

A time travel to Dhaka University's 2034 convocation

(Based on facts)



THE GRUDGING URBANIST

ADNAN ZILLUR MORSHED

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It was Titian Matin's first return to his native Bangladesh after he won the Nobel Prize in economics for his study of the reciprocal relationship between urban density and economic geography. As an MIT professor of economics, he was invited to be the keynote speaker at the 2034 convocation of his alma mater: the University of Dhaka. Lillian Roscoe, a Harvard professor of anthropology and Titian's wife, was making her maiden trip to Bangladesh. On the plane to Dhaka, Titian told his wife about his eventful undergraduate years on campus. They planned to spend a few days walking around Dhaka University and feel its academic pulse before the big day.

Lillian was impressed with Dhaka's brand new international airport on the bank of the venerated Padma River, about 40 miles from the city. The elevated expressway from the airport brought them to their Gulshan hotel in less than an hour. The first day in Dhaka was spent with Titian's cousins, reminiscing about their shared childhood stories.

The next day, they went to visit the university campus. On the way to the Teacher-Student Centre or TSC by the elevated metro, Titian was surprised to see how his city had been radically transformed with all kinds of sinuous flyovers, multilevel expressways, metro rail stations, swanky hotels, and shopping arcades. Only tiny fractions of Dhaka's sky could be seen through a high-rise concrete forest.

When they disembarked from TSC metro stop in front of Bangla Academy, Titian pointed to the area where Dhaka's iconic Ekushey Book Fair used to take place on a sprawling compound, now crowded with the massive piers of the metro rail, station, high-rise academic buildings, and a gargantuan gymnasium. It felt more like a congested city centre than the academic heart of a university campus. Tall buildings dominated the landscape rather than trees, people, or educational spirit.

Lillian gasped, "I was expecting a greener campus ... that's what I thought your university was ... what happened?"

Titian said absentmindedly, "Well, about a decade ago the university had a radical

transformation! I remember, under a new master plan for the campus, 97 high-rise buildings were constructed without much respect for the environmental history of the 304-acre campus. Nearly 600 old buildings were torn down. It seemed as if Baron Haussmann came from Paris to save Dhaka! Development and modernisation are necessary, but it was no less a steroid-induced and special-interest master plan for the university! A lot of people got fat from the multi-billion-dollar campus development. It was a greedy gilded age!"

Lillian asked, "Wasn't the decade of the 2020s the heyday of Sustainable Development Goals? Why couldn't Dhaka's local governments and the university administration learn a lesson from the West's failed mid-20th-century urban renewal schemes, and leapfrog to a new generation of environment-friendly green development? Isn't it expected from an academic community? Based on what you have been telling me, I thought Dhaka University had begun its journey with much promise in 1921."

Titian responded, "Yes, not many people are aware of the university's fascinating start! Many historians and members of the civil society readily like to buy into the alleged communal origin of the university. Many also like to think of it as what British India's Viceroy Robert Bulwer-Lytton called a 'splendid imperial compensation' in the wake of the failure of the Partition of Bengal (1905-1911), generally assumed to be a colonial ploy to favour East Bengal's intellectually backward Muslims. But the university was much more than an 'imperial concession.' It was also a product of the British Raj's ongoing educational reform efforts following the Indian Universities Act, 1904. A year after the annulment of Bengal's partition, the Nathan Commission was formed to create an academic blueprint for the establishment of Dhaka University. The commission included four Muslims, four Hindus, and four Englishmen. The first vice-chancellor of this university was a Jew, Philip Hartog, who prioritised educational excellence over communal grievance. There is evidence that Dhaka University was conceived as one of the most advanced institutes of higher learning in all of India."

As they kept walking around, Lillian said, "Very fascinating! Tell me a bit more about Hartog."

Titian continued, "Hartog, who had spent most of his administrative career in the University of London system, wanted to create a knowledge community at Dhaka University that would transcend not only the parochialism of communal bickering, but also the Western and



ILLUSTRATION: BIPOB CHAKROBORTY

'I am conscious of many things that I wish the university to accomplish and that are still in the future. I have still my original vision of a great university in this historic city, uniting the science and culture of the East and of the West and achieving new things by a new synthesis.'

Eastern dichotomies. In fact, to prepare my own convocation speech that I will present in a week, I read Hartog's last convocation speech in Dhaka, 'I am conscious of many things that I wish the university to accomplish and that are still in the future. I have still my original vision of a great university in this historic city, uniting the science and culture of the East and of the West and achieving new things by a new synthesis.' It saddens me to see how my alma mater lost that spirit of knowledge today. Instead, what I am seeing is a rampant commodification of education and the tyranny of mediocrity. I hear it's been a downward slide. About 15 years ago, a vice-chancellor very proudly proclaimed that the prestige of the university stemmed from its cafeteria's very affordable *singara*, a local snack! I am all for development, but is this spatialisation of development creating good, conscious citizens?"

