

Lessons we can learn from the Russian invasion of Ukraine



STRATEGICALLY SPEAKING

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THE invasion of Ukraine, which Russia chooses to euphemistically call "special operations," has produced several lessons for us, as much as it has, once again, exposed various negative facets of the existing world order, the fault lines in international relationship, and the skewed international system hogged by the rich and the powerful. This conflict has also brought to light the partisan nature of Western media, which flaunts its so-called objectivity and hypes its impartiality, now ever so consumed by selective amnesia of the US and its allies' bombardment of Afghanistan, Iraq, Syria and Libya, so much so that they cannot but betray their racist proclivities. This racial bias is also evident in the European governments' policy towards the Ukrainian refugees compared to their attitude and policies towards other refugees, whose skin colour happens to be a few shades darker than theirs.

Unfortunately, all wars are launched on the pretext of justice—and all wars result in deaths. But while all murderers face retribution and punishment since it is forbidden to kill, those who wage wars and kill people go free because, according to Voltaire, "they kill in large numbers to the sounds of trumpets," as have modern-day mass killers like the two Bushes, Henry Kissinger, Blair, and Obama. The latter, a Nobel Laureate, justified war as the arbiter of conflicts who wanted the world to think in new ways about the notions of just war, and legalised war; since the notion of "just" is highly subjective, one was, therefore, free to wage war. Now Putin has been added to that list.

What is particularly noticeable, and heartening, is the overdrive of certain international bodies and institutions that have moved very quickly to hold Russia to account, like the UN and the International Court of Justice (ICJ), the latter calling Russia for alleged genocide and war crimes. It is so encouraging to see the ICJ move with such celerity as never seen before under the Convention

on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide. The hearing started in The Hague on March 7, 2022.

These are appropriate measures that must be taken against a blatant aggressor, and one would like to believe that the international institutions are not totally neutered yet. But if only these bodies had moved with equal promptness



in similar circumstances in the past, when international order was equally blatantly trampled under the feet of the lone superpower, when the UN was bypassed and when indiscriminate carpet bombing tried to blow a civilisation out of the face of the Earth, Russia would have perhaps thought twice before attacking Ukraine.

Also, contrast that with the genocide in Bangladesh, which has not been recognised as genocide as yet. And what about civilian deaths in Iraq, Afghanistan, Syria and Libya caused by US operations? I quote a very conservative estimate, by the Watson Institute of Brown University in the US, that 387,072 civilians died violent deaths as a direct result of the US' post-9/11 wars. The war deaths from malnutrition and a damaged healthcare system and environment likely far outnumber deaths from combat. Should they not merit recognition by the ICJ? Let's see now the strategic and

security lessons the Russia-Ukraine war has for the world—particularly for a geographically small country like Bangladesh, whose main diplomatic preoccupation since its inception has been to craft policies and chart courses in order to exist peacefully with its preponderantly large neighbour. What has come out very starkly in

And more than anything, Russia's aggression, that has matched the immorality and depravity of the US and Western actions in the four aforementioned countries, demonstrates the need for a small country to have a credible deterrence, that would make amply clear to any potential aggressor that the cost of aggression would be highly disproportionate to its assessed gains. Ukrainian leadership must be ruing the fact that they gave up the nuclear warheads stationed in its territory in exchange for security guarantee. At the time of independence, Ukraine had the third largest nuclear stockpile in the world, which they surrendered in 1994 after joining the NPT regime, in exchange for economic and territorial guarantee. One wonders whether Russia would have attacked Ukraine if they were in possession of nuclear weapons.

And this is another lesson for a small country like ours: Do not depend on the security guarantees of others—not even that which is in black and white. Look at the fate of the Budapest Memorandum signed between Ukraine (and also Belarus and Kazakhstan) with the US, the UK and the Russian Federation in 1994, which stipulated economic and territorial security guarantees for the signatories in return for giving up nuclear weapons. The memorandum was honoured in its violation, regrettably. Ukraine has learnt the hard way that, while the US and its allies are willing to put boots on the ground while invading a third country, they would dither in doing so in defence of a country outside their alliance. And neither should small countries fall for the oft-repeated cliché that diplomacy is the best defence. In this instance, the US and the West's defence and diplomacy both failed miserably.

Last but not the least is the very important lesson that one must learn not only from the recent invasion of Ukraine, but also the Russian annexation of Crimea and its war against Georgia. In all three instances, ethnic affinity of the people living in areas bordering Russia was exploited by the latter to create grounds for invasion and annexation, as was done in Crimea, or carving a separate state from the mainland as with Abkhazia and South Ossetia in Georgia, and with the Donbas region in Eastern Ukraine. I call it "the quisling factor" for want of a better phrase, and we must be wary of it too.

European governments have been a lot more welcoming towards the Ukrainian refugees compared to refugees from other places.

FILE PHOTO: REUTERS

the latest Russia-Ukraine war is that a country's geopolitical importance, stemming from its geopolitical location, can be more of a bane than a boon—unless one plays one's diplomatic card deftly. Sandwiched between two big and powerful entities—i.e., the Russian Federation and the conglomerate of Nato allies with historical animosity to the former—the situation for Ukraine was always extremely delicate. Ukraine became a buffer for the Russians after the break-up of the Soviet Union, and the Nato borders moved further eastwards with Bulgaria, Romania and Slovakia joining the Western alliance. Ukraine fell victim to the large-single-powerful-neighbour syndrome, with the Russian Federation dominating its entire eastern flank and most of its big western neighbours allied to either of the big powers. Ukraine's intention to join Nato and make a big case out of it are the immediate reasons behind its woes.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Send us your letters to letters@thedailystar.net

Bring prices under control

Commodity prices have been rising uncontrollably in recent times. As a result, low-income people and the middle class have been finding it harder and harder to afford some of the most basic commodities. Even though prices have been rising, peoples' incomes have not gone up nearly as much.

