

## Proctor's ridiculous denial!

DU administration cannot abdicate its responsibilities

We are dumbfounded by the statement of the Dhaka University Proctor that he had not been "informed" about the multiple incidents of brutal attacks on DU students by Chhatra League members after the supporters of the quota reform movement had called a press conference to brief journalists on their next course of action. This he told reporters on Tuesday, although the attacks had started on Saturday. He said this after some students came to see him to ask why he had not done anything about these attacks.

What he has said in the way of not being aware of such serious assaults on students is just preposterous. News accompanied by photographs have been circulating on social media and even published in newspapers. Is it possible that the Proctor was in an isolated chamber where no one could reach him? Or that he was so otherwise preoccupied, with what pray tell, that he did not bother to read the papers or watch the news or check his social media account?

The Proctor is trying to deny knowledge of these horrific incidents where students have been mercilessly beaten, manhandled and even arrested. On Saturday, several students, members of the quota reform movement, were injured when Chhatra League members swooped on them as they were about to have the press conference. Since then, other members have been attacked in Shahbagh, Rajshahi University and Shaheed Minar Chattar.

Will the Proctor still continue to deny having knowledge of these heinous attacks? It is absurd that the very person responsible for the welfare of the DU students would adopt a denial mode at their hour of need.

The attacks, as evident from photographs and video footage, were brutal; female students were also mercilessly beaten and humiliated. Did this not warrant the Proctor's immediate intervention? Or at least a condemnation of the crimes and action against the attackers? Instead, he has chosen to turn the other way which is very unfortunate for it makes a mockery of the position he holds.

## Destruction in the name of development

Illegal hill-cutting must be stopped

THAT the hills in the southeast district of Bandarban are being ravaged to build connecting roads to a housing project is outrageous. According to our report, already around four to five hills on about five acres of land have been destroyed to make these two roads and the work for the housing project has been going on in 36 acres of hilly areas without any approval from the government.

Going by the report in this daily, the Bandarban Bhomong royal family sold the 36-acre land to four people in 2002. Although they were supposed to grow fruits in that land, they developed a housing project instead. As the project faced legal complexities over land ownership, the state minister of CHT affairs intervened in the matter and the project was renamed after him. We wonder how a project, not yet approved, can be named after a serving minister.

According to the Hill District Council Act 1989 and Chittagong Hill Tracts Regulation 1900, no land, including khas land, shall be leased out, settled with, purchased, sold, or transferred without prior approval of the concerned department, but this law is hardly implemented.

Many lives have been lost in the CHT due to landslides in the last several years, the main reason of which was illegal hill-cutting. Only last Tuesday, four people including a child died in a landslide in the district. But such tragedies could not stop these people from cutting hills. What is more worrying is that the authorities who are supposed to stop such illegal activities are also a party to these acts.

We urge the government to take immediate action against the owners of the project and other organisations that are destroying the hills in the name of development work. Hill-cutting must be stopped at any cost as this affects the ecology, biodiversity, and geological formation of the area. The government must strictly enforce the laws as the CHT environment is to be saved from permanent damage.

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

letters@thedailystar.net

## Renovate Farmgate Anwar Park

Anwar Park in Farmgate is located in one of the busiest intersections in Dhaka. Even a few years ago, the park had a natural view, allowing dwellers to take a break from their busy life. Many would go there for jogging and exercising in the morning, while kids used to play there in the evening. Now, however, the park serves as a safe haven for drug peddlers and sex workers, a garbage dump for local traders and even a human hauler stand. The fences around the park are broken, with many trees uprooted. Many passersby do not hesitate to urinate near the park.

In a nutshell, the park is unfit for public use. In spite of regular public complaints and several media reports, neither the Dhaka North City Corporation, which has jurisdiction over the area, nor the Public Works Department (PWD) has taken any measures to recover the park. As a resident of the area, I would like to request the authorities concerned to take steps to renovate the park and make it useable by the public as soon as possible. At a time when the city's recreational and public areas are shrinking, we should at least recover the existing ones.

Ratan Kumar Karmakar, By e-mail

## Our road to rapid industrialisation



SELIM RAIHAN

**E**XPERIENCE from successful industrialised countries suggests that industrialisation brings significant structural change in the economy which leads to considerable reduction in poverty, large-scale job creation and substantial improvement in the welfare of the people of a country.

Bangladesh has undergone some structural transformation over the past four decades, where the share of agriculture in the gross-domestic product (GDP) declined from around 60 percent in the early 1970s to 15 percent in 2016. The share of the services sector increased from 34 percent to 56 percent, the share of manufacturing increased from four percent to 18 percent, and the share of the non-manufacturing industry (mining quarrying, construction, and electricity and gas) increased from two percent to 11 percent during the same period.