Lillian: "Well, the discourse of development has to be also addressed anthropologically, based on a host of complex ground realities and human dimensions ... by the way, let's check out your favourite building on campus. Is it not the Greek architect-planner Constantinos Doxiadis' TSC complex? I recall you telling me that it was a heritage building that the

world wanted preserved. Didn't you and your friends spend a lot of time at the TSC cafeteria?"

Titian: "Oh, I feel so sad ... I forgot to tell you—the entire TSC complex was razed sometime around 2023, much to the consternation of local and international historic preservation advocates. I remember it was a horrific scene: bulldozers flattening mid-20th-century history!"

Lillian: "Too bad ... I so meant to see that building ... development pundits sometimes miss seeing the rich opportunities of blending the past and the future as the very basis of development, freedom, and progress. I am sorry, but your alma mater isn't inspiring me much today. It feels like a large shopping mall where consumers are masquerading as students and teachers. The secular and universal vision of knowledge with which Dhaka University began its academic journey in 1921 seems somewhat defeated in the treeless and generic concrete utopia of its campus."

Titian: "I think I would agree with you. Oh, look ... the famous Madhur Canteen still survives in its frugality and austerity! Shall we have a cup of tea there?"

Lillian: "Sure."

PROJECT SYNDICATE

Breaking Covid's Grip



JOSÉ MANUEL BARROSO

José Manuel Barroso, a former president of the European Commission and former prime minister of Portugal, is the chair of Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance.

Two years into the worst pandemic in a century, it is tempting to think that the world is stuck in a time warp, unable to shake off a virus that has so far killed more than 5.6 million people and wrecked countless livelihoods. But the truth is that in the 15 months since the Covid-19 Vaccine Global Access (COVAX) facility first gained the support of the international community, much has changed.

In September 2020, we did not know whether scientists would be able to develop a safe and effective Covid-19 vaccine. Now we have several. Nor did we know back then that the industry would succeed in scaling up production. But, in the event, 11 billion doses were manufactured last year.

Sadly, these successes also serve to highlight where the world has failed in its efforts to combat the pandemic. Although enough vaccine doses were produced in 2021 to vaccinate every adult on the planet, more than three billion people, most of them living in lower-income countries, have yet to receive their first dose.

High-income countries have an average vaccination rate of over 75 percent and are now focusing on booster programmes. In Africa, by contrast, roughly 10 percent of the population is fully vaccinated, on average, and healthcare systems are still catching up with primary vaccinations.

COVAX's recent delivery of its one billionth Covid-19 vaccine dose represents significant progress toward increasing supply, ensuring equitable access, and thus remedying the current appalling global disparity. This milestone also shows that COVAX—and multilateralism—can work,

despite hoarding or restricting exports of vaccines and ingredients by some governments.

Given this momentum, it is essential that COVAX—a partnership established by the Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness Innovations (CEPI), the World Health Organization (WHO), Unicef, and Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance—continues to receive the world's backing. Otherwise, as rich countries press ahead with booster roll-outs in the face of the Omicron variant, lower-income countries risk falling even further behind.

Such an outcome would constitute not only a moral failure, but also a public health catastrophe. We all know by now that no one is safe from Covid-19 until everyone is safe. Until we can vaccinate people in all parts of the world, the coronavirus will continue to mutate, resulting in the emergence of new and potentially more dangerous variants. There is a significant risk that we will become trapped in an endless cycle of booster vaccinations, chasing the virus rather than getting ahead of it.

Alternatively, by protecting people everywhere, we can reboot the global economy and fully resume trade, commerce, and travel. This will require renewed commitments by high-income countries and vaccine manufacturers to put orders for those most in need first. Providing equitable vaccine access also means ensuring that COVAX has the flexibility to respond to future needs, including those related to booster programmes, variant-adapted vaccines, or simply additional doses.

Progress in combating the pandemic over the last year has been slower than everyone involved in COVAX—including me, as chair of Gavi—wanted and expected, and many lessons need to be learned. And despite the widespread and growing perception that Omicron is somehow less dangerous than previous variants of this coronavirus, we are still very much in the midst of a global crisis.

The delivery of COVAX's one billionth dose proves that, when push comes to shove, we can collaborate effectively to tackle massive global challenges. But this achievement is also a timely reminder that much more remains to be done.

But while further supply-side and demand-side challenges will arise in 2022, we are at last in a position where breaking Covid-19 is a realistic prospect. Speed is of the essence, and the faster we limit the virus's ability to spread, the sooner we will end the cycles of havoc it has wreaked on our societies and economies. That requires ensuring rapid, fair, and equitable access to Covid-19 vaccines to people in all countries.

The delivery of COVAX's one billionth

dose proves that, when push comes to shove, we can collaborate effectively to tackle massive global challenges. But this achievement is also a timely reminder that much more remains to be done.

