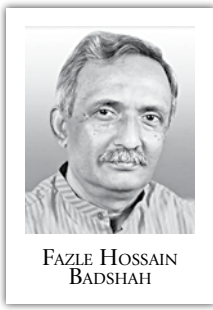


Resurgence of Taliban in Afghanistan and its effect on Bangladesh



FAZLE HOSSAIN BADSHAH

THE last batch of US-led NATO troops left Afghanistan's Bagram Airfield in early July of this year. They have been attacking Al-Qaeda and the Taliban in Afghanistan

from this airfield for the last 20 years. A few days ago, US President Joe Biden had a meeting with the visiting Afghan President Ashraf Ghani. What Biden said after the meeting was that Afghanistan will have to decide what happens next. Support would continue though, he added. That means, after a long period of geopolitical use, the US administration no longer wants to take any responsibility for the ongoing situation in Afghanistan, which has been in the throes of a bloody conflict for nearly 20 years.

At a time when Biden is preaching, NATO troops are leaving and on the other side, the Taliban are on a mission to occupy Afghanistan. The Taliban have expanded their dominance in rural areas of western Afghanistan. Now they are moving towards the major cities. They are occupying the districts. There have even been reports that 260 Afghan soldiers have fled to Tajikistan in the face of Taliban attacks. A few days ago, the Taliban launched an attack on the regional capital. After the Qala-e-Naw attack in western Afghanistan, there



Afghan Taliban fighters have captured four more districts from government forces amid an escalation in fighting.

PHOTO: AFP

have been reports of clashes between Taliban and Afghan forces. With everything that is happening, everyone is concerned about Afghanistan. America retreating like this is not new. They have provoked regional instability by creating complexities in the name of democratising Afghanistan and fighting a war on terror. The consequences of any military alliance led by them have always been the same. They have done the same thing

invasion of Iraq were baseless. But that invasion paved the way for terrorism around the world to increase and created new extremist forces like the IS, not only in Iraq, but all over the world.

The US supported the Taliban—or the Mujahideen—in the early 1990s to fight against the Soviet Union. It was after 9/11 that the US started its anti-Taliban activities. Today, John Bolton, a former US security adviser, says that Pakistan is responsible for the rise of

militants have always favoured their geopolitical interests at the end.

The strengthening of the Taliban in Afghanistan did not stop its influence in that country alone. Pakistan, Bangladesh and even India were influenced by the rise of such forces. The Taliban had established contacts with extremists in Bangladesh and they also developed close ties with radical political parties. We heard them chant slogans in their processions in the nineties that Bangla shall be Afghan and they will all be the Taliban!

We have seen how Bangladeshis have travelled to Afghanistan and fought for the Taliban. After returning to Bangladesh, they have not only created militant organisations like Harkatul Jihad or HUIJ, they have tried to destroy the progressive politics of the country as well. They have strategically expanded their organisation by choosing their political allies, and to do so, they have received money from the Taliban. The impact of the rise of the Taliban in the country was even clearer when one read the statement made before the execution of JMB leader Shaykh Abdur Rahman. Shaykh Abdur Rahman made contact with Afghani and Pakistani militants before entering the JMB with the help of Bangla Bhai. He also had a meeting with HUIJ on that basis. The unity of progressive politics in the country did not allow them to succeed in the end. But they are yet to be fully stopped.

According to media reports, intelligence officials have found the involvement of Afghan militants in

the violence of Hefazat-e-Islam in the country a few days ago. They are working on different strategies together. While staying in India, Salahuddin alias Salehin, the current Amir of JMB, has been organising militants in the country. A militant arrested in Dhaka a few months ago has confessed that he went to India and met him. It is not difficult to see from past experiences that the return of the Taliban to full power in Afghanistan will again fuel this radical group in Bangladesh.

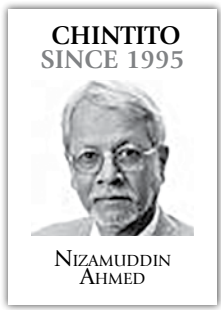
Is this a danger only for our country? India, one of the largest countries in Asia, cannot avoid such influences either. According to media reports, JMB's Salahuddin has reportedly worked with militant groups inside India. Hefazat's vandalism in March 2021 was also focused on the Indian prime minister's visit to Bangladesh. It cannot be ruled out that the rise of the Afghan Taliban will create a new crisis in Kashmir. There is nothing new to say about the Taliban's position inside Pakistan. As a result, just as a bloody Iraq affected the stability of the entire Middle East, a conflict-ridden Afghanistan could in fact destabilise the whole of South Asia.

