

COPENHAGEN CONSENSUS CENTER AND BANGLADESH PRIORITIES

Bangladesh needs clear priorities for the future



BJORN LOMBORG

With the economic aim, other ambitious goals include slashing poverty drastically, safeguarding basic rights for all citizens, ensuring ubiquitous access to adequate nutrition, clothing, housing, and health care - and doing it all while protecting the environment.

The country has made spectacular progress over recent years, halving poverty and growing the economy by about 6 percent each year. But to make Vision 2021 a reality, Bangladesh will also have to ameliorate the problems that continue to frustrate her development efforts.

cannot read. Many other obstacles remain, from inadequate and dangerous road infrastructure to limited access to electricity.

For Bangladesh to make progress toward a better tomorrow, it's imperative to focus on the most valuable strategies today. But the variety of challenges can seem overwhelming and all funding and resources have limits.

Should improving maternal health and child nutrition be our top priorities, through efforts to provide micronutrients to undernourished populations? What about investment in infrastructure for transportation, such as the Padma Bridge? Maybe expanding wireless connectivity and using technology to advance the economy would be most valuable? Or maybe we should assist small-scale farmers, who still struggle to diversify crop production?

There's no shortage of solutions proposed to these difficult problems. We have talked to more than 400 experts from government, international development agencies, think-tanks, and academics and heard more than a thousand proposals. But which are best?

The Bangladesh Priorities Project, in partnership with BRAC, aims to answer which solutions will do the most good at the lowest cost. It's vital that each taka spent - whether by the government or international donors - is directed at the solutions that have the potential to do the most good. We want to get the most "bang for the buck," as the Americans say.

Our teams of Bangladeshi and international experts have been examining 78 strategies from 17 different

Facebook call to action for THE VOX POP

In partnership with BRAC, the Copenhagen Consensus Center has been working on their project entitled Bangladesh Priorities. The aim of Bangladesh Priorities project is to work with stakeholders across Bangladesh to find, analyse, rank and disseminate the best solutions for the most pressing challenges of Bangladesh.

Copenhagen Consensus will be organising a Vox Pop to incorporate comments from readers into the series. Participating readers will be given early drafts of each article in the series and will be asked to provide comments to be incorporated into the series.

topic areas to discover which solutions can yield the most benefits per taka spent. The research project can help us figure out not only which areas to prioritise, but also the most effective strategies to pursue within each area.

Our experts are using a tool that provides hard data to help prioritise how to spend limited resources: cost-benefit analysis. And their analyses don't include just economic benefits and costs—they're designed to take into account the social, health, and environmental effects as well.

By calculating the costs of each proposed solution, and also projecting the total benefits for each, we can judge the proposals in a more objective manner than if we simply picked them based on subjective criteria or emotions. We can also use the analyses to compare and contrast a broad range of topics, from concerns about education to air pollution to everything in between.

Given the stakes, this approach can have an incredible payoff. Take the standard policies that do some good. We have reason

to believe that each taka spent typically does 7 takas of good. That is definitely respectable. But we can do much more good if we focus more precisely on the very best solutions. An earlier estimate, by more than 120 experts and several Nobel laureates, suggests that each taka spent could do 32 takas of good, instead of merely 7.

Likewise, imagine if we could help guide the national budget toward more cost-effective spending. The Tk. 2.2 trillion in annual government spending would hold the potential to increase social benefits by Tk. 55 trillion, each and every year.

"A nation without vision is a nation gone astray," the government's report on Vision 2021 says. Bangladesh Priorities will create a map of strategies and solutions that can help steer the country closer to its vision.

In our forthcoming series, which will be published here in The Daily Star, we'll address most of the detailed and path-breaking research that will help us all find the best solutions for Bangladesh. I invite you to participate on Facebook and in conversation. In May, once we have published all the research, we will all be ready to start the difficult but rewarding discussion about which ideas have the most promise to help Bangladesh flourish, and at the least cost.

The writer is president of the Copenhagen Consensus Center, ranking the smartest solutions to the world's biggest problems by cost-benefit. He was ranked one of the world's 100 most influential people by Time Magazine.

The American Idol



A bonfire in a field of damp firewood, Donald Trump is moving millions of Americans - and politics does not get any more basic than that.

The Grand Old Party does not know how to stop Trump and it is their fault. Throughout history it's a party that has won elections mostly on anti-government rhetoric.

ideologies. It's Trump. "I play to people's fantasies. I call it truthful hyperbole," he has said. The problem is Trump isn't winning in spite of such statements; he is winning because of them.

Can Hillary Clinton defeat him? What would a hypothetical Trump presidency look like? President Trump would get elected without substantial support from the Republicans establishment and with open acrimony from elected Democrats everywhere.

