be put on the BSF's trigger-happy attitude.

Masquerading as DB members

These gangs must be nabbed

WHAT a businessman and his relative were picked up in the early hours of November 29 by a criminal gang masquerading as Detective Branch (DB) personnel is a disturbing development. We are informed by a report printed in this paper that a microbus with 'tinted' windows was used and there were eight gang members in the vehicle. This vehicle apparently roamed the streets from 1am till 5am when the two were let go after being robbed of all their possessions near Uttara.

The incident raises a number of questions. Given the heightened security alert in the city, how could this vehicle with tinted glass roam around for four hours in the dead of night? With so many police and security check points in the city, didn't its presence raise any questions among the several law enforcement agencies deployed in the city? Such an incident is not the first of its kind in the city. At different times, various gangs have been busted for impersonating one agency or another, but seldom have we heard of any follow-up on these cases.

This lax oversight on the part of those entrusted with our security has only encouraged criminals to pose as DB personnel to do what they do. It is only in the interests of DB itself that the agency should conduct a thorough investigation and bring to book those who are giving the agency a bad name. City residents too will breathe a little easier if they know that the next nondescript vehicle coming their way belongs to law enforcers and not criminals.

COMMENTS

Behind bars for life"
(November 26, 2015)

Raihana

He deserves it.

Joynal Rahman

Police inspectors SM Shahdat Hossain and Mahbubey Khoda showed extreme inefficiency and negligence while investigating the case. That's unacceptable and they should be awarded due punishment under law.

"Wasfia becomes first Bangladeshi to scale seven summits"
(November 26, 2015)

Chandro

She is an inspiration to the entire nation.

"Chennai lesson for Dhaka"
(November 25, 2015)

Shammi Rahman

Over the years, water bodies have been grabbed and filled up by influential. It seems the day we face the same fate as Chennai is not too far.

Abdur Rahman

We should be very cautious. The same problem may strike our city.

Shahrin
Our drainage system is extremely poor. Influential people, politicians and real estate businessmen have encroached on almost all water bodies. We need to address these problems and act accordingly.

PARIS CLIMATE SUMMIT

Will Bangladesh be "compensated" for loss and damage?

ABDULLAH SHIBLI

BANGLADESH is in the frontlines of mounting costs of climate change. With the United Nations Summit on Climate Change scheduled to start on November 30 in Paris, it is not too unbecoming to ask, "What's in it for Bangladesh?" Are we going to be compensated for the billions of dollars we might potentially lose if the global temperature increases by 3.5°C as projected, and rivers rise, salt water inundate our coastal areas, and the weather pattern displays all the effects of warming? Or are we going to just take what we get and try to manage the best we can?

The issue of money is always a tricky one, and like all families which face financial troubles and hardship following a catastrophe, the conventioners at the Climate Summit and the organisers will reasonably try to stay clear of any bickering centred on the three critical questions that need to be addressed:

What is the full extent of loss and damage incurred by each country?

How much resource is available each year until 2050 to manage the damage, adopt, and adapt greener technologies?

How is funding going to be administered and divided up among the less developed countries and small island nations?