COVAX and the other international organisations committed to vaccine equity cannot end the pandemic without the help of governments, industry, and civil society. By working together, we have a chance to break the grip of Covid-19 once and for all. We must make the most of it.

রাজশাহী বিশ্ববিদ্যালয়			
রেজিস্ট্রার দপ্তর			
উন্মুক্ত টেন্ডার বিজ্ঞপ্তি			
টেন্ডার নং-কো: ডা: ১৮/৭/১৫/৮৫		তারিখ: ১৩/০১/২০২২	
১.	মন্ত্রণালয়	শিক্ষা মন্ত্রণালয়।	
২.	এজেন্সি/প্রকৌশল	রাজশাহী বিশ্ববিদ্যালয়।	
৩.	প্রকৌশল/এনটিসি নাম	রাজশাহী বিশ্ববিদ্যালয়।	
৪.	প্রকৌশল/এনটিসি কোড	রাজশাহী।	
৫.	প্রকৌশল/সেট পদ্ধতি	উন্মুক্ত দরপত্র পদ্ধতি (OTM)।	
৬.	বাজেট ও অর্ধের উৎস	আবর্তিত খাত (ফির্ডি)।	
৭.	টেন্ডার আহ্বানের কারণ	মসোহাটী প্রবাহ জরুরি।	
৮.	টেন্ডার রেন্ডার নং ও তারিখ	কো: ডা: ১৮/৭/১৫/৮৫ তারিখ: ১৩/০১/২০২২	
৯.	টেন্ডার সিডিউল বিক্রয়ের সর্বশেষ তারিখ ও সময়	০৯/০২/২০২২ তারিখ বেলা ১.০০টা পর্যন্ত।	
১০.	টেন্ডার জমা দেয়ার সর্বশেষ তারিখ ও সময়	১০/০২/২০২২ তারিখ বেলা ১২.০০টা পর্যন্ত।	
১১.	টেন্ডার খোলার তারিখ ও সময়	১০/০২/২০২২ তারিখ বেলা ১২.৩০টা। টেন্ডারলাভাপন উপস্থিতি থাকতে পারবে।	
১২.	টেন্ডার সিডিউল বিক্রয়ের স্থান	আম্রাণী বাজার, রাজশাহী বিশ্ববিদ্যালয় শাখা, রাজশাহী।	
১৩.	টেন্ডার জমা দেয়ার স্থান	কোম্পানি নগর, রাজশাহী বিশ্ববিদ্যালয়।	
১৪.	দরপত্রের নাম	আমানতী অর্থ (টাকা)	দরপত্র দলিলের মূল্য (অঙ্গেরকরযোগ্য)
	মসোহাটী প্রবাহ জরুরি	৳ ১৫,০০০/-	৳ ৫০০/-
	আমানতী অর্থের বিবরণ	৩০ দিন	
১৫.	আমানতী অর্থের বিবরণ	রেজিস্ট্রার, রাজশাহী বিশ্ববিদ্যালয়ের অনুমোদিত বাংলাদেশের কোন সিডিউল ব্যাংক থেকে ব্যাংক ড্রাফট/পে-অর্ডার হিসেবে আমানতী অর্থ (কেন্দ্রকরযোগ্য) দরপত্রের সাথে জমা দিতে হবে।	
১৬.	বিশেষ নির্দেশনা	ক) টেন্ডারের বাধ্যতামূলক শর্তাবলী টেন্ডার সিডিউল ও শর্তাবলীতে পাওয়া যাবে। টেন্ডারলাভাকার খামের উপর দরপত্রের নাম ও তার প্রকৌশলের নাম ও ঠিকানা লিখতে হবে। খ) সরবরাহকৃত বিল থেকে সরকারি বিধি মোতাবেক ভ্যাট/ট্যাক্স কর্তব্যপূর্ণ। গ) দরপত্র দাখিলের শেষ তারিখ কোন কারণে অফিস বন্ধ থাকলে পরবর্তী কার্যদিবসে নির্দিষ্ট সময়ে দরপত্র দাখিল করা যাবে।	
১৭.	টেন্ডার আহ্বানকারীর নাম, পদবী, অফিস ও ফোন নম্বর	প্রফেসর মোঃ আবদুল সালাম, রেজিস্ট্রার, রাজশাহী বিশ্ববিদ্যালয়, ফোন: ৭৫০২৪৪	
১৮.	কর্তৃপক্ষ কোন কারণে বাতিলের ক্ষেত্রে যে কোন দরপত্র গ্রহণ কিংবা সমস্ত দরপত্র বাতিল করার ক্ষমতা সংরক্ষণ করেন।		
প্রফেসর মোঃ আবদুল সালাম রেজিস্ট্রার রাজশাহী বিশ্ববিদ্যালয়			
ক্রিডি-১৭০			