

BANGLADESH DELTA PLAN 2100

Not the most practical proposal

MD. KHALEQUZZAMAN

BANGLADESH is considered to be extremely vulnerable to the impacts of climate change. In an attempt to provide safety and security for people living in low-lying coastal regions (15 percent of the country has an elevation below 1 m) against cyclones, tidal surges and flooding, the government has taken various measures over the last few decades, which included building 139 polders. Despite having polders, Bangladesh is facing adverse hydro-meteorological shocks, including inundation of coastal plains due to the high rate of sea-level rise (8 to 23 mm/year) as compared to the global trends (3.4 mm/year), salinity ingress, water-logging, reduction in cropland and crop yield, siltation of riverbeds, and impact on human health.

Despite an increase in natural calamities, the economic growth over the last few decades has been quite satisfactory with a GDP growth rate ranging between 4.8 percent to over 6 percent. The per capita GDP has grown from \$631 in 1990 to \$1,276 in 2010. In the face of population growth and climate change, it will be challenging to sustain the economic growth and to achieve the sustainable development goals (SDGs) in coming decades.

In this backdrop, it is imperative to formulate a long term strategic plan to protect the delta and its environment. Proper land and water management is central to the country's sustained economic development and protection of its environment. Recently, a large consortium, led by the consultancy firm Twynstra Gudde, has signed a contract for the development of the Delta Plan for Bangladesh 2100 (BDP2100), which is designed to formulate a long-term (50 to 100 years) delta governance. As per the Inception Report for the BDP2100, "the mission is to develop strategies which contribute to disaster risk reduction, water safety, climate change resilience and adaptation, food security, and economic development of the country." This author holds the view that BDP2100 lacks merit on the following grounds:

Ownership: According to news reports and the official webpage of BDP2100 (<http://www.bangladeshdeltaplan2100.org>), a total of eight (Twynstra, Mott McDonald,

Climate Adaptation Services, Ecorys, Defacto, Deltares, Alterra, and Weeteveen BOS) out of ten consultancy firms are from outside Bangladesh. This plan will put the management of land, water, and environment of the country in the hand of foreign agencies. Recently, the Prime Minister of Bangladesh Sheikh Hasina reiterated that Bangladesh has achieved self-sufficiency in all sectors of development and there was no need to rely on foreign consultants for development projects. The inception of the BDP2100 is incongruent with the stated

Transparency: The BDP2100 is probably by far the largest land and water management project that Bangladesh has ever undertaken. It is expected that such a monumental project will be discussed in the Parliament and in open public forums. Yet, not much is known about the details of the project in the public domain.

Adoption of the failed structural approach: Building of flood control structures and polders did not prove to be an effective measure over the last six decades. The BDP2100 webpage states

River Linking Project, but it falls short in addressing the importance of an integrated water resources management plan for the GBM basins, involving all co-riparian countries. BDP2100 does not indicate how, or if, various projects can be successful without having any guarantee of adequate flow in transboundary rivers during lean seasons. **Unidirectional composition of the technical team:**

The BDP2100 team consists of 39 people, of which eight belong to various Bangladeshi agencies and 21 belong to foreign consulting

tackle the existing polders. The proponents suggest a rise of polder height by one metre. However, a study by Gardiner (2014) projected a four metre rise in sea level in the next few decades, which will inundate about 40 percent of the land area in Bangladesh, including the polders, and will displace 50 million people. Under these uncertain predictions, BDP2100 will become obsolete and an open-ended project in the next century.

Beyond coastal zone management: As per BDP2100, the whole of Bangladesh is divided into seven hotspot-wise intervention programmes. The implementation of this project will put unlimited amount of control of the national development agenda in the hand of consulting firms, which cannot be acceptable for a sovereign nation.

Getting locked in a long-term maintenance contract: The proposed BDP2100 is designed to last at least another 50 to 100 years. Bangladesh will be locked in a maintenance contract with the consulting firms for the entire duration of the project and beyond. It will be unwise to put our future generations under such an obligation.

Missing the SDGs: As a signatory of the SDGs, Bangladesh is expected to implement the goals following the targets set by the UN. However, there is no mention of any SDG in the proposed plan.

Which way should we go now? Bangladesh needs to abandon the structural approach in managing coastal zones, and adopt an ecological or open approach to water resources management. Bangladesh, along with 194 other nations, has embarked on the sustainable development goals that are proposed by the UN for the next 15 years. Bangladesh needs to devote more resources to improve national capability building that will be necessary to implement land and water management projects in the context of SDGs. It is equally important for the country to work on achieving water sharing agreements for all transboundary rivers with all co-riparian nations in the GBM basins before adopting an ambitious plan like BDP2100, which cannot be successful without adequate flow of water and sediments during lean seasons.