So, we all need to focus on the future crisis brewing in Afghanistan now. It is not a headache of any single state. If the South Asian countries cannot work together on this issue with a common goal of achieving regional stability, then everyone will have to pay the price for it in the future.

Fazle Hossain Badshah is a Member of Parliament from Rajshahi-2.

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In search of an Olympic medal with 'athletes without borders'



CHINITO SINCE 1995

NOW that San Marino, population 34,000, less than Sabrang, the smallest Union in Teknaf Upazila, have won medals at the Tokyo Olympics, the

pressure is mounting on us, the eighth largest country, with about 17 crore people. But, how?

For a person with first-hand experience of presenting for BCB Bangladesh's case to the ICC delegation before we were granted, first the ODI and then the Test status in 1996 and a year later, I know how difficult it is to sell an argument when you do not have a bag-full of laurels.

The importance of a games medal is the prestige and the inspiration it entails for the winner. Ignorant me did not know about San Marino before their triumph on August 1.

San Marino's Alessandra Perilli won their first medal, a bronze in the Women's Shooting Trap at Tokyo. She paired with Gian Marco Berti to claim their second-ever medal, a silver in Mixed Trap two days later.

Bangladesh is the most populated part of the world that has been without a medal, and we have been in the Olympics since USA 1984. Someone born then is today 37-years-old, about the age when most retire from competitive sports. Invigorated by sporting spirit, we are taught that participation is more important than winning, but for how long can we beat our empty vessel?

At Tokyo 2021, Bangladesh had six athletes in four events. Except our male archer, being the first ever direct qualifier in Olympics, the others participated by invitation—our woman archer, the 400m sprinter, the men's rifle shooter,

and the two swimmers. Time has come to shake off the lassitude and sluggishness, but Paris 2024 is too soon. Not much time is left to implement a strategy to our advantage. Realistically, we should target USA 2028. We will have come a full circle in almost 50 years from Los Angeles to Los Angeles. Beats me, I thought they had 50 states.

Let us oil our own *charka*, and approach the medal problem historically.

Consider the track sprints. The variety of rice we take helps to fatten us in the wrong places. No calf muscle to power us. We have no stamina for long distance events because our lungs are bungled by oil and spice, *rashogolla* and *jilapee*.

Long and high we are not, the events are. Have you seen how tall these Fosbury Floppers are? Too dizzy an altitude, if you ask me at five feet five, and they are leaping almost eight feet high. The elastic pole that can bend so, is quite different from the bamboo we produce, so vaulting is not in our wish list.

Throwing events have been designed unfairly to favour the mammoth. Clearly the steel sphere (Okay, shot putt, you whiz!), the disc, and the hammer that is useless with nails are too heavy. The spear would have been declared a WMD were we good at flinging it, and so they call it javelin.

Our waterbodies are hardly suitable for training. They are dirty, stinking and shallow from dumping waste. I am talking about the sports swimming pools. No surprises that at the Tokyo 2021 our male participant finished 51st, and our woman swimmer finished 68th. Don't look at me! I can barely cover a few metres in a pool.

Basketball, handball, volleyball, nahh... we are too short. We could provide Liberoes though, the diminutive chap in volleyball with the different coloured jersey, but we have to wait till citizenship policies are relaxed in the

taller nations. Scanty beach volleyball is out because that would be unjust to our prosperous garment industry.

Allow me to give you one example of this international machination, and our sports pundits are none the wiser. Say, if boxing, wrestling and lifting can be run on the basis of bodyweight, why can't we have volley- and basketball according to height. Lower the net and the basket to make us look good.

Our only male archer at Tokyo 2021 was eliminated from the last 16 and the woman from 32, giving us reason to further concentrate on Archery, but the target has receded into the horizon seemingly well beyond our vision.

Shooting was seriously a promise once upon a time, but if our air rifle shooter was 41st at Tokyo from 10 metres away, we need to rethink the entire process of talent hunt, training and competing. One wonders whether the sport is restricted initially to the son of a big gun, seeing the amount of expensive technical equipment required.

Gymnastics could have been our forte, given our physique, but we cannot start after 12 years of age for Olympic glory, and never stop the rice and other culinary vice. Some of those celebrity rubber band athletes start at two years.

Let's talk of the conspiracy against us. How many countries play the Olympic events, baseball or softball? Globally how many people are golfers of some standard? Canoeing and equestrian are hardly popular worldwide. Respective federations governing karate, skateboarding, sport climbing, and surfing have enough clout to compel IOC to include them in the Olympics. After two consecutive T20 triumphs against Australia early August, we have to move full throttle to convince IOC to include cricket too. It's more global than some.

