

How Bangladeshi universities can make it to the world ranking

A.S.M.A. HASEEB

RECENTLY, there has been much discussion in Bangladesh about international ranking of universities. This follows the absence of any Bangladeshi university in major ranking lists, while some universities in the neighbouring countries such as India, Pakistan and Nepal have succeeded in having their names included in ranking.

Ranking of universities, being increasingly important in a globalised world, is generally recognised to improve the quality of education and research as a benchmarking tool. Ranking helps improve transparency and foster competition. It enhances the visibility and reputation of a university, and indeed the reputation of a country. World university ranking in its present form probably started in 2003 with the introduction of what is currently known as the Academic Ranking of World Universities (ARWU). Three of the most influential global university ranking systems are ARWU, Times Higher Education (THE), and Quacquarelli Symonds (QS).

ARWU uses the following indicators and weightage for world university ranking: 1) Quality of Education (alumni winning Nobel Prizes and Fields Medals) - 10 percent; 2a) Quality of Faculty (staff winning Nobel Prizes and Fields Medals) - 20 percent; 2b) Quality of Faculty (highly cited researchers) - 20 percent; 3a) Research Output (papers published in *Nature* and *Science*) - 20 percent; 3b) Research Output (papers indexed in Web of Science) - 20 percent; and 4) Per Capita Performance (academic) - 10 percent.

Most indicators above—e.g. the number of Nobel Prize winners, and publications in most prestigious journals like *Nature* and *Science*, etc.—are linked with research achievements at the highest level. For determining the quality of faculty and quality of research output, ARWU uses the most esteemed bibliographic data base, the Web of Science (WoS), which indexes selected high-quality journals.

The Times Higher Education (THE) World University Ranking uses five criteria: 1) Teaching - 30 percent (1a. Reputation survey - 15 percent, 1b. Staff-to-student ratio - 4.5 percent, 1c. Doctorate-to-bachelor's ratio - 2.25 percent, 1d. Doctorates-awarded-to-academic-staff ratio - 6 percent, 1e. Institutional income - 2.25 percent); 2)



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Research - 30 percent (2a. Reputation survey - 18 percent, 2b. Research income - 6 percent, 2c. Research productivity - 6 percent); 3) Citations (research influence) - 30 percent; 4) International outlook - 7.5 percent (4a. International-to-domestic-student ratio - 2.5 percent, 4b. International-to-domestic-staff ratio - 2.5 percent, 4c. International collaboration - 2.5 percent); and 5) Industry income (knowledge transfer) - 2.5 percent.

The THE ranking assigns 30 percent to teaching, and 60 percent to research and research influence (citation) combined. A substantial weightage for teaching and research comes from surveys conducted

by THE. It also takes into account doctoral students in a university, which relate to the strength of postgraduate programme. THE puts 30 percent weightage on citation. Citation refers to the quotes that a research paper receives from other researchers. A higher number of citations supposedly means that the authors have created greater academic impact on the research community. For calculating research output and citation, THE uses Scopus database which is not as high-ranking as WoS used by ARWU.

QS World University Ranking uses six criteria: 1) Academic Reputation - 40 percent; 2) Employer Reputation - 10 percent;

3) Faculty/Student Ratio - 20 percent; 4) Citations per faculty - 20 percent; 5) International Faculty Ratio - 5 percent; and 6) International Student Ratio - 5 percent.

QS determines academic reputation and employer reputation totalling 50 percent through surveys conducted among national and international stakeholders. Faculty/student ratio also has a substantial weightage (20 percent). Citation per faculty, a measure of research performance, accounts for 20 percent. Like THE, QS also counts citation based on Scopus. The international character of a university, in terms of international faculty and students, receives 10 percent weightage. Compared with THE (33 percent), QS (50 percent) puts more weightage on the perceived reputation determined through surveys.

Generally, ARWU, being most skewed towards highest quality research, is suitable for universities with a very strong research base. THE is second in terms of putting emphasis on research, while QS puts lesser weight on research compared with the other two.

