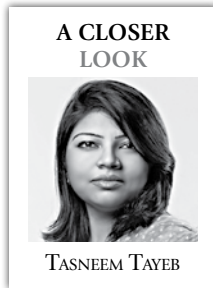


QATAR DIPLOMATIC CRISIS

# A warm embrace or just a photo op?



A CLOSER LOOK

TASNEEM TAYEB

**S**AUDI Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman warmly embracing Emir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani of Qatar on January 5 at the Saudi Al Ula airport made for

a picture-perfect scene of brotherhood. The Qatari Emir was in Saudi Arabia to attend the 41st summit of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC)—the first time since 2017, when four member states of the GCC: Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain and Egypt, imposed a blockade on Qatar after accusing it of supporting terrorism, among other allegations. The four countries placed 13 demands which they said Qatar must comply with for the air, land and sea blockade to be lifted.

Qatar not only denied the unsubstantiated allegations, but stood its ground. The country strengthened its ties with Iran and Turkey in the last three and a half years and has emerged from this crisis—the worst in the history of the GCC in the last couple of decades—stronger and more resilient.

According to Middle East and North Africa (MENA) analysts, this has put Qatar in an advantageous position. With strong ties with Iran and Turkey, Qatar is now in a position to heal some of the gaping wounds festering in the MENA region: Libya, Syria and Yemen. In all the three countries, major MENA players such as the Saudis, the Emiratis, Iran, Turkey, Egypt, Kuwait, Oman and Qatar, are divided in their support for rival factions.

While discussing the issue with TRT World, Dr Sanam Vakil, Deputy Director and Senior Research Fellow at Chatham House's Middle East and North Africa Programme, suggested that

to resolve the ongoing disputes in the Middle East, "regional investment and regional diplomacy" would be required and that by not having Qatar as a competitor, the GCC would have more to gain in the current situation.

However, the optimism for a more unified GCC should be measured. First of all, on the face of it all, the reconciliation seems imposed on the Saudis, UAE and Egypt by the Trump administration as a last ditch attempt to leave a Camp David style legacy at the end of Trump's tenure. The incumbent US president's son-in-law has taken a keen interest in the affairs of the Middle East in the last four years and has tried, and failed, on multiple occasions to make a mark of his own.

From a preposterous USD 50 billion plan for "a vision to empower the Palestinian people to build a prosperous and vibrant Palestinian society" disclosed at the Manama Workshop in 2019 that went nowhere, to coercing countries to "normalise" ties with Israel, Kushner has tried various means to push forward the Trump administration's agenda for a "Israel First" and Israel friendly Middle East policy, with the backing of the Saudi-UAE axis. Having failed at fully achieving this objecting—the Saudis are yet to normalise ties with Israel—the Trump administration needed to make one last face-saving attempt. With greater control over the Saudis

and the Emiratis, major players in the Qatar diplomatic crisis, resolving the GCC dispute was perhaps the most feasible.

In mid-November 2020, US National Security Adviser Robert O'Brien asserted that for the US, it was a "priority" to resolve the Qatar blockade issue, adding "I would like to see that get done before—if we end up leaving office—I'd like to see that get

soon simply because I don't think there has been any introspection"—the UAE had to ultimately comply with the US plan.

And Egypt sending its Foreign Minister Sameh Shoukry, and not its head of state, to join the GCC summit, is a sign in itself that it is perhaps not fully in agreement with the lifting of the blockade on Qatar. The other participants at the summit were Saudi

Muslim Brotherhood and its support for Al Jazeera, whose coverage of El Sisi's misadventures has so irked Egypt that it has imprisoned the international news channel's senior journalist, Mahmud Hussein, for more than 1,400 days under inhumane circumstances and without charges or trial.