The authorities should be doing a lot more to control prices. The lack of monitoring by the authorities, along with the dishonesty of powerful

traders who are artificially increasing prices have led to a crisis that we have not seen for a very long time. Should things continue like this, we might see other social costs go up rapidly. Therefore, the authorities urgently need to expand their social safety net programmes, as well as take immediate measures to bring prices back under control.

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Memo No. 35.01.2690.189.07.000.22-698

Dated : 21-03-2022

CORRIGENDUM-01

Sub : Supply, Installation, Commissioning, Operation and Maintenance of a Real-Time Web-Based Toll Collection System of Meghna Bridge at 25th km & Gomoti Bridge at 42nd km & 43rd km of Dhaka-Chattogram National highway under Narayangonj Road division.
Package No. 01/Manual/PSN/NRC/2021-2022
Date 16-03-2022.

Ref : Invitation Notice Memo No. 35.01.2690.189.07.000.22-666 Date 16-03-2022.

The following amendment (as shown in column-4) is hereby made to the Tender notice for the above mentioned work. The participants are advised to submit their Tender with due consideration to this amendment. This corrigendum is a part of the Tender notice. All other terms and conditions of Tender notice shall remain unchanged. The participants must submit this corrigendum-01 along with their Tender document duly sealed and signed.

Sl. No. of IFT	Reference	To be replaced	Replace With
17.	Tender last selling date and time	06-04-2022 4.00 PM (Bangladesh Standard Time)	12-04-2022 4.00 PM (Bangladesh Standard Time)
18.	Tender Closing date and time	07-04-2022 12.00 PM (Bangladesh Standard Time)	13-04-2022 12.00 PM (Bangladesh Standard Time)
19.	Tender opening date and time	07-04-2022 12.30 PM (Bangladesh Standard Time)	13-04-2022 12.30 PM (Bangladesh Standard Time)
20	Selling tender document (principal)	Office of the Superintending Engineer, RHD, Road Circle, Narayangonj	Office of the Executive Engineer, RHD, Road Division, Narayangonj
	Selling tender document (others)	(i) Office of the Chief Engineer, RHD, Sarak Bhaban, Tejgaon, Dhaka. (ii) Office of the Additional Chief Engineer, RHD, Dhaka Zone, Alenbari, Tejgaon, Dhaka. (iii) Office of the Superintending Engineer, RHD, Narayangonj Road Circle, Allenbari, Tejgaon, Dhaka.	(i) Office of the Executive Engineer, RHD, Administration & Establishment, Sarak Bhaban, Tejgaon, Dhaka. (ii) Office of the Executive Engineer, RHD, Road Division, Dhaka (iii) Office of the Executive Engineer, RHD, Road Division, Munshiganj (iv) Office of the Executive Engineer, RHD, Road Division, Narshingdi

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GD-544

বাংলাদেশের সুপ্রীম কোর্ট
Bangladesh

বাংলাদেশ সিকিউরিটিজ অ্যান্ড এক্সচেঞ্জ কমিশন

সূত্র নং-বিএসইসি/প্রশাসন/১২:০০/২০০৩-৩৩৩ তারিখঃ ২১/০৩/২০২২ইং

“ অকেজো গাড়ি বিক্রয়ের দরপত্র বিজ্ঞপ্তি ”

বাংলাদেশ সিকিউরিটিজ অ্যান্ড এক্সচেঞ্জ কমিশনের ০৩ (তিন)টি অকেজো গাড়ি নং- ঢাকা মেট্রো-খ-১২-৭১৭৫, ঢাকা মেট্রো-খ-১২-৭১৭৬ ও ঢাকা মেট্রো-খ-১৩-১২৮৩ “যেখানে যে অবস্থায় আছে” ভিত্তিতে বিক্রয়ের জন্য বাংলাদেশের প্রকৃত নাগরিক বা আগ্রহী ব্যক্তি বা প্রতিষ্ঠানের নিকট থেকে সীলমোহরকৃত দরপত্র আহবান করা যাচ্ছে। বিক্রয়যোগ্য অকেজো গাড়ির বিস্তারিত বিবরণ ও শর্ত সম্বলিত সিডিউল নং ৫০০/- (পাঁচশত) টাকা মূল্যে (অফেরতযোগ্য) ২৭/০৩/২০২২ হতে ১০/০৪/২০২২ তারিখ অফিস চলাকালীন সময়ে সহকারী পরিচালক (প্রশাসন), বাংলাদেশ সিকিউরিটিজ অ্যান্ড এক্সচেঞ্জ কমিশন এর নিকট হতে সংগ্রহ করা যাবে এবং ১১/০৪/২০২২ইং তারিখ বেলা ০২:০০ ঘটিকার মধ্যে কমিশনের প্রশাসন বিভাগে দরপত্র জমা দিতে হবে। সিডিউল ক্রয়ের পর আগ্রহী ব্যক্তি/প্রতিষ্ঠান বা পক্ষে মনোনীত ব্যক্তিগণ বাংলাদেশ সিকিউরিটিজ অ্যান্ড এক্সচেঞ্জ কমিশন, ই-৬/সি, শের-ই-বাংলা নগর, আগারগাঁও, ঢাকা-১২০৭ হতে বিক্রয়যোগ্য গাড়ি সমূহ অফিস চলাকালীন সময়ে দেখতে পারবেন।

(আবু মেহেদী আক্তার)
সহকারী পরিচালক (প্রশাসন)
বাংলাদেশ সিকিউরিটিজ অ্যান্ড এক্সচেঞ্জ কমিশন
মোবাইলঃ ০১৮১১১৯৭০৬৮

GD-542