

# An Ignoble Nobel Laureate

## An appallingly warped document

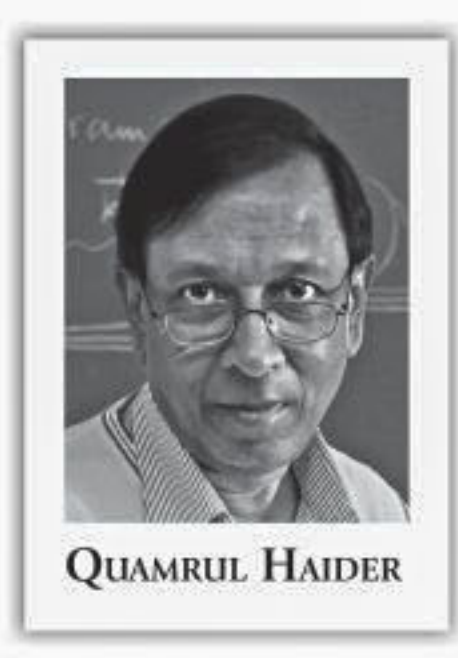
*Withdraw, verify and then republish the Razakars' list*

THE Ministry of Liberation War Affairs couldn't have presented the nation with anything worse than a Razakars' list replete with mistakes on the eve of our 49th Victory Day. To say that the list is a sloppy work will be an understatement. It betrays a total lack of seriousness, sincerity and interest in presenting to the nation something that happens to be an important and historical document. Any error therein has unmitigated ramifications. It is shocking that the Razakars' list should contain names of well-known freedom fighters and even martyrs. It is a faux pas of the greatest magnitude that brooks no justification and deserves the severest censure.

The Liberation War Ministry's excuse that it had not made the list is a fig leaf for the grievous hurt and humiliation that it has caused to not only those freedom fighters and martyrs whose names have been wrongfully included in the list of Razakars; it has also demeaned all the freedom fighters and the Liberation War as a whole. Saying that the ministry has only reprinted the list published by the home ministry, 48 years after it was first published, cannot help shirk the responsibility for the disgraceful, shocking and scandalous document. We feel it was the responsibility of the Liberation War Ministry to go through a document published nearly half a century ago and remove any error that might have been there before publishing it. Apparently, there were quite a few.

The Liberation War Minister's comment that his ministry would withdraw the list if there were more mistakes and then correct it after investigation will do little to assuage the wounds inflicted by this disgraceful list. Why was such a list, which was not properly verified, published at all? Why such utter apathy regarding something so vital?

The Liberation War holds the most respected pride of place in a nation's life and, equally so, in the hearts of those who risked death to confront and fight the Pakistan army. One can understand the feelings of those freedom fighters and their families and also those of the martyrs whose names appear in the list wrongfully. And the least the ministry can do to assuage the frayed sentiments is to first withdraw and verify and then republish the list free of all errors.



QUAMRUL HAIDER

AFTER his death in 1896, the will of Alfred Nobel, the Swedish inventor of dynamite, established the Nobel Prize in the fields of Physics, Chemistry, Medicine, Literature and Peace. The prize is awarded annually to individuals and/or organisations (peace only) whose work "during the preceding year, shall have conferred the greatest benefit on mankind." Although it is considered to be the most prestigious award in the world, the noble purpose of the prize creates an odd juxtaposition with the source of the prize money, sometimes referred to as "blood money," because Nobel's claim to fame and fortune came mainly from making and selling arms.

Since the first Nobel Prizes were awarded in 1901, peace prizes have been the most controversial of all the Nobels. The endless controversies surrounding the prizes stem not only from the ambiguity of the concept of peace, but also from the political motivations behind the selection of the recipients.

However, the 1991 Nobel Peace Prize winner Aung San Suu Kyi's refusal to stop the genocide and ethnic cleansing of the Rohingya Muslims by her proxy government, the Myanmar army, begs the question: how noble are the Nobel peace laureates?

The list of peace prize recipients whose eligibility for the honour was questionable is long. Leading the pack of not-so-noble peace laureates is the former US Secretary of State Henry Kissinger, who spearheaded a series of secret aerial bombings in Southeast Asia that either killed, wounded, or made homeless an estimated six million people. He also condoned the 1971 genocide in Bangladesh and was instrumental in toppling the Chilean President Salvador Allende in favour of the military dictator Augusto Pinochet. Nevertheless, he shared the 1973 prize with North Vietnam's Le Duc Tho for ending the Vietnam War.