Tokyo, more than any other games, has been a celebration of athletes without borders, although the trend was growing. Sudan-born Peter Bol

ran the 800m for Australia in Tokyo. American Becky Hammon competed for Russia in the 2008 Olympics. Tongan Olympic flag bearer at Rio and Tokyo, Pita Nikola Taufatofua, was born in Australia. American pole vaulter Giovanni Lanaro represented Mexico in Rio. Qatar has lured Kenyan athletes to run for them. Great Britain's 2012 Olympic team had 60 athletes born in other countries. So do the European

requires an athlete with a new nationality to let three years pass since the competitor last represented another country to be eligible for the Olympic Games. Just enough time for us to catch Paris.

That has given me the gold medal idea of inviting world-class athletes from other countries. Offer them facilities, and grant them (dual) citizenship to represent Bangladesh. Why should they?



Bangladesh is the most populated part of the world that has been without a medal, and we have been in the Olympics since USA 1984.

PHOTO: REUTERS

countries, and the USA.

Racism perhaps is deep-seated but the stigma of colour and nationality has been shattered in world sports for socio-economic and political reasons; thus allowing switching of country. Olympics is no more about patriotism only, but an opportunity to compete, which is the moving force for any athlete.

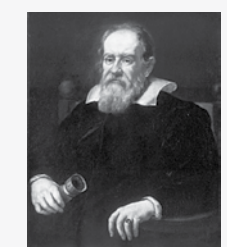
Rule 41 of the Olympic Charter

For Olympic glory obviously.

The Olympics allow only three athletes per event per country. Many countries have several with qualifying marks in the queue. Their only Olympic hope is to migrate. Why not to Bangladesh?

Dr Nizamuddin Ahmed is a practising Architect at BashaBari Ltd., a Commonwealth Scholar and a Fellow, a Baden-Powell Fellow Scout Leader, and a Major Donor Rotarian.

QUOTABLE Quote

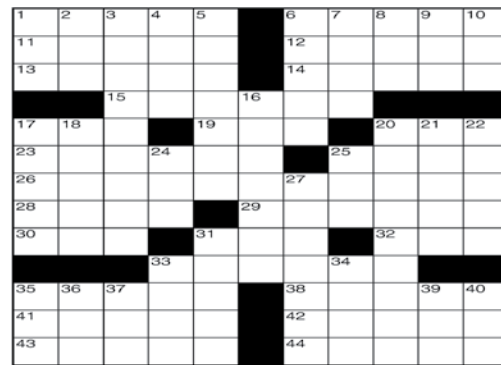


GALILEO GALILEI (1564-1642) Italian astronomer

I do not feel obliged to believe that the same God who has endowed us with sense, reason, and intellect has intended us to forgo their use.

CROSSWORD BY THOMAS JOSEPH

- ACROSS**
- 1 Cat's quarry
 - 6 No longer a minor
 - 11 Deed holder
 - 12 Shady spot
 - 13 More mature
 - 14 Bars on cars
 - 15 G.I.'s org.
 - 17 Kilmer of "The Doors"
 - 19 Caffeine source
 - 20 Central
 - 23 Stressed type
 - 25 Franc's replacement
 - 26 Put into words
 - 28 Told tales
 - 29 Filling up
 - 30 Blue
 - 31 Black
- DOWN**
- 1 Cattle call
 - 2 Athena's symbol
 - 3 Made waves
 - 4 Spots
 - 5 Unpredictable
 - 6 President born in Hawaii
 - 7 Shrewd
 - 8 Cobbler's tool
 - 9 "My word!"
 - 10 Hosp. parts
 - 16 Steps aside, in court
 - 17 Small bottles
 - 18 Parts of hearts
 - 20 Mangled
 - 21 Dancer Castle need
 - 22 Avoid
 - 24 Jar part
 - 25 Put away
 - 27 Sideways pass
 - 31 Setting filler
 - 33 Vatican VIP
 - 34 Ripped
 - 35 Diamond club
 - 36 Swelled head
 - 37 Attorney's concern
 - 39 Lennon's love
 - 40 Sought a seat



YESTERDAY'S ANSWERS

C H I M E C O B B
H A T E S C A N O E
A B E T S O R I O N
L I R A A N Y O N E
E T A A B C N E T
T A T T L E R S
T E A M E A S T
A T L N E E M A T
T H O R A X R I D E
L Y R I C L I N E R
A M E N S A G A I N
S E N D B A R N S

BETLE BAILEY

BY MORT WALKER



BABY BLUES

BY KIRKMAN & SCOTT



WRITE FOR US. SEND US YOUR OPINION PIECES TO dsopinion@gmail.com.