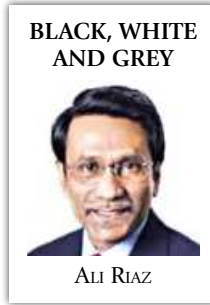


# Mohiuddin Ahmed: An institution in himself



ALI RIAZ

**BLACK, WHITE AND GREY**

**T**O the average reader, Mohiuddin Ahmed is better known as the founder of University Press Limited, a reputed publishing house in the country. However, that describes only a part of his identity, an incomplete one. Limiting his identity to the founding of the UPL ignores his contributions to the world of publishing in Bangladesh and his impacts on Bangladesh studies. It is an understatement that Mohiuddin Ahmed was a pioneer in the publishing scene of Bangladesh, because he was much more than that.

The news of Mohiuddin Ahmed's passing is still hard to believe. He breathed his last early Tuesday, at the age of 77. He fought his long-term illness with remarkable courage and fortitude. Neither old age nor illness of one can prepare us for their departure. This is truer in the case of a personality like Mohiuddin Ahmed. His passing is an irreplaceable loss for us all.

The news of the demise of people who have, through their work, greatly changed an entire domain not only fills us with sorrow and pain but also reminds us, with greater clarity, how profoundly they impacted the lives of others. The absence of those whose endeavour has opened the door for the creative work and research of others reminds us of their importance in this world, and how badly we need them

now and always.

To me, Mohiuddin Ahmed was a person dedicated to bringing the global standard of research, particularly in social sciences, at home. Throughout his life, he has tirelessly worked to introduce research works on Bangladesh, produced in Bangladesh, to the outside world—as well as to familiarise local readers with the research on Bangladesh being done internationally. The impact of his work can be grasped by looking at the books published by the UPL, the breadth of the topics covered, and how it has encouraged new researchers to engage in perceptive works. This is how he has enriched Bangladesh studies, both at home and abroad. For more than 40 years, that is what he has done wholeheartedly, without any respite. His driving forces were neither material success nor any expectation of recognition, but rather his love for his work and a profound sense of duty.

He was a soft-spoken person



Mohiuddin Ahmed (1944-2021).

PHOTO: COLLECTED

in Pakistan. Therefore, it was not surprising that he had considered an academic trajectory. However, publishing and editing for the Oxford University Press (OUP) attracted him more. This happened in 1969, and became the turning point of his life.

When Mohiuddin Ahmed told me about this episode of his life in London in 1997/98, my spontaneous response was: "Thankfully, you joined the OUP instead of doing a PhD!" With his characteristic smile, he said, "I think so too." Then we talked more about how UPL was founded in 1975 and its journey in becoming the premier publishing house in Bangladesh. No wonder that under his leadership, UPL has won the National Book Centre Award a total of 16 times since 1981.

I often wondered, could anyone else have set the trend of publishing research-based English books in Bangladesh with such commitment? I think not.

The way he built the UPL and devoted himself to the world of publishing was only possible through patience, dedication, and love. In a country where such organisations do not have a history of surviving long, where their untimely demise is considered inevitable, Mohiuddin Ahmed built an institution that Bangladesh can be proud of. In the process of building this institution, he became an institution in himself.

Ali Riaz is a Distinguished Professor of Political Science at the Illinois State University, a non-resident Senior Fellow of the Atlantic Council, and the President of the American Institute of Bangladesh Studies (AIBS).

*The way he built the UPL and devoted himself to the world of publishing was only possible through patience, dedication, and love.*

who preferred to remain behind the scenes. But the history of the publishing industry and its endeavour for quality—both in content and production—cannot be written without his name in it. He is the principal protagonist of the publishing history of the country and he will remain at the centre of it.

His talent and labour propelled him to this position. But above all, he has paved the way for his successors. Those associated with the publishing world in Bangladesh must acknowledge that the lion's share of the credit for Bangladesh's recognition in the

international publishing industry belongs to him. That the books published in Bangladesh now draw the attention of the international community is largely because of his efforts and his attention to the quality of published content. This is where he is unique, and he has carved a space for himself.