By honouring Kissinger with the peace prize, the Nobel Committee essentially rewarded a war criminal. Tho declined the award, accusing Washington of violating the truce, while two members of the Nobel Committee, who voted against Kissinger's selection, resigned in protest.

Four years after sharing the Nobel Peace Prize with Egypt's Anwar Sadat for their Camp David peace accord, Israeli leader Menachem Begin, once a member of the terrorist organisation Irgun, ordered the invasion of Lebanon in 1982. Begin's terrorist compatriot Yitzhak Rabin and nuclear hawk Shimon Peres shared the 1994 prize with the Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat, for signing the Oslo Accords. Two years later, Peres was responsible for the Qana Massacre in Lebanon. Needless to say, the

Oslo Accords have not brought a lasting settlement to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, which still persists with Benjamin Netanyahu using weapons of mass destruction to kill women, children and unarmed civilians.

It was rather strange that the 1993 peace prize was awarded jointly to two opposite extremes—a great peace activist and a staunch defender of apartheid—Nelson Mandela and FW de Klerk, respectively. What criteria were used to award the 2009 peace prize to Barack Obama just months after taking office as the President of the United States? Did his work in the previous years benefit

by the Nobel Committee as the champion of "non-violent struggle for democracy and human rights." In 2015, her election to the post of state councillor, making her the *de facto* head of government, was hailed as a watershed moment for Myanmar.

But four years on, the one-time intrepid champion of human rights and democracy has become one of the worst violators of human rights. She is now a global pariah shielding a marauding army from scrutiny, defending its genocidal campaign against the Rohingyas, jailing journalists and locking up critics, thereby leaving the international community

denounces them as terrorists and illegal immigrants.

In 1991, Suu Kyi was applauded for her "courage in the face of tyranny." Today, because of her complicity with the top brass of the military, she is loathed even by her former admirers. She finally laid bare her true colours by defending the indefensible charges of genocide against the generals at the International Court of Justice (ICJ) in The Hague. Let's not forget, these are the people who once imprisoned her for her struggle for human rights and democracy. Yes, she forgot her own mantra: "The only real prison is fear and the only real freedom is



Aung San Suu Kyi, once garlanded as a global rights champion, has seen a sharp fall from grace due to her persistent refusal to stop the genocide and ethnic cleansing of the Rohingyas in Myanmar.

## Proper disposal of medical waste essential

*Hospitals must have a mechanism to incinerate medical waste*

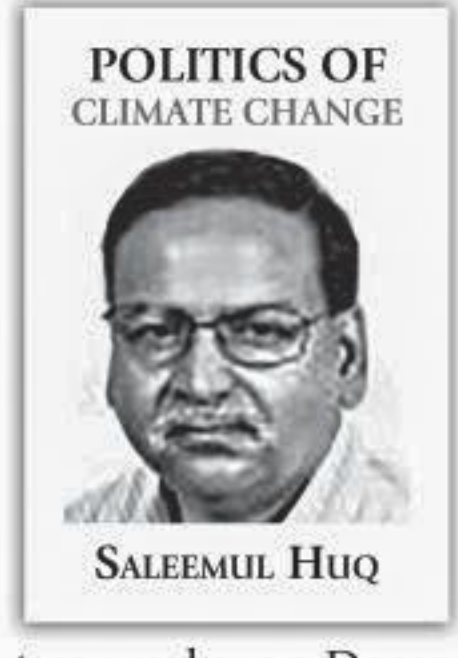
IT is alarming to learn that none of the 88 hospitals and 182 diagnostic centres operating in Chattogram have any mechanism in place to incinerate clinical waste. Even the two main government hospitals of the city—Chattogram Medical College and Hospital (CMCH) and Chattogram General Hospital (CGH)—do not have incinerators. This is a cause for concern because open dumping of medical waste in the landfills poses serious risks to public health. Diseases such as pneumonia, diarrhoea, tetanus, hepatitis B and C and even HIV/AIDS can easily spread through the untreated medical waste. So medical waste must be collected separately and sterilised or incinerated to avoid the risk of contamination.

Not only in Chattogram, the situation is pretty much the same in other divisional cities as well. The divisional cities, excluding the capital, have around 1,380 public and private healthcare establishments that produce over 20 tonnes of medical waste every day. This huge amount of untreated waste is dumped in the landfills which are mostly situated near rivers and water bodies. This daily ran a report a few months ago about how medical waste, dumped near rivers and wetlands, is polluting the drinking water supplies as well as contaminating the soil.

