

As Myanmar is shred into pieces, can its people unite to stop the Tatmadaw?

A CLOSER LOOK



TASNEEM TAYEB

WE couldn't stand to watch it so we kept our heads down, crying. . . We begged them not to do it. They didn't care. They asked the women, 'Are your husbands among them? If they are, do your last rites,' a woman from Myanmar's Keni

Township, whose brother, brother-in-law and nephew had been brutally murdered by the notorious Myanmar military—also known as the Tatmadaw—told the BBC during an investigation.

In July this year, the Tatmadaw had gone on a revenge-killing spree in the Keni Township—a stronghold of sorts for the forces opposed to the ruling military junta. The People's Defence Force, a militia of civilian groups fighting for democracy, had earlier intensified their anti-military activities in the area, including clashes with the soldiers. The outcome was the Tatmadaw's ruthless and brutal mass killing of the locals of the township. In multiple attacks in July 2021, the Myanmar soldiers had gone from door to door in four villages—Yin, Zee Bin Dwin, Taungbauk and Shikoet forest—rounding up the men, torturing them with rifle butts, beating them up with stones, and then burying their mutilated bodies, at times in half-alive state, in shallow graves.

At least 40 corpses have been recovered from mass graves in the four villages, including a small body, most likely that of a child. Among the murdered was a 60-year-old man, who had been tied to a plum tree and tortured for hours—the numerous marks on his lifeless body a testament to the unspeakable horrors he had to endure in his final hours. Some of the soldiers involved in the bloody killings were as young as 17-18. The Myanmar military junta did not deny the allegations, saying, "It can happen. . . When they treat us as enemies, we have the right to defend ourselves." The comment of General Zaw Min Tun, Myanmar's

Deputy Minister for Information and military spokesperson, holds ominous portents for the future of democracy and human rights in the country.

The Myanmar junta carried out multiple air strikes since December 22, on the Karen State's Lay Kay Kaw town, in southeastern Myanmar—a stronghold of the Karen National Union. This was the result of fresh raids by military soldiers to subdue the Karen fighters, protesting against the military rule. The clashes since last week and the subsequent air

raids—in which the military has not only been firing artillery at the locals but also dropping bombs—have led to the displacement of more than 4,200 Karen people, who fled to Thailand. Unofficial estimates put the figure at nearly 10,000. Some shells even fell on the Thai side, according to The Irrawaddy news site.



The Tatmadaw not only unleashed a bloody nightmare on the civilians but also ensured that they do not get access to medical care, as they attacked hospitals and medical staff tending to the injuries of the protestors.

PHOTO: REUTERS

The Tatmadaw, in a swift coup d'état, ousted the democratically elected government of National League for Democracy led by Aung

San Suu Kyi, in the early hours of February 1, 2021. Since then, the country has been embroiled in a bloody struggle between the usurpers and the civilians calling for the return of democracy. At least 1,300 protesters and civilians have been killed since then, as conflicts between the two parties continue, according to data from Assistance Association for Political Prisoners—a Thailand and Myanmar based human rights organisation—as cited by UK-based news outlet The Independent.

In response to the attacks on the Karen community, the Ambassadors, Chargés d'Affaires, and Heads of Mission from Australia, Canada, the Delegation of the EU and European Union Member States with presence in Myanmar—Czech Republic, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Italy, Netherlands, Spain, and Sweden—as well as New Zealand, Norway, Switzerland, the United Kingdom and the United States, have signed a joint statement in which they have reiterated "condemnation of the serious human rights violations committed by the military regime across the country" and called on the "regime to immediately cease its indiscriminate attacks in Karen State and throughout the country, and to ensure the safety of all civilians in line with international law".

While the international community has condemned the misadventures of the Myanmar military after the coup, with the US and some other countries even imposing sanctions against the military generals involved, the measures are too little, too late.

Myanmar has a history of bloody military rule and suppression of civilians. Starting from the regime of General Ne Win to the dissolution of military rule in 2011, the country has witnessed numerous clashes between the military and civilians. During this time, the Rohingya, along with some other minority groups including Karen and Kachin, have been systemically cornered and persecuted by the country's military. The Rohingya especially had been forced to endure genocidal and ethnic cleansing attempts by the country's military. And the Tatmadaw continued these atrocities almost unchecked, with muted, templated responses from the international community.