The writer is Professor of Geology, Lock Haven University, Lock Haven, PA 17745, mkhalequ@lhup.edu.



PHOTO: WWW.BANGLADESHDELTAPLAN2100.ORG

vision for development by the prime minister. **Accountability:** According to the Dutch Water Sector, collaboration between the Netherlands and Bangladesh on various flood prevention measures and coastal zone management has been in place for over 50 years. The success from these projects in terms of flood prevention and coastal zone management has been scanty at most. What guarantee will the NGOs involved in the implementation of BDP2100 provide should the plan drive the delta to a path of failure and further destruction?

that "besides these typical coastal projects, a number of river improvement projects are also of relevance for our baseline, such as the Gorai River Restoration Plan, the Ganges Barrage Plan, Bhairab River Plan and Kobadak River Basin Plan." Without any water sharing agreement with upper riparian countries, there will be no guarantee of river flow needed to make the Gorai River Restoration Plan and the Ganges Barrage Plan a success during the lean season.

Absence of transboundary river issues: The BDP2100 mentions the adverse impacts of the Farakka Barrage and other upstream diversion structures, including the Indian

firms. Of the 21 consultants, eight are of Bangladeshi origin, but are employed by Euroconsult Mott McDonald. A vast majority of the team members are civil engineers, but the proposed BDP2100 involves dealing with subject matters pertaining to earth systems science, hydrogeology, coastal geomorphology, wetland ecosystems, sustainability science, agriculture, fisheries, and socio-cultural issues.

Open-ended nature of the project: Almost all the coastal structures are designed to face coastal hazards of a certain magnitude. A rise of sea level by 0.88 meters is likely to

Governance after Rana Plaza

SHAHIDUR RAHMAN

THE Rana Plaza disaster, on April 24, 2013, is described as the worst industrial accident anywhere in the world, galvanising stakeholders into pledging inspection and improvements in building practices and safety codes. Rana Plaza brought the country's apparel industry under intense scrutiny, inspiring national governments, the European Union, the ILO and apparel retailers to establish monitoring initiatives to improve working conditions in the RMG sector. Two monitoring regimes, establishing fire and building safety programmes, have emerged in the US and the EU: the business-dominated Alliance (US-led) and the multi-stakeholder-oriented Accord (EU-led). A third key initiative is Better Work Bangladesh, which was established in 2014 as part of an ILO project designed to support the Bangladeshi

government's National Tripartite Plan of Action on Fire Safety and Structural Integrity in the country. Multi-stakeholder initiatives such as the Accord and Alliance, introduced in response to Rana Plaza, represent a major social experiment in developing new governance arrangements aimed at securing internationally acceptable factory, labour and environmental standards.

While certain steps have been taken under Accord and Alliance to ensure safety in the context of Bangladesh, recent developments point out to disjuncture between the two and other institutions. Relationship with the government has been strained, and the general view of several policymakers in the government see Accord and Alliance as interfering with state affairs. To illustrate, in June of 2015, Abul Maal Abdul Muhith, the Finance Minister of Bangladesh, in a meeting with

BGMEA and BKMEA leaders, described Alliance and Accord as a "noose for the garment industry." Similarly, Tofail Ahmed, the Commerce Minister, in an International Trade Expo for

the state wants to control the industry in their own right, and wants lesser and lesser external influence. While both Accord and Alliance try to collaborate their efforts for a safer Bangladesh in terms of the garments

agreement in 2013, Accord stated how "the American retailers would piggyback at no cost on the efforts of the Europeans — which includes H&M, Carrefour and more than 100 other retailers — in financing safety upgrades at hundreds of factories" (New York Times, 2013). In response to this, Alliance was surprised at the criticism and noted that there were several investments in place to help the industry. Initially, there were concerns that Alliance was not working closely with unions and a "tremendous lack of worker involvement" was noted by Scott Nova, executive direct of Worker Rights Consortium. A report by International Labour Rights Forum notes that while Alliance embraces "worker empowerment" as a central principle, the group themselves tend to overlook incidents of harassment and violence against union members. At the same time, they note how the word 'union' only appears in one

section of the 18 page Alliance Member (ILRE, 2015). Finally, both Accord and Alliance only cover a very small portion of garments factories in Bangladesh. Although the number of total factories is debatable, even if there are 4,500 factories, both Accord and Alliance combined only reaches out to less than half of the existing factories.

In spite of the controversies, there is no way to deny that their presence has changed the focus of the garments industry, as there is more emphasis on workers' safety, which was previously unheard of. The end of their tenure in 2018 will allow us to view which path the industry will take in the future, and indeed it should be a sustainable one.