And the rifts created between the peoples of these nations, stoked by the arbitrary blockade in 2017 on Qatar, is unlikely to heal anytime soon. The people of Qatar have had to face dire challenges in the wake of the blockade. "It is infringing on the right to free expression, separating families, interrupting medical care—in one case forcing a child to miss a scheduled brain surgery, interrupting education, and stranding migrant workers without food or water," said Human Rights Watch in 2017, expressing concern over the situation in Qatar after the blockade was imposed.

If anything, mistrust and skepticism are likely to prevail—at least in the short to medium terms. And on all sides. After all, the Saudi Arabia, UAE, Bahrain and Egypt had previously, in February 2014, severed diplomatic ties with Qatar over the country's stance on the toppling of the Morsi government in 2013. And there is no guarantee that given the chance, the countries in the future won't resort to coercive tactics to subdue Qatar's growing influence in the region. Although this time, it would only be more difficult. And under the Biden administration, the relationship between the US and Saudi Arabia is likely to be more transactional in nature.

But given the intricate geopolitical mosaic of the puzzle that is MENA, and the vested interests of the US in the region, things are as transient in nature as it can get.

Tasneem Tayeb is a columnist for The Daily Star. Her Twitter handle is: @TayebTasneem



Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman welcomes Qatar's Emir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani in Al-Ula, Saudi Arabia, on January 5.

PHOTO: REUTERS

*If anything, mistrust and skepticism are likely to prevail—at least in the short to medium terms. And on all sides.*

done in the next 70 days. And I think there's a possibility for it."

And in less than 70 days, Saudi Arabia, UAE and Egypt—staunch critics of Qatar—agreed to not only shake hands with the country but embrace it, at least superficially. Although initially the UAE seemed to question the possibility of lifting the Qatar blockade—the country's ambassador to the US, Yousef al-Otaiba, told Israel's Channel 12 after O'Brien's comment, "I don't think it gets resolved anytime

Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman; UAE Prime Minister and Emir of Dubai Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum; Emir of Qatar Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad; Emir of Kuwait Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah; Crown Prince of Bahrain Salman bin Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa; Oman's Deputy Prime Minister Fahd bin Mahmoud Al Said; and, GCC Secretary-General Abdullah bin Rashid Al Zayani.

If anything, Egypt is wary of Qatar's softer approach with regard to the

COVID-19 AND SDG 11

## Making cities liveable



SYED YUSUF SAADAT

**W**HEN a pestilence caused the deaths of more than half of the population of Milan in 1846, it was evident that

and uncontrollably. This means that one billion people living in slums and four billion people living in cities worldwide are at high risk of infection from the deadly coronavirus. Since Bangladesh has one of the highest proportions of the urban population living in slums in South Asia, it must remain especially vigilant to ensure that the coronavirus does not strike in the slum areas and spread like wildfire.

During the pandemic, as many people were forced to remain indoors for prolonged periods of time due to lockdowns, the importance of having green open spaces in cities resurfaced. Scientists recommend spending at least 120 minutes per week in nature to maintain good health and enhance wellbeing. Unfortunately, Dhaka has only 8.5 percent tree-covered land and only 0.0002 metres squared of green park

year, the urban slum population increased by 403,000 during the period 1991 and 2014.

The increase in the urban slum population is just the tip of the iceberg. The much bigger problem is the increase of the overall urban population in Bangladesh. The share of the population living in urban areas in Bangladesh increased from 22.43 percent of the total population in 1997 to 35.85 percent in 2017. Such persistent rural-urban migration is indicative of the existence of push-pull factors that are motivating people to move from the villages to the cities. The rural-urban wage differential, as well as the wage differential across different sectors of the economy, could be likely factors pulling workers to urban areas. Climate change has also pushed many people away from rural areas to the urban areas of Bangladesh.