His life began with journalism. He was invited to step into the academic world permanently when he was offered admission into a PhD programme at Stanford University. He previously taught in the journalism department of Punjab University

## PROJECT SYNDICATE

# The G7 Vaccine Charade



JAMES K. GALBRAITH

**I**N a recent essay on Samantha Power, President Joe Biden's new administrator of the United States Agency for International Development, Michelle Goldberg of the *New York Times* writes, correctly, that Power's "first big test... lies in what America does to help vaccinate the rest of the world against Covid-19." And Power herself is quoted as saying that, "It's about a very, very tangible, results-oriented agenda."

Results seemed to follow. At the G7 summit, Goldberg duly reports, Biden announced that the US would contribute 500 million vaccine doses for use in "low- and middle-income countries." According to Goldberg, this "spurred other countries to step up their contributions," ensuring "a billion doses by 2022."

Except that it didn't.

According to the World Health Organization, the actual new commitment was for 870 million additional doses, not a billion, "with the aim to deliver at least half by the end of 2021." In other words, the "aim" would be to get "at least" 435 million additional vaccine doses to the COVAX facility (the international mechanism established to ensure vaccine access in poorer countries) "by 2022." Even if all billion come in over the course of 2022, Agnès Callamard, the Secretary-General of Amnesty International, has called it a "drop in the ocean," made of "paltry half-measures and insufficient gestures." As Gavin Yamey of Duke University summed up the outcome for a *Lancet* working group, the "rich countries behaved worse than anyone's worst nightmares."

And there is a further problem: the G7 commitments are only promises,

and the G7's track record on meeting its promises is not especially good. Here the language of the G7 communiqué is telling: "aim to deliver." Even if one believes that those words were chosen in good faith, they are not exactly precise or categorical.

Today, Africa and India have vaccinated barely 3 percent of their combined populations of about 2.5 billion people. Why is that? The US alone is reputed to have the capacity to produce 4.7 billion doses by the end of 2021—four billion more than America needs. Again, according to Amnesty

Progressive International. Meanwhile, outside the rich-country bubble, the virus can spread, mutate, sicken, and kill.

This is not merely a humanitarian issue. If viruses are not eradicated, they evolve. Already, multiple variants of the coronavirus have appeared. As far as we know, none can overcome the available vaccines. But no one can say for sure that such a variant will not emerge, and the more time lost, the greater the risk—and not merely for the world's poor.

One obvious solution is to get

*The US and Europe are offering crumbs, protecting their billionaires, their pharmaceutical lobbies, and their politicians' campaign contributions.*

up to five billion doses for the world—enough for India and Africa combined. Meanwhile, Chinese producers are determined to build production sites worldwide, beginning recently in Egypt. And Russia has plans to produce over 850 million doses of Sputnik V in India alone this year. That's just about the same as the entire G7 commitment, and it will happen sooner.

Not everything we read on these matters is necessarily reliable. Not every projection will work out. It may be, as reported, that the Chinese vaccines are less effective than those produced by Pfizer-BioNTech, Moderna, AstraZeneca, Johnson & Johnson, and Sputnik V.

But for now, where this is heading is obvious. The US and Europe are offering crumbs, protecting their billionaires, their pharmaceutical lobbies, and their politicians' campaign contributions. Meanwhile, China and Russia have other ideas, and the capacity to realise them. So, before too long, when the back of this pandemic is finally broken, the world will have fresh evidence about who is reliable and who is not.

I would say that all of this is unprecedented, but it's not. In the cold and hungry European winter of 1947-48, Jan Masaryk, the Czechoslovak foreign minister, pleaded with the US for food shipments. The US dithered, imposing conditions. Klement Gottwald, head of the Czechoslovak Communist Party, appealed to Joseph Stalin, who put 300,000 tons of wheat onto trains. Czechoslovakia fell under full communist control in February 1948.

Samantha Power is right. It is all about tangible results.