Over the years, the Tatmadaw has wielded enormous power and in the process has amassed even more. The vicious crimes of the Tatmadaw now feels like a déjà vu, at times it even reminds one of Nietzsche's philosophy of the Eternal Return: "This life as you now live it and have lived it, you will have to live once more and innumerable times more; and there will be nothing new in it, but every pain

and every joy and every thought and sigh and everything unutterably small or great in your life will have to return to you, all in the same succession and sequence—even this spider and this moonlight between the trees, and even this moment and I myself. The eternal hourglass of existence is turned upside down again and again, and you with it, speck of dust!"

The silence of the international community over the ethnic cleansing of the minority communities in Myanmar, and in the heydays, their bolstering trade tied with the Myanmar military held business conglomerates and holdings—some countries have also directly invested in the economic zones in Myanmar, built on lands once belonging to the now uprooted Rohingya—have empowered them with not only the acknowledgment but also economic resources to carry on with their nefarious activities.

In addition, the inaction of the majority during the persecution of the minority communities has also added to the Tatmadaw's power. The communal divide within Myanmar has created just the right environment for the military to continue to belligerently violate the basic human rights of its people.

The Tatmadaw has turned into a monster—a Wendigo to be specific—that is now feeding on its own people to quench its insatiable craving for human flesh. And now this monster cannot be controlled, neither with sanctions nor any other form of threats from external actors. The only way this monster can be contained is by creating a united internal front against it. It is only the people of Myanmar—majority and minority alike, irrespective of religion or ethnicity—united together that can put up a resistance against the crimes of this monster and put an end to its killing spree. That is the only way out for the civilians.

But the question remains, can the people of Myanmar rise above their communal rifts for the greater benefit of the nation, of the future generations? Only time will tell.

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

Circularity in SMEs: The what, why, and how



MD SHAH JALAL

THE world is being plagued by a global pandemic, climate change, biodiversity loss, rising demand for food and scarcity of natural resources, to name a few. Our irresponsible consumption and production are the root causes of humanity's multifarious problems.

The traditional consumption and production process is based on a linear economic system that follows the "take-make-use-waste" resource utilisation pattern. The circular economic system is an alternative to the linear economic system since it utilises resources in a restorative and regenerative manner, resulting in no waste. That is, the circular economy is a model of consumption and production that focuses on reducing, refurbishing, recycling, and reusing resources—benefiting both the economy and the environment.

The World Resource Institute (WRI) postulates that we can cut global greenhouse gas emissions by 39 percent (22.8 billion tons) simply by implementing circular strategies in our existing linear consumption and production process. The Washington-based think tank also estimates that the circular economy offers USD 4.5 trillion worth of economic opportunity through sustainable economic growth.

Recently, at the 26th UN Climate Change Conference of the Parties (COP26), the biggest climate conference on earth, Bangladesh presented the "Mujib Climate Prosperity Plan" to tackle climate change. We have committed to implementing the plan by 2030. Furthermore, we have committed to achieving the United Nations' 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by 2030. One of the SDG goals is responsible consumption and production (SDG 12). Achieving SDG 12 is impossible without effectuating circularity