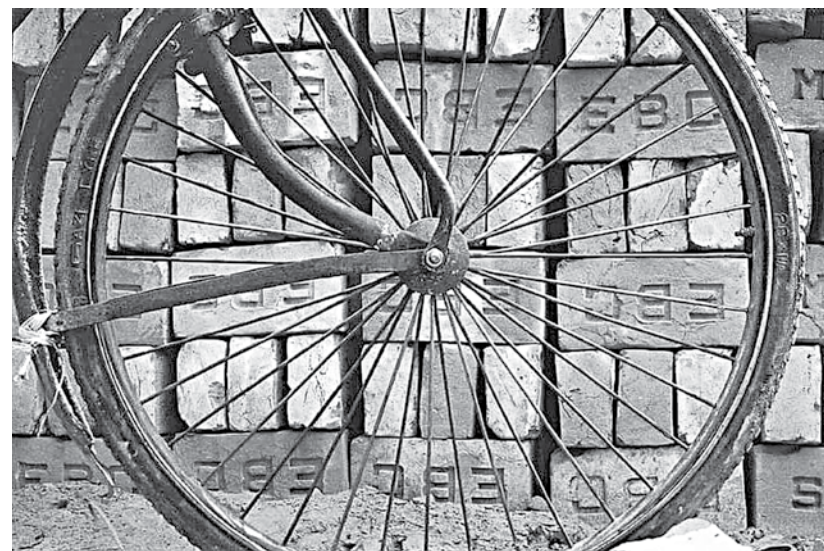


PHOTO: SYED YUSUF SAADAT

per capita, whereas ideally a city should have 20 percent tree-covered land and nine metres squared of green park per capita. Therefore, Covid-19 has reiterated the need for Bangladesh to implement SDG target 11.7, which calls upon countries to "provide universal access to safe, inclusive and accessible green and public spaces".

Bangladesh's performance on indicators under SDG 11 has been mixed. SDG target 11.1 calls upon countries to ensure access to adequate, safe and affordable housing for all and upgrade slums by 2030. In Bangladesh, the proportion of the urban population living in slums has fallen significantly from 87.3 percent in 1991 to 55.1 percent in 2014. This represents good progress as the proportion of the urban population living in slums decreased by 1.04 percent annually, on average, during the period of 1991 to 2014. Nevertheless, the total number of people living in urban slums increased from 19.99 million in 1991 to 29.27 million in 2014. This implies that on average, every

Ironically, increased urbanisation can itself become a cause behind further climate change, since urban inhabitants have a much larger material footprint compared to rural inhabitants.

Bangladesh faces a host of challenges pertinent to the implementation of SDG 11. Unrestrained urbanisation poses a risk for developing countries such as Bangladesh, which have low technical expertise, limited financial capacity and lacklustre infrastructural facilities to address the needs of the urban poor. Overpopulated cities such as Dhaka suffer from an array of problems, which include, but are not limited to, reduced access to goods and services, insufficient number of decent jobs, lack of affordable housing, water-logging, fire hazards, air and water pollution and traffic congestion.


In order to overcome the aforementioned challenges, a number of policy measures may be adopted. Dilapidated housing in rundown areas should be renovated in order to improve their

aesthetics and safety. Precautions should be taken to reduce the risk of fire accidents, by ensuring that all buildings have fire-fighting equipment and comply with international fire safety standards. In order to gradually improve urban air quality, metropolitan cities should be given targets, such as a fixed percentage of days with heavy air pollution that will be allowed per year, and these targets should be progressively made


more stringent every year. Urban green spaces in established cities like Dhaka and Chattogram should be protected from encroachment and burgeoning cities across the country should be designed with at least one-third of urban built-up areas reserved for green spaces. An integrated approach to urban and territorial planning that engages diverse multi-level stakeholders is necessary to design cities that are clean, compact,

energy efficient, environment friendly, socially cohesive, readily accessible, climate responsive and disaster resilient. These measures need to be implemented on a priority basis, so that Bangladesh's cities can bounce back from Covid-19 stronger and be guided towards the achievement of SDG 11 by 2030.