Typically, a university follows a ranking system(s) which is in line with its vision and mission. Universities not very strong in research tend to follow QS ranking. For instance, universities in Malaysia have been focusing on QS ranking. The University of Malaya (UM), the oldest in Malaysia, can be considered as an example. In 2012, UM stood at 156th position in the QS World University Ranking. Since then, UM, backed by total policy and funding support from the government and guided by its own strategic plan, has been putting focused efforts to improve its performance against each of the QS criteria. UM established a dedicated strategic planning unit for ranking which helps it make steady progress. Currently, UM ranks 70th in the QS World University Ranking.

Since even the top universities in Bangladesh are at present not very active in research, they may target QS ranking out of the three prestigious ranking systems. The bottom line for performing well in ranking is simple: improve the quality of education, increase the quality and quantity of research output, and enhance visibility. As mentioned above, QS puts much emphasis on academic and employer reputation. As for academic reputation, a university should carry out

research and publish in indexed journals. Regarding employer reputation, universities must produce graduates with adequate subject-matter knowledge and skills, and transferrable skills so that they perform well professionally.

The recent HEQEP project run by the University Grants Commission (UGC) on enhancing institutional quality should help in this regard. For both academic reputation and employer reputation, visibility and branding are important. Citation per faculty, an important QS criterion, would be an issue for Bangladeshi universities. This requires that the faculty publish research papers in journals indexed by Scopus. Indeed, the quality and relevance of these papers should be adequate enough to receive citations. To achieve this, ample resources have to be made available to the universities to produce quality research outputs. Universities need to strengthen their research leadership and management skills, research infrastructure, postgraduate programmes, and incentive schemes for researchers.

Bangladeshi universities may not perform well in areas like international faculty and students. These, accounting for 10 percent in QS ranking, should not be of much concern at this stage. Universities interested in participating in ranking should devise their strategic plans and put dedicated efforts to this end, as it is a long-term endeavour.

After nearly 50 years of independence, Bangladesh deserves to have at least a few of her universities included in a respectable world university ranking system, e.g. QS. Ranking is important not only for national prestige but also for attracting hi-tech foreign investment. The latter is vital for Bangladesh to achieve the status of a middle-income nation. Given the concentration of talents in the top universities in Bangladesh, it should not be very difficult to achieve respectable ranking positions. However, the commitment should begin at the national level. To start, the government may focus on a few universities—for example, Dhaka University, BUET, etc.—and provide them with adequate resources and support so that they can in turn strive to elevate national prestige.

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Trade war dominates G20 Summit

SULTANA YESMIN

THE 14th summit of the Group of 20 (G20) major economies was held at the International Exhibition Center, Osaka, Japan on June 28-29. The G20, a coalition of the leaders of the largest and fastest-growing economies, was formed in 1999 soon after the financial crisis in East Asia that affected many countries around the world.

The annual summit has gradually evolved into a major forum to promote international financial stability, discuss important economic issues, and other pressing global concerns. The group consists of 19 countries and the European Union and accounts for around 85 percent of the world's Gross Domestic Product (GDP), nearly 75 percent of all global trade, and about 66 percent of the world's population.

The ongoing trade war between China and the United States and signs of a global economic slowdown took the lime light at the two-day G20 summit. Leaders raised their concern over trade tensions between the world's two biggest economies and the dire consequences of a protracted trade war for the world economy. Jean-Claude Juncker, President of the European Commission, referred to US-China trade relations as "difficult" and raised the issue of the risks of the slowdown of global economy. Experts also raised their concern about the spread of dispute between the largest economies beyond trade.

The United States has already imposed tariffs on about USD 250 billion of Chinese imports. US President Donald Trump also threatened to levy additional tariffs on another USD 325 billion of Chinese goods, covering almost all imports from

China into the US. In addition, as part of "protecting" the US computer networks from "foreign adversaries", the US commerce department has added Huawei—the Chinese telecommunications giant and leader in fifth generation or 5G mobile phone technology—to its "entity list", declared as "security threat", and banned US companies from doing business as well as sharing any technology with Huawei.

Soon afterwards, Google has confirmed its restriction of Huawei's access to the Android operating system and chipmakers until further notice. The US also put pressure on other countries to drop Huawei from the development of 5G network. Relations between the two countries have severely soured due to the escalating trade tensions. In response, China imposed tariffs on USD 60 billion worth of US goods and also cancelled purchases of US soybeans.

