

# Bangladesh and the US need each other

Understanding the importance of Bangladesh in the Bay of Bengal and the Indo-Pacific



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OUR Planet Earth was so named by human beings who are essentially terrestrial creatures. But how would a visitor from outer space, from another planet or galaxy, react on discovering our planet for the first time? In sharp contrast to other planets he has seen so far, he would see a planet that is 71 percent covered with oceanic waters, with continental land masses as floating islands on these oceanic expanses. He would perceive all the oceans as being interconnected. Such an interplanetary visitor would probably name this planet of ours as "Oceana."

Zooming in on from outer space on our oceanic planet, our intergalactic visitor would see the vast Pacific Ocean on the east, the Atlantic Ocean on the west, the Antarctic Ocean on the south, and the Indian Ocean in the centre of this oceanic geosphere (geographers on Earth refer to the Indian Ocean as the great "Great Middle Bay"). Zooming in more, our intergalactic visitor would see the Bay of Bengal, the largest bay in the world as the "lesser middle bay" in this Great Middle Bay. Now, tempted to zoom in further on this triangular Bay of Bengal, our visitor from outer space would view Bangladesh, at the apex of this bay, as being at the epicentre of this oceanic planet.

## Historical development and legacy of Bangladesh

Bangladesh derives its historical legacy, and its current importance, from its geographical location at the epicentre of this vast oceanic planet of ours. Let us not forget that precolonial Bengal was famed since time immemorial, as a land of vast riches. During British colonial rule over India, Bengal was the largest of its three administrative presidencies, with highest GDP and its summer capital, Shillong, boasting the highest per capita GDP.

What enabled Bengal to achieve such remarkable attention? Historically, it was primarily through the web of riverine and maritime lanes extending through the Bay of Bengal via the coastal ports of Myanmar, Malaysia, Sumatra via Malacca to points further east. Colonial Britain added to this pre-existing riverine circulatory system the railway network from 1844 onwards. With the railways vastly augmenting the riverine routes, historical Bengal became a vital bridging country, oceanically connecting the western and eastern hemispheres. Historical Bengal flourished because of this bridging role.

Modern Bangladesh, today, is already discovering the benefits of acting as a connectivity facilitator between the West and the East. Its surge in growth and ability to attract attention and investment flows over the last decade is derived from this perceived newly established stature. To give credit where it is due, this would not have happened without the bold and visionary leadership of Sheikh Hasina, who well understood the importance of ensuring better bilateral relations with all immediate neighbours and embarked determinedly on the revival of all connectivity that had existed prior to 1947, but had been systematically uprooted after 1965.

## Re-evaluating Bangladesh's position and role within the Global Commons

Today, Bangladesh is not an inconsequential country. It is certainly not the "bottomless basket case" it was contemptuously dismissed as being on its wrestling independence from neocolonialism in 1971. It has not only survived as a state, but today is globally looked upon with respect and admiration as one of the fastest growing economies not just in the region, but in the world, thanks largely to the foundational policies adopted by its Father of the

Nation ("Bangabandhu: The architect of Bangladesh's foreign policy," *The Daily Star*, May 7, 2020). Bangladesh today can proudly claim that they have better human development indices than most of their neighbours. Two-and-a-half generations on from its gory liberation as a nation, Bangladesh today has a vibrant youthful population

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that is eagerly forward-looking, replete with high aspirations, supremely self-confident and exuding pride in their nation and their achievements to date, and that does not take kindly to being patronised or dictated to by anyone. Its business community has demonstrated its entrepreneurial talents and zest by unleashing its animal spirit and driving the engine of national growth.

The bold and visionary leadership of Sheikh Hasina has stabilised the country economically and led it on the path to prosperity. This same leadership has reemphasised to the world Bangladesh's identity as a moderate, secular, inclusive Muslim majority state, with deeply embedded democratic aspirations that has zero tolerance towards forces of radicalism, terrorism, and destabilisation of any kind. By contributing the largest numbers of military, police and civilian personnel to the UN Peacekeeping Force and its global peace-building efforts, Bangladesh has palpably demonstrated its core commitment to peace and justice for all.