The author is Associate Professor of Sociology at BRAC University and author of *Broken Promises of Globalization: The case of the Bangladesh garment industry.*

Although the number of total factories is debatable, even if there are 4,500 factories, both Accord and Alliance combined only reaches out to less than half of the existing factories.

Building and Safety, which took place in December 2015, said that the government would not extend the operation tenure of Accord and Alliance, scheduled to end in July 18, 2018. According to the minister,

industry, there have been tensions between these two monitoring regimes as well, owing to the fact that one of them is a largely European effort, while the other is American. Just a few months after signing the

QUOTABLE Quote

SIMON BOLIVAR

An ignorant people is the blind instrument of its own destruction.

BEETLE BAILEY BY MORT WALKER

LT. FUZZ LECTURED ME FOR AN HOUR ABOUT WASTING SCRUB WATER. SO? WHY CAN'T HE JUST KICK ME AND GET IT OVER WITH? NOW YOU APPRECIATE ME!

CROSSWORD BY THOMAS JOSEPH

ACROSS: 1 Up in the air, 6 Ship poles, 11 Air traffic aid, 12 Snow house, 13 Jockey Arcaro, 14 Approaches, 15 Singer McEntire, 17 Cow call, 18 Cutting tool, 22 Whip, 23 Solve a cipher, 27 Spouse's kin, 29 Short putt, 30 Looked intently, 32 Woodwind part, 33 Periodic table listing, 35 Small tablet, 38 Sketch, 39 Rust compound, 41 Highway exits, 45 Bugs bugs him, 46 Unpleasant fellow, 47 Prom crowd, 48 Carmaker Ford

DOWN: 1 "You - Here", 2 Boy, 3 Peculiar, 4 Equitable portion, 5 Forest sights, 6 Mosque tower, 7 Crow older, 8 Shut with a bang, 9 Bullfight beast, 10 Mediocore, 16 Physique, for short, 18 Lose one's footing, 19 Walking stick, 20 Cruise stop, 21 Malicious apps, 24 Ready for business, 25 Slimming plan, 26 Finishes, 28 Sky-scraper workers, 31 German article, 34 Equinox month, 35 Verse creator, 36 Wheel bar, 37 Thin coin, 40 Lair, 42 Fellows, 43 Apiece, 44 Secret agent

NORTH SOUTH UNIVERSITY
The First Private University in Bangladesh

TENDER NOTICE
Tender No. NSU/16-02

North South University (NSU) is inviting sealed offer from the bona fide / reputed organization / distributors / business partners / agents for supplying Laboratory Instruments / Materials for the Department of Civil and Environmental Engineering (CEE) as mentioned below :

| SL. NO | Description of Item | Quantity |
|---------|---------------------------------------|----------|
| Lot -01 | Transportation Engineering Laboratory | 14 items |
| Lot -02 | Geotechnical Engineering Laboratory | 17 items |

Interested bidders may collect a schedule of tender from the Southeast Bank Ltd. Bashundhara Branch, Dhaka from 10:00a.m. to 4:00p.m. Sunday through Thursday on all working days till **May 8, 2016** by paying the non-refundable amount of Taka 1,000.00 (One Thousand) in cash for the schedule.

The bidders must submit **earnest money @ 2.5%** of the quoted price in the form of Pay-Order issued from any scheduled bank drawn in favor of North South University along with their offer. The sealed offer must be submitted on **May 9, 2016** by 2.00 p.m. at the office of the undersigned. The offers will be opened at 2:15 p.m. on the same day. Representatives of the participating bidders may remain present at the time of opening the bids. NSU authority reserves the right to accept or reject any or all the tenders without showing any reason.

USAID REQUEST FOR QUOTATION

USAID Agro-Inputs Project (AIP) in Bangladesh, implemented by CNFA, invites request for quotation from reputed companies/firms for the "Design, Layout, and Printing of Vegetable Pest and Disease Flash Cards" in order to assist agro-input retailers under AIRN.

Experienced and interested companies/firms may electronically obtain explanatory bidding documents <http://www.aipbd.org/opportunities/rfq/> beginning on April 21, 2016. The deadline for hard copy quotation submission is 17:00, May 8, 2016. Bidders must not make inquires to USAID.

YESTERDAY'S ANSWER

C R E M E F L U S H
R E L A X L A N C E
A T T I C A W F U L
V I O L E T A B E
E R R L I L L I A N
N E O S P E A R S
M I S T Y
S H O O T S W O K
M A I T R E D A R E
A F T R A C I N E
S A M B A N O L A N
T R A I L C R E T E
S I N G E E N D E D

The Director, Administration
NORTH SOUTH UNIVERSITY
Bashundhara, Dhaka-1229
Phone: 55668200, Ext. 1204 & 1213
Fax: 55668202, 8845165
www.northsouth.edu