However, it is good to know that a private organisation has been working to improve the situation in Chattogram. It has signed contracts with many hospitals and diagnostic centres across the city to collect their waste. However, since the organisation uses a pit-hole method to destroy medical waste, it has been causing air pollution as a result.

Needless to say, we need a modern waste disposal system to deal with the huge amount of medical waste being produced every day. In addition, the government should strictly enforce the Medical Waste (Management and Processing) Rules 2008 to avoid any public health disaster in the future.

# COP25: Long but barely fruitful



SALEEMUL HUQ

THE 25th Conference of Parties (COP25) of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) started on December 2 and was due to finish after about two weeks, on December 13 (Friday). However, it went into overtime for non-stop negotiations through Friday night and Saturday day and night, to finally finish two days late on Sunday afternoon. It is thus the longest COP ever held.

Even after all that time, however, there was agreement on only some of the items. The final topic involved the discussion of Article 6 on allowing trading of carbon

credits, where some countries such as Brazil and India wanted their old carbon credits under the Kyoto Protocol to be counted under the Paris Agreement. Even after two days of non-stop negotiations, this topic remains unresolved and has been moved on to the COP26 agenda for next year.

The other topics where agreements were reached include capacity building, ambition, finance and Warsaw International Mechanism (WIM) on Loss and Damage.

On the issue of loss and damage, Bangladesh, along with other vulnerable developing countries, had been demanding the addition of an implementation financing wing to the WIM. We got the creation of the Santiago Network on Loss and Damage which is a good outcome but we didn't get the finance part. Nevertheless, all is not lost

as we can continue to work on exploring finance for loss and damage in the future.

The extension of negotiations beyond the two weeks of official talks has an extremely debilitating impact on the vulnerable developing countries as most of their delegates had to leave Madrid, where COP25 was held, and could not be there until the end to prevent their text disappearing in the final version.

As this has become a usual practice, Bangladesh should join with other vulnerable countries' groups and demand that, in future COPs, the deadline of Friday is made a hard deadline and anything that is undecided by then is automatically taken forward to the next COP. If the Presidency of the COP feels that overnight negotiations are essential, then this should be done on Wednesday and Thursday nights and not on Friday and Saturday nights.