Needless to say, the US-China trade dispute has already cost billions of dollars for companies on both sides. It has also disrupted global manufacturing and agitated global markets. The International Monetary Fund (IMF) warned that the US-China trade dispute could cut global GDP by 0.5 percent in 2020 or about USD 455 billion.

Regarding the ongoing tensions, Chinese President Xi Jinping and US President Donald Trump held high-stake talks on the sidelines of G20 summit in Osaka. The US agreed to postpone levying additional tariffs on Chinese goods that it had threatened earlier. Both Xi and Trump agreed to a ceasefire and a return to talks. Trump declared the US trade negotiations with China to be "right back on track" and mentioned the scope of reaching a fair trade deal on easing tensions with China as "monumental".

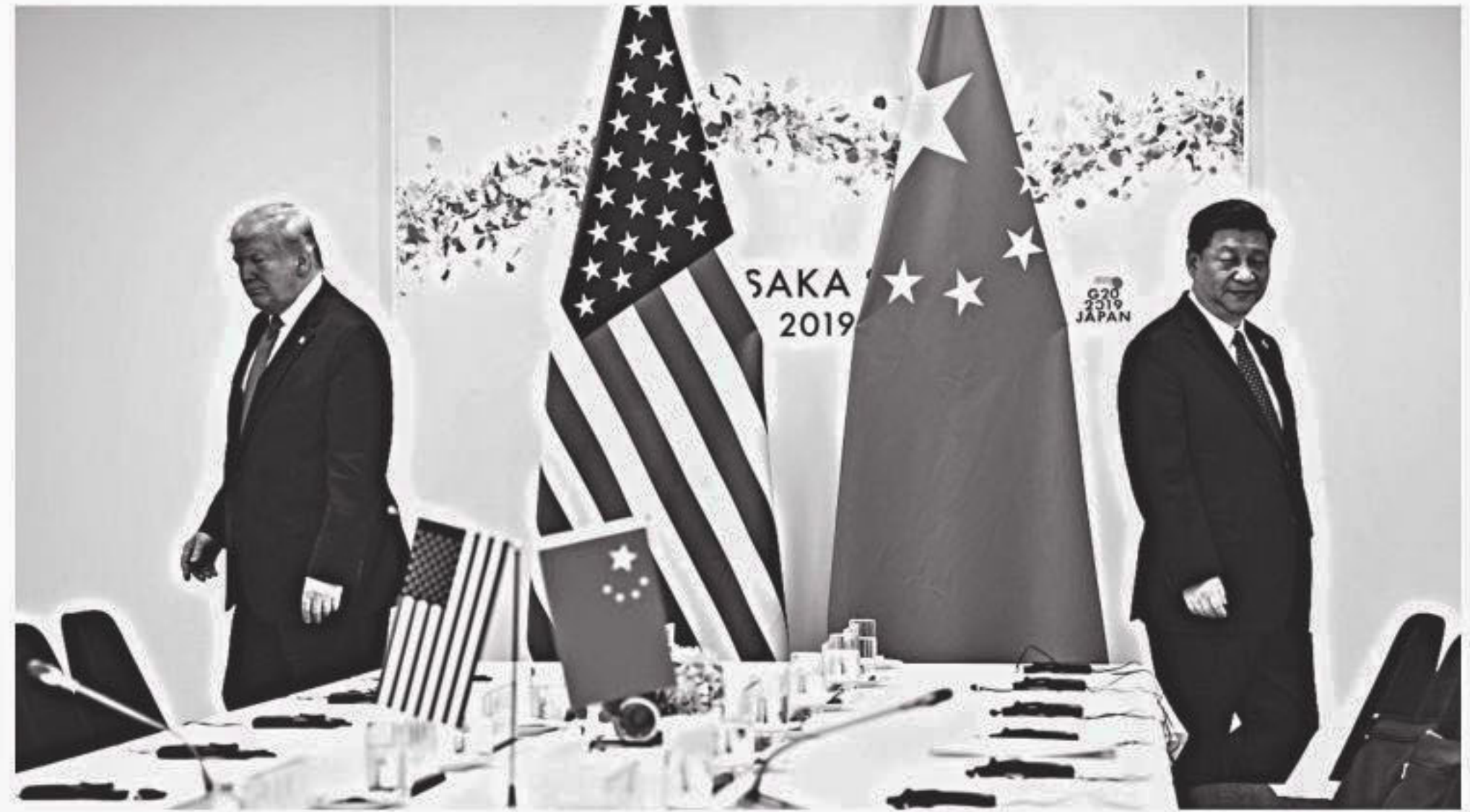


PHOTO: BRENDAN SMIALOWSKI/AFP

Chinese President Xi Jinping (R) and US President Donald Trump attend their bilateral meeting on the sidelines of the G20 Summit in Osaka on June 29, 2019.