James K. Galbraith holds the Lloyd M. Bentsen, Jr. Chair in Government/Business Relations at the LBJ School of Public Affairs at the University of Texas at Austin.

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A prop vaccine is seen during a protest of Oxfam activists at a beach near Falmouth, on the sidelines of G7 summit, in Cornwall, Britain, June 11, 2021.

PHOTO: REUTERS/PETER NICHOLLS

International, the G7 will have "three billion doses surplus to requirement by the end [of 2021]."

Where are those doses going? Apparently to wealthy customers. This includes 1.8 billion doses committed to the EU for "booster shots," as reported by Varsha Gandikota-Nellutla of

the hoarded stockpile into arms all around the world. A second would be to waive patent protection and supply restrictions on the Western vaccines, so that they can be produced more rapidly in other countries. If India alone—the world's largest vaccine producer—could overcome current production

difficulties, it could resume exports and start supplying doses to the rest of Asia and to Africa, while meeting its own requirements by the end of this year. And enough doses could be produced to end the pandemic, for practical purposes, by the end of 2022.

In early May, the Biden administration announced its support for a proposal, advanced by India and South Africa, to waive Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS) enforcement on Covid-19 supplies, including vaccines. But what does this amount to? So far, just support for negotiations. With whom? Over what?

It was government, not the big drug companies, that underwrote the basic research used to invent these vaccines. The companies have patents only because they were granted as an "incentive" to produce the vaccines. The claim that otherwise they would not do so is absurd: the US government has the power of compulsion under the Defense Production Act, which it has already used to get vaccine production ramped up, including in a way that briefly disrupted Indian production.

Meanwhile, there's China, and at a smaller scale, Russia. China currently is vaccinating more than ten million people per day—an accelerating pace that will cover their entire population this year. In 2022, China could produce

**QUOTABLE Quote**

**MAYA ANGELOU**  
(1926-2014)  
American poet

*History, despite its wrenching pain, cannot be unlived, but if faced with courage, need not be lived again.*

**CROSSWORD BY THOMAS JOSEPH**

**ACROSS**

- 1 Godzilla's home
- 6 Part producers
- 11 Digression
- 12 In the know
- 13 Ties
- 14 Nigeria neighbor
- 15 Scrooge cry
- 16 Badmouths
- 18 Freud topic
- 19 Knight address
- 20 Bauxite, e.g.
- 21 Bakery buy
- 23 Chimes
- 25 Near-eternity
- 27 Summer shirt
- 28 "Get outta here!"
- 30 Sing like Ella
- 33 Stew sphere
- 34 Power, in old

**DOWN**

- 1 Prattle
- 2 Crumbly cheese
- 3 Primitive picture taker
- 4 Throw in
- 5 Comfy homes
- 6 Berlin-based musical
- 7 Has debts
- 8 Street sights
- 9 Prickly plants
- 10 Reason
- 17 Vault part
- 22 John, in Jersey
- 24 Trumpeter Elgart
- 43 "—Rae"
- 44 Principled
- 45 Loses it
- 46 Annoying ones
- 28 Pulpit delivery book
- 29 Frank McCourt
- 31 Ark's landing site
- 32 Adds up
- 33 Aspirin targets
- 35 Rhythmic jazz
- 38 Freeway exit
- 42 "The Gold Bug" author

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**YESTERDAY'S ANSWERS**

J	A	M	S	Q	U	O	T	E
A	L	O	T	S	U	N	D	E
C	O	R	E	L	A	D	D	E
K	E	E	P	P	A	C	E	
A	T	R	I	S	K	C	A	V
R	E	I	N	S	N	O	I	S
C	C	C	C	I	N	D	E	R
S	H	O	E	L	A	C	E	
F	U	T	U	R	E	F	A	C
A	N	O	D	E	S	O	I	N
R	O	P	E	S	T	A	T	S

**BEETLE BAILEY BY MORT WALKER**

**BABY BLUES BY KIRKMAN & SCOTT**