Syed Yusuf Saadat is Senior Research Associate at Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD). Email: saadat@cpd.org.bd



গণপ্রজাতন্ত্রী বাংলাদেশ সরকার  
বাংলাদেশ পুলিশ  
অধিনায়কের কার্যালয়  
৪ আর্মড পুলিশ ব্যাটালিয়ন  
নিশিন্দারা, বগুড়া।



তারিখ- ০৬/০১/২০২১ খ্রি।

**৪ উন্মুক্ত দরপত্র বিজ্ঞপ্তি (OTM) :-**

এতদ্বারা The Public Procurement Act-2006 & The Public Procurement Regulation-2008 এবং তথ্য সংশোধনী মোতাবেক চলতি ২০২০-২০২১ অর্থ বৎসরে বগুড়া ৪ এপিবিএন এর নিম্নবর্ণিত লট অনুসারে পূর্ত মেরামত/সংস্কার কাজ বাস্তবায়নের জন্য প্রকৃত বাংলাদেশী ঠিকাদার/সরবরাহকারী প্রতিষ্ঠানের নিকট হইতে সীল মোহরযুক্ত খামে প্রতিযোগিতামূলক দরপত্র আহ্বান করা যাইতেছে :

০১। মন্ত্রণালয়/বিভাগ	: স্বরাষ্ট্র মন্ত্রণালয়/জননিরাপত্তা বিভাগ।
০২। সংস্থা	: ৪ আর্মড পুলিশ ব্যাটালিয়ন, বগুড়া।
০৩। দরপত্র সম্পাদনকারী প্রধান	: অধিনায়ক (পুলিশ সুপার), ৪ আর্মড পুলিশ ব্যাটালিয়ন, বগুড়া।
০৪। দরপত্র সম্পাদনকারীর জেলা/সংস্থা	: বগুড়া এপিবিএন।
০৫। দরপত্রের সূত্র নম্বর ও তারিখ	: স্মারক নং-এপিবি(৪)/প্রশাঃ-২০২১/২৩৫ তারিখ- ০৬/০১/২০২১ খ্রি।
০৬। দরপত্রের পদ্ধতি	: উন্মুক্ত দরপত্র পদ্ধতি (OTM)।
০৭। অর্থের উৎস	: পুলিশ হেডকোয়ার্টার্স কর্তৃক বরাদ্দকৃত অর্থ।
০৮। দরপত্র প্রকাশের তারিখ	: ০৯/০১/২০২১ খ্রি।
০৯। দরপত্র বিক্রয়ের শেষ তারিখ ও সময়	: ২৪/০১/২০২১ খ্রি. ১৩.০০ ঘটিকা পর্যন্ত (ছুটির দিন ব্যতীত)।
১০। দরপত্র জমা দেওয়ার সর্বশেষ তারিখ ও সময়	: ২৫/০১/২০২১ খ্রি. বেলা-১২.০০ ঘটিকা পর্যন্ত।
১১। দরপত্র খোলার তারিখ ও সময়	: ২৫/০১/২০২১ খ্রি. বেলা-১২.৩০ ঘটিকা।
১২। দরপত্র মূল্যায়নের তারিখ ও সময়	: ২৬/০১/২০২১ খ্রি. তারিখ লট নং-১ = ১০:০০ ঘটিকায়, লট নং-২ = ১১:০০ ঘটিকায় ও লট নং-৩ = ১২:০০ ঘটিকায়।
১৩। দরপত্র সম্পাদনকারী অফিস ও ঠিকানা	: অধিনায়কের কার্যালয়, ৪ আর্মড পুলিশ ব্যাটালিয়ন, বগুড়া।
১৪। দরপত্র ডকুমেন্ট/সিডিউল বিক্রয়কারী অফিস	: (ক) ডিআইজি, এপিবিএন, বাংলাদেশ পুলিশ, ঢাকা। (খ) অধিনায়কের কার্যালয়, ৪ আর্মড পুলিশ ব্যাটালিয়ন, বগুড়া।
১৫। দরপত্র খোলার স্থান	: অধিনায়কের কার্যালয়, ৪ আর্মড পুলিশ ব্যাটালিয়ন, বগুড়া।
১৬। দরপত্র দাতার যোগ্যতা ও দরপত্রের সহিত যে সকল কাগজপত্র জমা দিতে হইবে।	: হালনাগাদ বৈধ ট্রেড লাইসেন্স, টিআইএন নম্বর সর্ধিলিত হালনাগাদ আয়কর সার্টিফিকেট, ভ্যাট রেজিস্ট্রেশন সার্টিফিকেট, ব্যাংক সলভেন্সি সার্টিফিকেট, সংশ্লিষ্ট কাজের অভিজ্ঞতা সনদপত্র, অন্যান্য শর্তাবলী দরপত্র দলিলে উল্লেখ করা হইবে।
১৭। দরপত্র আহ্বান কর্তৃপক্ষের নাম	: জনাব মোঃ জয়নুল আবেদীন, অধিনায়ক (পুলিশ সুপার), ৪ এপিবিএন, বগুড়া।
১৮। দরপত্র আহ্বানকারী কর্মকর্তার নাম ও পদবী	: জনাব মোঃ জয়নুল আবেদীন, অধিনায়ক (পুলিশ সুপার)