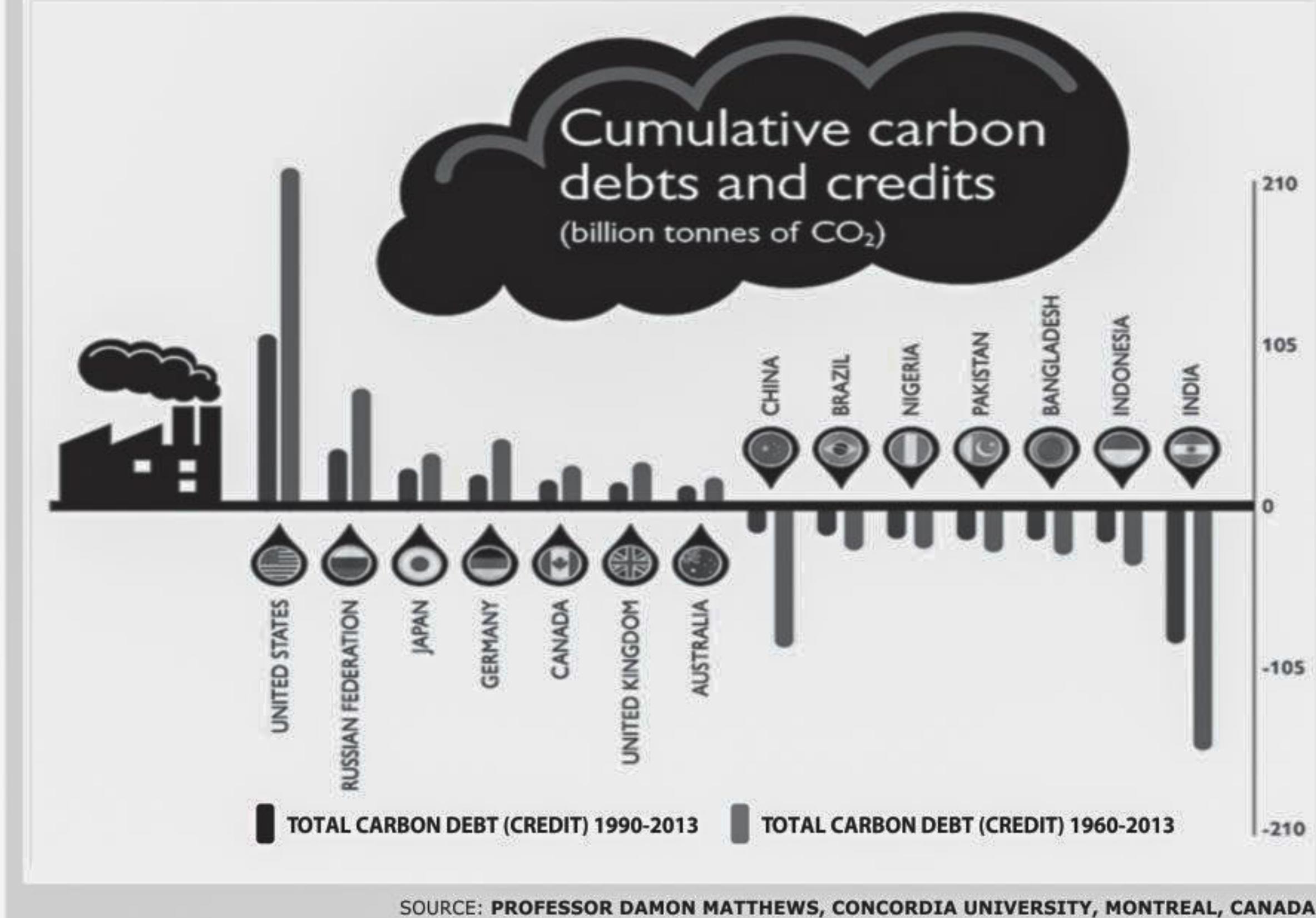
It is not my intent to debate these questions here nor offer detailed answers. Nonetheless, I do want to point out that now that we know the promised cuts in emissions and levels of financial commitments from the affluent countries, Bangladesh needs to raise its voice and ask for a fair share of the funds available to support us as we adopt, mitigate, and adapt in the face of climate change. As we argue and deal with other parties at Paris, we need to have a clear stance on two key issues. One of them is that Bangladesh and other countries that can be considered to have credit in terms of CO2 emissions, have a legitimate need for financing. The other one is that the mechanism for "loss and damage" arbitration must be formally adopted at the Paris Summit.

According to new research done by Prof Damon Matthews of Concordia University in Montreal, Canada, every citizen of US and Australia owes \$12,000 in carbon debt. This amount only takes into account the excess emissions since 1990. Since lifestyles in these countries are dependent on higher level of CO2 emissions, as compared with those who live "off the grid", so to speak, countries are broken down into "creditor" and "debtor" nations. A debtor nation like the US has incurred climate debts defined as the amount by which its climate contributions have exceeded a hypothetical equal per-capita share over time. Using the estimate provided by the US

Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) that each tonne of CO2 emissions causes \$40 in damage, Prof Matthews estimates that the US has incurred a debt of \$4 trillion during the period 1990-2013. He has also suggested that each citizen of India, as a creditor nation, is owed \$2,500 per capita for their lesser contribution to carbon emissions (see chart).