However, no decision has yet been made from the US side about the relaxation of strict rules imposed on Huawei. So far, the resumption of trade talks based on mutual respect and equal-footing has been considered as the best outcome coming from the Trump-Xi talks at G20 summit.

Besides, discussion on global economy also got priority at the summit. The leaders of G20 nations agreed to work towards a "free, fair, and non-discriminatory" trade, "digital economy", and "open market". Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa called for joint efforts to stabilise international trade and oppose protectionism in a meeting on the G20 sidelines, though they kept from

criticising Trump-style protectionism.

Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe delivered his speech with a particular emphasis on "free and open economy" for "peace and prosperity". Likewise, Chinese President Xi Jinping addressed the issue of open global trading system, multilateralism, and open world economy. Xi reiterated China's vision for easier market access through further opening up its market, proactively expanding imports, and continuously improving its business environment for foreign enterprises along with China's engagement with various trade agreement negotiations. China's National Development and Reform Commission

(NDRC) announced further reducing the negative list of foreign investment and widening access to petroleum and gas exploration, agriculture, mining and manufacturing.

G20 nations also endeavoured to forge a consensus on geopolitical tensions such as worsening relationship between the US and Iran. To be specific, Donald Trump announced to impose additional sanctions on Iran in response to the shooting down of an unmanned US drone in the Gulf that sparked fears of a new war breaking out in the Middle East. The leaders urged both Washington and Tehran to reopen a negotiation process and resolve their differences peacefully. The United Nations' Secretary-General, Antonio Guterres, highlighted the urgency to deescalate the rising US-Iran tensions and avoid confrontation.

Climate change was another contentious item on the agenda at the G20 meeting and got a fair amount of attention. In order to protect the environment, G20 nations agreed to increase their annual spending on coal-fired plants to USD 64 billion. All G20 nations except the US reaffirmed their support to the successful implementation of the 2015 Paris Agreement.

Despite having some shortcomings such as the lack of a consensus on US-China trade dispute, and absence of a concrete promise to end US-Iran tensions, the summit will be noted for some positive developments such as the US-China agreement on resumption of trade talks, consensus on free and fair trade, and the increase in annual spending for environmental protection.

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QUOTABLE Quote

THOMAS JEFFERSON
(1743–1826)
American statesman, diplomat, lawyer, architect, and Founding Father who served as the third president of the United States.

I find that the harder I work, the more luck I seem to have.

CROSSWORD BY THOMAS JOSEPH

ACROSS

- 1 Island east of Java
- 5 Stews
- 10 Oscar or Tony
- 12 Constraint
- 13 Small error
- 14 Acid type
- 15 Tippy
- 16 Hounds' quarry
- 18 Negative link
- 19 Visit briefly
- 21 Make coffee
- 22 With 25-Across, four-dimensional
- 24 Make broader
- 25 See 22-Across
- 29 Liberal study
- 30 Kermit, for one
- 32 Spare tire

DOWN

- 1 Part of a count
- 2 Looks forward to
- 3 Computer choice
- 4 1040 org.
- 5 Linen source
- 6 Brink
- 7 "8 Mile" rapper
- 8 Cassiterite, for one
- 9 Long-legged bird
- 11 Surplus's opposite
- 17 Phrase on a coin
- 20 Most of a chess set
- 21 Locker poster
- 23 Like some profs
- 25 Less refined
- 26 Canada's capital
- 27 Employ more employees
- 28 Turned to liquid
- 29 Like tumblers
- 31 Lock
- 33 Stance
- 36 Towel word
- 38 High hit

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YESTERDAY'S ANSWERS

W	A	G	O	N	R	E	G	A	L
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