Despite some fluctuations, the share of manufacturing in GDP increased from as low as four percent in 1972 to around 15 percent in 1984. But, between 1984 and 2016, this share increased by only three percentage points, from 15 percent to 18 percent. Though there has been a consistent but slow upward trend in the share of manufacturing in GDP between 1990 and 2016, the trend of the share of manufacturing in the country's employment has been rather uneven during the same period. From a share of 14 percent manufacturing employment in 1989, the share declined to 7.3 percent in 2000. However, the manufacturing employment share had seen a steep rise since 2000, and in 2013, the share reached the level of 16.4 percent. Yet, it is a matter of grave concern that since 2013 the share started declining and, in 2016, it stood at 14.4 percent. This raises the fear of "pre-mature" deindustrialisation in Bangladesh at a very low level of per capita income.

It is important to note that the structural transformation through manufacturing is primarily the movement of labour from agriculture to manufacturing. Successful newly industrialised countries from East and Southeast Asia, at their peak of industrialisation, had employment share in manufacturing well above 20 percent. Also, the share of manufacturing in GDP in those countries at their peak was well above 30 percent. Despite the fact that over

the past four decades, the share of agriculture in employment in Bangladesh declined, agriculture still accounts for over 40 percent of total employment. The labour released from agriculture has been absorbed primarily in the low-productive services and non-manufacturing industrial (especially construction) sectors. This process has led to an unsuccessful headway towards the creation of productive jobs, slow progress in reduction in poverty as well as rising inequality.

The aforementioned analysis also points to the fact that the pace at which Bangladesh has increased its manufacturing shares in both GDP and employment has been considerably slower than those of many newly industrialised countries in East and

Despite some progress in raising the manufacturing shares in GDP and employment during 1990 and 2016, Bangladesh has not been successful in moving to the next phase of industrialisation. The manufacturing sector in Bangladesh is highly concentrated around low value-added readymade garments, and the country has not yet been able to move successfully to the next generation of manufacturing, especially to high value-added manufacturing.

There are four major issues which need to be in order for a rapid industrialisation in Bangladesh. First, there are a number of policy-induced challenges. The first generation of reform of trade and industrial policies in the 1980s and 1990s helped Bangladesh

the Bangladesh government in setting up 100 special economic zones (SEZ) as well as the development of some infrastructural projects seem to address these infrastructural and high-cost-of-doing-business issues. However, the progress in the implementation of the SEZs and the infrastructural projects is slow and is yet to show the signs of any "regime change". A major departure is needed in terms of enhancing the government's institutional efficiency to ensure timely and cost-effective delivery of such projects.

Third, the current state of human capital is not at all conducive to rapid industrialisation in Bangladesh. The country needs to attach utmost importance to improving the existing low level of human capital by enhancing



PHOTO: ISMAIL FERDous/WORLD BANK

Southeast Asia. Newly industrialised countries from East and Southeast Asia saw rapid rises in shares of value-added manufacturing and employment. All these contributed to the massive reduction in poverty, large-scale employment generation, and rise in per capita incomes by many folds within a much shorter time in those countries. The immediate lesson Bangladesh can draw from the experiences of these successful countries is that Bangladesh needs to graduate from the current very sluggish process of industrialisation to achieve the aforementioned large development goals of poverty reduction, employment generation and per capita income growth within a short time period.

achieve the current level of progress in manufacturing. However, returns from those reforms have been exhausted, and also there are now some policies in place towards the wrong directions. There is a need for second-generation strategic and dynamic industrial policies aiming at rapid expansion and diversification of manufacturing through large-scale domestic and foreign investments. Given the changes in the global and regional trade scenarios, the need for such strategic trade and industrial policies is more important now than ever.

Second, a number of supply-side constraints in the form of weak infrastructure and the high cost of doing business need to be addressed within a short time span. The initiatives taken by

investment on education, skill development, and health.

Finally, the political economy factors, especially institutional development for rapid industrialisation, require proper attention. The incentives to maintain the status-quo are huge in the form of generation of substantial rents from the existing economic system. The onus now is on the political elites to break this vicious cycle of rent generation. There is also a need for strong commitments from the political elites for necessary economic and institutional reforms for a rapid industrialisation.

Dr Selim Raihan is Professor, Department of Economics, University of Dhaka, and Executive Director, South Asian Network on Economic Modeling (SANEM). Email: selim.raihan@econdu.ac.bd

## India-US ties set upon an uncertain path

PALLAB BHATTACHARYA

**I**NDIA is in for a testing time for conducting its complex relations with the United States. This was clearly brought out by US' inability made public on June 27 to hold the crucial dialogue at the level of foreign and defence ministers in the first week of July in Washington and seek a rescheduling of the events.