While nobody expects that these estimates will be translated into real claims at Paris, these numbers are indicative and provide a frame of reference for the terms of the conversation. It can be expected that the bloc Association of Small Island States (AOSIS) which represents 44 islands and low-lying countries, will have a legitimate demand should they decide to force the

together under the less developed countries (LDC) and small island developing states (SIDS) banners. In 2013, the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), the host of the Climate Summit, established the Warsaw International Mechanism for Loss and Damage (the WIM) to address the issue. However, there is growing apprehension that the Paris Summit might sideline the "loss and damage" component and address it only in the footnote, if at all. A number of countries have joined forces to register in the strongest terms that WIM must be part and parcel of any climate agreement. "Many developed countries are arguing that the Warsaw Decision set a different timetable for this issue,



SOURCE: PROFESSOR DAMON MATTHEWS, CONCORDIA UNIVERSITY, MONTREAL, CANADA.

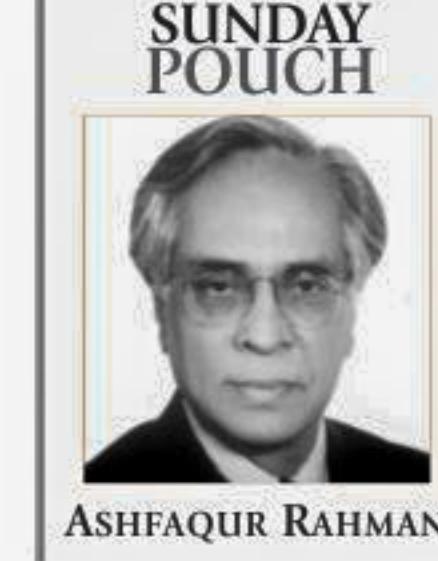
hands of the richer countries once the initial hoopla dies down. While the term "compensation" is strongly opposed by the US and other big emitters and will not be included in the final agreement, Bangladesh could, as a leader of the LDC group, make all our efforts to bolster the financial aspect of the Paris Agreement.

Finally, the Paris Agreement must set in motion the mechanism to allocate financing according to "loss and damage" sustained by the countries that have grouped

which would mean that loss and damage is not currently set to be decided on as part of the Paris Agreement, unlike the issues of adaptation, mitigation, and finance, ("The Road Through Paris, "Loss and Damage"). Bangladesh should be at the forefront of countries that foil such moves!

The writer is an economist, and drafted the Economists Report on Bangladesh's National Environmental Management Action Plan (NEMAP).

IS CHINA'S GROWTH SLOWING?



SUNDAY POUCH
ASHFAQUR RAHMAN

REMEMBER Churchill's description of China? He said that China is a 'riddle wrapped in an enigma'. What an apt characterisation which has indeed withstood the test of time. Developments in China are not easily understood yet there remains profound interest in that country from all corners of the world. China, moreover, has been a big player over centuries. Its products, its inventions, its unique culture has impacted the world. Only in the recent past in its history when some western powers came to its shores and when the Chinese emperor lost to these powers has there been a hiatus in its growth. But by 1949 when it regained its suzerainty China bounced back. Yet China's story is merely unfolding. The country over the past thirty years has again forged its economic and military leadership in the world.

But news from China in the past year has not been as optimistic as predicted. The annual rate of economic growth is slowing down. This has elated many in the West who were envious of China's 10 percent annual growth in the past years. Doomsayers have seen China's growth plummet to 7+ percent in 2014. This is understood to go down further to 6+ percent in the coming years. Is China, therefore, facing recession or is it in serious trouble?

Not really. China's growth in the last 35 years was basically a 'catch up' growth supported by its state infrastructure, political system, availability of cheap labour and credit availability from state owned banks. The economy was also banking on export of cheap supplies to the rest of the world. It thus became the export hub of the world. Yet the pace of growth in 2014 was only 7 percent and is sliding down further in 2015. There are several reasons for this.