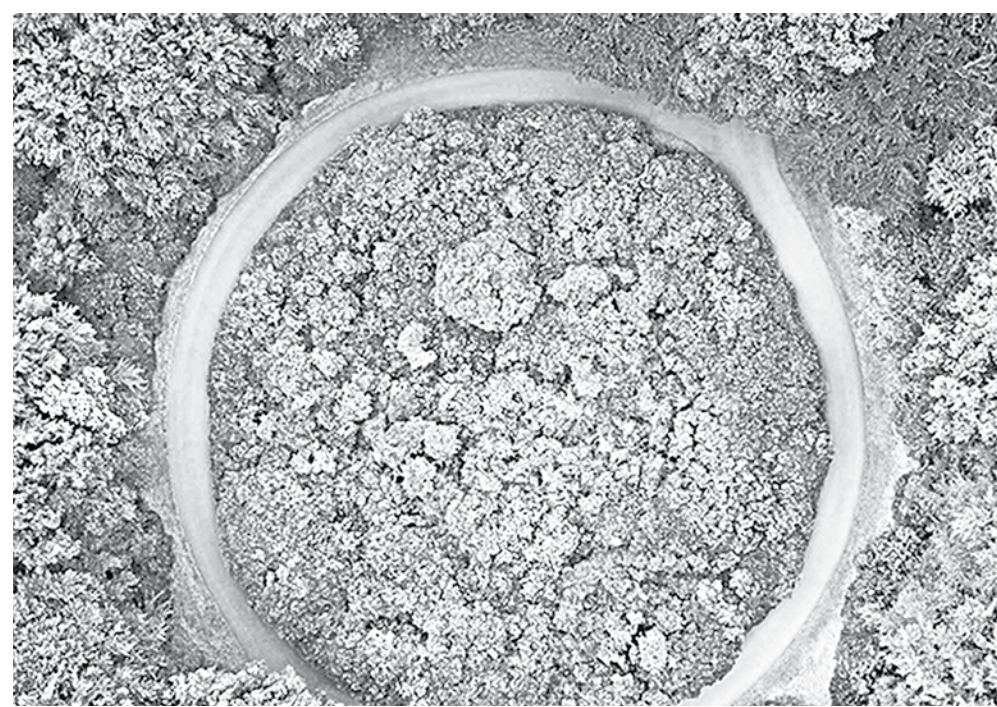
in our consumption and production process. Surely, it will help us achieve not just SDG-12 but also the other SDGs.

Numerous economic entities are involved in our consumption and production process. All economic actors need to embrace circular thinking to unleash the power of a circular economy in terms of socio-economic and environmental benefits. The World Bank (WB) estimates that small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) account for more than 90 percent of businesses worldwide. According to the BBS Economic Enterprise Census 2013, SMEs (including cottage and micro-businesses) account for more than 99 percent of all enterprises in Bangladesh. Hence, SMEs have a crucial role in implementing a carbon-neutral circular economy as an integral part of our economy.

SMEs have enormous economic and environmental impacts as a group, though individually, their impacts are small in most cases. Moreover, SMEs have vertical and horizontal linkages with large enterprises. Such connections make SMEs strategically important to a true circular transition.

Generally, being more malleable than their larger counterparts, SMEs are more likely to adopt circular business practices. Nevertheless, SMEs face many capacity constraints because of their size, whereas the capacities of large enterprises facilitate the acceptance of and realisation of returns from a circular economy-based business model. Some critical limitations include limited access to finance, lack of knowledge and understanding of the circular economy, the dearth of technical and managerial capacity, and the absence of an SME-friendly regulatory framework.

Of course, there is no single way to support SMEs to surmount these obstacles. Through collective transition efforts, SMEs can integrate circularity into their operations; all they need to know is what, why, and how to do so. This is where business leaders, financiers, policymakers, international



The circular economy is a model of consumption and production that focuses on reducing, refurbishing, recycling, and reusing resources—benefiting both the economy and the environment.

PHOTO: COLLECTED

development agencies, and other stakeholders come in.

In most instances, large corporations can finance the circular transition internally through their retained earnings or other internal sources of finance, whereas SMEs are often dependent on external financing to design, manufacture, and use products in a circular way. Unfortunately, many a financier aren't acclimated to the correct assessment of the risks and opportunities associated with circular project financing. By formulating a circular economy financing strategy to improve understanding and knowledge of circular economy concepts among banks and other financial institutions, we can bridge the

financing gap in SME circular projects.

Thanks to technological advances in both recycling and upcycling, we have an opportunity to leapfrog to a circular economy now. However, because of the upfront costs of installing circular technologies, most SMEs may not find it financially feasible to overhaul their current linear business models. That is why we need to make technologies more accessible and affordable for SMEs to redesign their manufacturing processes to increase reuse of industrial waste potential and recyclability.