Indian External Affairs and Defence Ministers Sushma Swaraj and Nirmala Sitharaman were supposed to travel to Washington for holding what has come to be known in Indo-US diplomatic parlance as 2+2 dialogue with their American counterparts Mike Pompeo and James Mattis.

It was just a week ago that the US had formally announced July 6 as the date for the 2+2 dialogue. Indian media reports, quoting unnamed US officials, attributed the postponement of the 2+2 dialogue to the problem of scheduling the events, whose holding was decided



In a recent meeting, United States Ambassador to the United Nations, Nikki Haley, urged Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi to stop Iranian oil import.

PHOTO: AFP

defence sectors, and the two discussed ways to enhance bilateral cooperation.

So it is clear that the deferment of the 2+2 dialogue cannot be explained merely by scheduling issues and that the reasons are much bigger. The US Embassy in India, however, was quick to try and quell any dim view of the postponement of the 2+2 dialogue by issuing a statement on June 28, saying it should not be linked to India-US ties. But it may not have had the intended effect.

The rough patches in the Indo-US relations have developed primarily on account of three issues: (i) Washington's withdrawal from the 2015 international agreement on Iran's nuclear programme and imposition of sanctions on any country doing business with the Persian Gulf country; (ii) India's move to sign a USD 5.5 billion deal to buy five S-400 Triumf air defence missile systems from Russia targeted by the US legislation Countering America's Adversaries Through Sanction Act (CAATSA); and (iii) friction on imposition of import duties on steel and aluminium from India and 29 goods imported from the US. The impact of American sanctions on India, the world's third largest oil consumer, for import of petroleum from Iran and purchase of defence

hardware from Russia could have come up for discussion at the 2+2 dialogue.

Besides the missile defence system, other military hardware deals worth USD 7 billion are also waiting to be wrapped up between India and Russia. Since the US too is planning to sell armed drones and other high-tech equipment to India, there was speculation if the US is working on injecting some kind of flexibility under the CAATSA to those countries keen to buy the Russian weapon systems. In fact, Mattis had earlier favoured an exemption from CAATSA for countries like India. But that may not translate into reality.

India has had strong defence ties with Russia from the days of the Soviet Union and prefers to continue with that despite warming of New Delhi-Washington relations in the last four years of the Modi government. New Delhi believes diversification of options is the name of the game in international relations. Proceeding with this belief, Modi had held an informal summit with Russian President Vladimir Putin in the eastern Russian coastal city of Sochi in May and sought to assure him that India is not into joining any alliance with any one or group of countries. One of the issues Putin had flagged before Modi in Sochi was the proposed Quadrilateral

involving India, the US, Japan and Australia. This articulation also found expression in the Indian prime minister's first Indo-Pacific policy statement at the Shangri-La Dialogue in Singapore a few weeks later when he made it clear that while India's relationship with the US has shed the baggage of the Cold War era, it does not believe in forming "alliances of containment."

Much for the same reason, India has so far resisted from signing with the US two pacts—Communications Compatibility and Security Agreement (Comcas) and Basic Exchange and Cooperation Agreement (BECA)—because in the case of both, Washington's eyes are on containing Beijing. The Trump administration must realise that in international diplomacy you cannot have an "us or they" mindset, particularly for a country like India which is wedded to a multi-polar world order.

What is of immediate worry for India is the US sanction on import of oil from Iran. Seven years ago, the US had pressured India to cut down its procurement of oil from Iran. Over the years, Iran has been replaced as India's top oil supplier to number three at present—behind Saudi Arabia and Iraq. India's import of oil from Iran stood at 22 million tonnes in 2017, down by five million tonnes from 2016. But there is a major difference between what it was under the Obama administration and the Trump dispensation now. In the past, the US had insisted on gradual reduction in oil import from Iran and not total halt to dealings with Iran. But Trump, the great disruptor, is unlikely to extend the concession by even a small window and could be stricter in enforcing the sanctions on business with Iran. A decline in Iranian oil supply may push up its costs in the international market and consequently put pressure on India's oil import subsidy bill in a year when Modi-led Bharatiya Janata Party faces general elections. All in all, India-US ties are set to enter an uncertain path in the weeks to come.

Pallab Bhattacharya is a special correspondent at The Daily Star.

**India has had strong defence ties with Russia from the days of the Soviet Union and prefers to continue with that despite warming of New Delhi-Washington relations in the last four years of the Modi government.**

upon in August last year after a meeting between Prime Minister Narendra Modi and President Donald Trump. The announcement of the postponement came on a day when the US Ambassador to the United Nations Nikki Haley met PM Modi in New Delhi and noted the deepening relations between India and the US, particularly in strategic and