Firstly, analysts believe that economic weakness in the US and Europe is the cause of China's slowdown. Everyone knows that China's growth was fuelled by exports to the US and Europe. But with recession in many parts of the world, consumption levels had come

down. Thus Chinese exports declined.

Next, China's growth which was supported by availability of cheap labour now seems finite. People worked for long hours on low wages under state control. But China's one child policy has added to a shrinking supply of cheap labour. Thus China's pool of cheap labour is falling dramatically.

China's domestic consumption has also gone down in the past years. As more and more people joined the industrial workforce in the past 30 years, wages remained low but consumption levels continued to climb. But the flow of cheap labour is reaching saturation point.

A major reason for China's spectacular growth was the country's strong investment in housing and transport infrastructure. It was meant to fill up the gap

The slowdown of the Chinese economy is definitely intentional. The country is moving away from super fast growth based on often wasted investment in factories and real estate.

in these sectors. But as time passed demand fell and in many cases economic bubbles were created. Poor returns have now started to emerge. Today, there is low demand for building materials like cement, steel and housing fixtures.

But in these three and a half decades of near double digit growth, China graduated from a poor and rural society to the second largest economy in the world. It has now accumulated \$3.5 trillion in foreign exchange and has boosted its military expenditures manifold.

But certain uncertainties in the Chinese economy prevail. Firstly, how much stimulus will the Chinese government provide in the future to maintain or manage the growth rate? Chinese leadership knows that a high rate of GDP growth is the key to political stability. Major infrastructure projects in China such as the completion of a high speed rail system and diverting the waters of the Yangtze River to north China has put Chinese leaders in a dilemma. They are working on these projects at a slow pace.

Despite projections of lower growth, the slowdown is unlikely to lead to a crisis even though the outlook for the world economy may seem dull. China is transitioning from an era of super charged but unsustainable growth that pushed demand for anything and everything, from Australian iron ore to European luxury goods. But this is about to end. For some countries, the Chinese economy slowdown will hurt. Countries like Australia and Malaysia that rely heavily on the Chinese market will be affected. So will commodity exporting countries in Africa, South America and even India.

The slowdown of the Chinese economy is definitely intentional. The country is moving away from super fast growth based on often wasted investment in factories and real estate. President Xi Jinping of China has described this economic downturn as a 'new normal'. Chinese manufacturers are now pledging to produce new products with better quality at lower prices. The Chinese know that such actions will decrease their profits but the Chinese economy will survive. For instance, in 2016, China will grow at 6.7 percent yet it would likely generate 10 million jobs which will keep the unemployment rate at 4.5 percent.

China today is going through a major restructuring of its economy. By cutting down on expansion, the Chinese economy can be more efficient. China indeed seems to be treading a path of sustainable growth which will define clearly Churchill's reflection on China.

The writer is former Ambassador to China and columnist at *The Daily Star*. E-mail: ashfaque303@gmail.com

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Letters@thedadlystar.net

Pakistan's audacity

In 1971, Pakistan committed one of the worst genocides in history in the then East Pakistan in collaboration with their local quislings commonly known as Rajakars, Al-Shams and Al-Badr. Recently, two war criminals (Mojaheed and SQ Chy) have been served with capital punishment. The Pakistan government condemned the sentence and expressed "deep worries and anguish" over it. Pakistan's rights activist Asma Jahangir has rightly said that it proves these war criminals were Pakistan's agents.

A.H. Dewan
Dhaka Cantt., Dhaka

UN Climate Change Conference

I do not expect any major outcomes at the UN Climate Change Conference. The huge gap between the developed and the developing nations regarding climate change mitigation is too wide to come up with a consensus and any meaningful resolution. The developed nations have reached the peak of eco-

nomic prosperity without caring much about the impact on environment. But most developing nations being under colonial rules for centuries have fallen far behind. Now when they are making advancements, the developed nations want them to make sacrifices for protecting the environment. Unless there is some reconciliation on this ground, any meaningful policy for global climate change mitigation is nothing but a distant dream.

Saikat Kumar Basu
Lethbridge, Canada