Beyond the unmistakable frisson of violence to bomb this or that or exclamations that he will negotiate "great deals," Trump has displayed no knowledge of the hard or soft power of the United States. What would happen if the United States Armed Forces, despite his promise to make its military "so strong our heads would spin", began to have doubts about the judgment and stability of its commander-in-chief?

And around the world, who would respect Trump as the de facto leader of the free world? Who might be the illustrious diplomat to serve as his secretary of state and travel the world to vouch for his judgment and fitness for office? Who



PHOTO: AP

would believe he had the capacity to build alliances or enforce measures to punish rogue actors? Is his infamous statement that US should ban all Muslims from entering the country "until we find out what the hell is going on" going to build trust among communities?

Describing how Christians abroad are being massacred and Christians at home are under cultural and political siege, he once pledged: "We're going to protect Christianity." Not just Christians, but Christianity itself. What he is promising is to stand outside the churchyard gate and protect the faithful inside. He's the knight standing between them and barbarians abroad and hard line secularists at home. Is this the worldview that's

going to "make America great again?"

The Grand Old Party does not know how to stop Trump and it is their fault. Throughout history it's a party that has won elections mostly on anti-government rhetoric. Now they are facing the music: millions of voters dazzled by a man with no known party loyalties and no coherent political principles, an oft-married casino mogul and reality-TV star, a narcissist and a demagogue who presents the next election as a hostile takeover, offering to turn America around with his "deal making" brilliance as if the roles of Congress, the Supreme Court and limits to executive power were not well defined under the US Constitution and could be negotiated upon.

What's remarkable is not that Trump is not going to be president, but that such a thing should even need considering. The vagaries of the Electoral College notwithstanding, no survey suggests that 60 million Americans, or indeed anything like that number, are willing to vote for him despite the assurance of his wife Melania Trump, a former model, that her husband will change his tone if he is elected president of the United States. Yeah, right.

The Trump fantasy will fade at some point. But it has already revealed the hollowness of American democracy.

The writer is a member of the editorial team at The Daily Star.

QUOTABLE Quote ROMILA THAPAR History is essential to a national ideology, but it has to be a shared history that binds people together. It cannot be a history dominated by only one identity because nationalism does not exist on only one identity. It is all inclusive.

CROSSWORD BY THOMAS JOSEPH ACROSS 1 Funny fellows 5 Bat abode 11 France's replacement 12 City way 13 Fancy button 14 Became close 15 Huck's pal 16 Thin cut 17 Dog show category 19 Zeus or Apollo 22 Roberts of film 24 Private's boss 26 Yale students 27 Secluded valley 28 Queen-lace 30 Circus star 31 Decrepit horse 32 Cookie bit 34 Wheedle 35 Research site 38 Ringed planet 41 Farm sight 42 Idolized 43 Golden Rule word 44 Landed folks 45 They may clash DOWN 1 Sunset setting 2 Lot buy 3 Curmudgeon's habit 4 Grassy clump 5 Bridge suspender 6 Steers clear of 7 Let off steam 8 Wrap up 9 Regret 10 Composer Rorem 16 Poseidon's domain 18 Ascend 19 Louisiana university 20 Lusty look 21 Glade grazer 22 Director Renoir 23 Radius partner 25 First person 29 Game official 30 Groom's garb 33 Lustful 34 Brusque 36 Choir voice 37 Derisive calls 38 Decline 39 Sports drink suffix 40 Heavy weight 41 Take to court

YESTERDAY'S ANSWER G R O W L A S T I E A R U N I T A R T I E O N E G O O D T U R N R O D A N Y P A S A U G U S T H I D E T E N T H O D E S D Y E R S B A S E R E E D S E V E R O L D I E S H E R M A O M A E O N E B A D A P P L E L U N A R D O P P L E D E A N S T E D S

BEETLE BAILEY by Mort Walker DOESN'T IT FEEL GOOD TO FINISH A JOB, BEETLE? IT'S LIKE A HUGE WEIGHT HAS BEEN LIFTED OFF MY SHOULDERS! THE TROUBLE IS, THAT HUGE WEIGHT KEEPS COMING BACK GREG+ MORT WALKER 3-13 BABY BLUES by Kirkman & Scott ZOE IS CLOWNING AROUND IN CLASS. PLEASE DISCUSS THIS AT HOME. I'M SURPRISED AT YOU, YOUNG LADY! I KNOW, BUT IT'S NOT ALL MY FAULT. I THINK HAMMIE IS CONTAGIOUS! DOES ANYBODY KNOW HOW TO BUY SCORPIONS ONLINE?