কাজের বিবরণ :

লট নং	কাজের নাম	সিডিউলের মূল্য (অফেরযোগ্য)	দরপত্র জামানতের পরিমাণ(ফেরযোগ্য)	কাজ সমাপ্তির সময়
১৯।				
১.	৪ এপিবিএন, বগুড়ার ৩ তলা বিশিষ্ট টিআরসি ভবন মেরামত।	১০০০/-	৪৬,০০০/-	৪৫ দিন
২.	৪ এপিবিএন, বগুড়ার অভ্যন্তরীণ পানির লাইন মেরামত/সংস্কার কাজ।	৭৫০/-	২৫,০০০/-	৪৫ দিন
৩.	৪ এপিবিএন, বগুড়ার ৪ ইউনিট বিশিষ্ট এএসপি কোয়ার্টার মেরামত।	১০০০/-	৫০,০০০/-	৪৫ দিন

বিশেষ জ্ঞাতব্য

ক। ব্যক্তি বা প্রতিষ্ঠানের স্বত্বাধিকারীর স্বাক্ষরযুক্ত প্যাডে আবেদন পূর্বক অফিস চলাকালীন সময় পর্যন্ত দরপত্র সিডিউল সংগ্রহ করা যাইবে।

খ। প্রতিনিধির দ্বারা সিডিউল ক্রেয়ের ক্ষেত্রে ক্ষমতা অর্পন পূর্বক দরপত্র সিডিউল সংগ্রহ/ক্রয় করা যাইবে।

গ। দরদাতার দর প্রাক্কলিত ব্যয় ১০% এর অধিক কম বা অধিক বেশি দর উদ্ধৃত করা হইলে উক্ত দরপত্র বাতিল বুলিয়া গণ্য হইবে।

ঘ। দরপত্র আহ্বানকারী কর্তৃপক্ষ কোন কারণ দর্শানো ব্যতীত দরপত্র গ্রহণ/বাতিলের ক্ষমতা সংরক্ষন করেন।

০৬/০১/২০২১

(মোঃ জয়নুল আবেদীন)  
অধিনায়ক (পুলিশ সুপার)  
৪ এপিবিএন, নিশিন্দারা, বগুড়া।  
☎ ০৫১-৬৭৯১০, ☎ ০৫১-৬০২৫০  
ই-মেইল-co4ap@Police.gov.bd

GD- 44

**SDG target 11.1 calls upon countries to ensure access to adequate, safe and affordable housing for all and upgrade slums by 2030.**

Although Leonardo da Vinci's ideal city was never actually built due to its prohibitively high costs, such cities could be instrumental in the global response to Covid-19 and in the implementation of Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 11, which affirms the need to "make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable". Worldwide, more than 90 percent of Covid-19 cases have been detected in urban areas where the relatively higher population density makes it easy for the virus to spread quickly