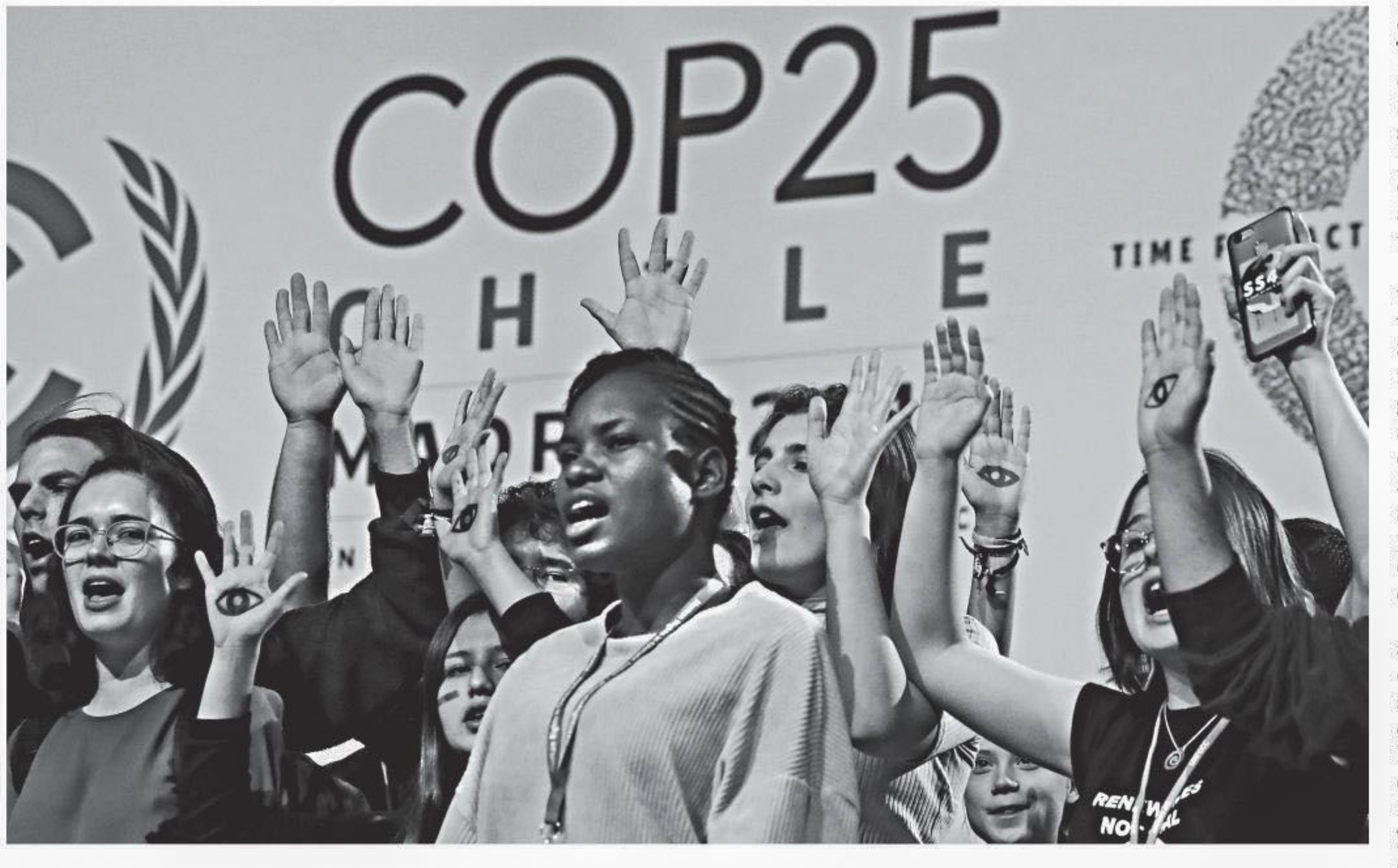
At the same time, the government should allow some of the senior negotiators to remain for an extra two days beyond the official end, in case the negotiations go into overtime. By not being there at the end, we risk losing everything we wanted in the final decision, as the final agreement always drops our text unless we stay until the end to defend it.

One of the bigger issues that the COP failed to address was to even recognise the magnitude of the global climate change problem, which was highlighted by a special report by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) on the Cryosphere and Oceans that highlighted the higher sea level rise now being expected. Some countries refused to even recognise the science from the IPCC.

The other big issue was the role of children and civil society who use the term "climate emergency" rather than climate change, and were led by Greta Thunberg in a march in Madrid with half a million people. The COP president invited Greta to come to the COP and speak. The negotiators listened to her politely but then ignored her message of urgency and went back to endless arguments over comas and obscure terms that no one else even understands.

Finally, the Bangladesh government took a nice pavilion at COP25 in Madrid which was inaugurated by Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina when she attended the first day of the COP. This allowed the government as well as Bangladeshi NGOs and researchers to run sessions which were quite well-attended. The initiative to have a pavilion enabling non-governmental actors to join in using it was a good and practical way of demonstrating the whole-of-society approach to tackling climate change in Bangladesh.

The Bangladesh delegation also held a daily debrief every evening where other Bangladeshis were invited to attend and provide inputs to the official delegation. Over the years, Bangladesh has developed some excellent climate change negotiators. However, we also need to invest in building the capacity of younger negotiators who can take over after some years.



Climate change activist Greta Thunberg is seen behind young climate activists on stage at the High-Level event on Climate Emergency during the UN Climate Change Conference (COP25) in Madrid, Spain, on December 11, 2019.

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

letters@thedailystar.net

### Stop child abuse at any cost

Abuse of children is a reprehensible crime. It is extremely shameful that we have earned quite a bit of notoriety when it comes to abusing children. One may recall the many horrific incidents in which children were abused and tortured. A recent report by *The Daily Star* about a homeless boy set on fire by an unknown man filled me with fear and anguish. Are street children so neglected that no one even bothered to notice a crime of this magnitude being committed?

Apart from physical abuse, the increasing number of child rape incidents in our country is another big worry for us. If the existing laws cannot prevent sexual abuse of children, then the authorities should implement stricter laws to protect them. It is extremely important that we take the matter seriously and do whatever is necessary to ensure a happy and healthy future for all children.

Rehnuma Rahman  
Chattogram

SALEEMUL HUQ is Director, International Centre for Climate Change and Development at the Independent University, Bangladesh.