We all know that SMEs, particularly start-up SMEs, are receptive to new ideas and innovations. Initiating reforms in the ease

of doing business will help attract foreign direct investment (FDI) as well as circular management skills and expertise from multinational enterprises to our local SME landscape.

A regulatory framework for the circular economy is imperative. Policymakers should come up with a streamlined and SME-friendly regulatory framework to promote circularity practices among our SMEs. For instance, we may reward eco-inclusive SMEs through tax breaks, subsidies, and other financial incentives for a systemic transformation.

Finally, to foster the uptake of circularity systems among SMEs, awareness of the circular economy is a must. Appropriate policy initiatives to raise awareness about responsible consumption and production will invigorate the acceptance of circular business models among SMEs. Finland, a global frontrunner in the circular economy, has already taken such an initiative—called the "Program for the Promotion of Low-Carbon, Circular Economy and Digital Transformation", to encourage SMEs to accept circular economic approaches.

Bangladesh is one of the world's fastest booming economies, and it is anticipated to double its USD 409 billion economy by 2030, aiming to become a higher middle-income country. Concomitantly, our stellar economic growth is intertwined with sustainability challenges. As a country that has a pivotal role to play in the climate change debate, Bangladesh must make solid strides in transforming into a circular economy. Otherwise, we will be one of Asia's largest carbon emitters while being a higher middle-income country by 2030, which is inconsistent with our zero-carbon growth stance. So, let's walk the path of circularity by supporting our SMEs to ensure inclusive and sustainable development and prosperity.

Md Shah Jalal is a senior SME credit analyst and credit approver at IDLC Finance Limited. Email: shahjalal248@gmail.com

QUOTABLE Quote

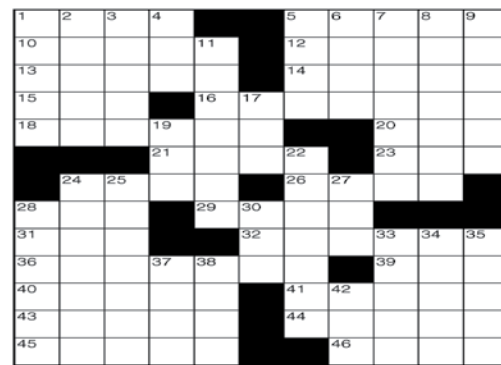


JOAN DIDION
American writer (1934 - 2021)

The willingness to accept responsibility for one's own life is the source from which self-respect springs.

CROSSWORD BY THOMAS JOSEPH

- ACROSS**
- 1 Flank
 - 5 Scarecrow fill
 - 10 School events
 - 12 Head out
 - 13 Incurred, as debt
 - 14 Had a curving path
 - 15 Skater Midori
 - 16 Migrating rodent
 - 18 Desert rodent
 - 20 Be litigious
 - 21 "My Way" writer
 - 23 Talking bear of films
 - 24 Mint product
 - 26 Game fish
 - 28 Jazz instrument
 - 29 Lip
- DOWN**
- 1 Parsley unit
 - 2 Seething
 - 3 Generous person
 - 4 Aussie bird
 - 5 Close with a bang
 - 6 Semester
 - 7 Intolerant group
 - 8 Broad streets
 - 9 In a tight spot, perhaps
 - 11 Healing aids
 - 17 Moose's kin
 - 19 Outlaw
 - 22 Soaks up
 - 24 Buyer's guide
 - 25 Look over
 - 27 Pharaoh's symbol
 - 28 African expanse
 - 30 Candle count
 - 33 Port-au-Prince's nation
 - 34 Church leader
 - 35 Frail
 - 37 Tattoo site
 - 38 Circus setting
 - 42 Unrefined



YESTERDAY'S ANSWERS

C L O S E D A J A R
D E L E T E T A C O
S E D U C E O C T O
S H R A N K
T A B S N O B L E
I L L R E D F L A G
A L A O L E A N Y
R E C A L L S C A P
A N K L E S K I T
J E S U I T
S C A R P R O B E S
P A C T T O R E R O
A R K S O N E D A Y

BEETLE BAILEY



BY MORT WALKER



BABY BLUES



BY KIRKMAN & SCOTT



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