Ensuring economic prosperity and stability, deepening, widening, and broadening its educational base, ensuring equal participation by women, gender equality and social stability are the prerequisites for the first stage of development of any state, for progressing, consolidating, and stabilising its foundational pillars. This enables it to advance to organically ensuring social equity, inclusivity, good governance, and respect for human rights with justice for all. Most advanced industrialised nations have organically traversed this same path centuries ago. Bangladeshis are only now embarking on this second stage of development.

## Potential for growth: The next 50 years of Bangladesh-US ties

Today, the focus of attention by almost all major, middle or minor powers has pivoted to Asia. Contextually, the Indo-Pacific region is strategically at the heart of Asia. The increasing attention upon Bangladesh emanates from it being perceived as a bridging nation located at Asia's very epicentre. Bangladesh's prosperity is and will continue to be derived from this role and will also depend on its ability to maintain the best of relations with all countries, whether near or far from it. Indeed, its survival and continuing prosperity as a state depends on judicious management of its geostrategic location.

At the same time, this locational advantage and importance also devolves on Bangladesh an onerous responsibility. For Bangladesh to continue serving as a facilitator of free maritime passage in the

Bay of Bengal nested in the larger Indo-Pacific region in the vast global Oceanic Commons, there must be common understanding that it is in its own larger interest as well as the interest of all. However, ensuring this requires greater regional cooperation than the peoples of the region have so far had or indulged in. Bangladesh has always ardently

only be surpassed at current rates by the US, China, and the European Union. The US can help Bangladesh's leading role as the facilitator of this process.

Given Bangladesh's centrality, the US needs a stable and prosperous Bangladesh, just as Bangladesh needs the US as a continuing interdependent development partner. Of course, Bangladesh also needs to demonstrate its role as exemplar by ensuring better governance of itself that is based on the exemplary standards of social justice and egalitarian rights for all its own citizens as well. However, in this endeavour, the US, with its head start of over 250 years in nation building and state consolidation, would surely recall its own many challenges that it has had to overcome. Today, the US can draw upon its own often difficult experience and assist Bangladesh, which embarked on its journey as an independent state a mere 50 years ago. It can help Bangladesh in capacity-building and institutional development towards an inclusive rules-based society, avoiding the pitfalls that it itself faced and is still facing to some extent.

Bangladesh has historically been part of ancient Indo-Pacific connectivity, and it has declared that it shall continue to be a part of ensuring future connectivity in the region. It is indeed in Bangladesh's interest to advocate and work for an open, resilient, and interconnected Indo-Pacific, because its own continuing sustainability as an independent, sovereign prosperous nation-state depends on this.

As an increasingly self-confident and prosperous Bangladesh moves away from a sense of obligatory dependency that defined its relationship with the US in the last 50 years, it is in the US' interest to promote a sense of growing interdependence with the relatively new nation-state that is Bangladesh, looking ahead at the next 50 years.

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advocated cooperation among neighbours. It has consistently punched well above its weight in promoting regional cooperation, as clearly evinced from its active roles in the formation of Saarc, Bimstec and IORA, as well as its proactive role in fostering subregional cooperation within the BBIN. Bangladesh can, and should, now look to working in concert with other Bay of Bengal littoral and adjacent countries (who together comprise a quarter of the world's population) to engage together in economic cooperation. Such cooperation could organically progress towards the emergence of a Bay of Bengal Economic Community, whose aggregate GDP would

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**Auction Notice (2nd Call)**

Sealed auctions are hereby invited from the interested National/Foreign Buyers/Companies in order to sell Inventoried & Valuated Structure, Machinery & other Assets by auction "as and where basis" of terminated male wears, female wears and children wears made of fleece/knit fabric manufacturing industry named M/s. Shine Fashion Co. (Pvt.) Ltd., Plot # 269-276, DEPZ (Ext. Zone) or to operate the enterprise. To participate in the auction the terms & conditions are stated below:

**Terms & Conditions:**

- Interested Persons/Organizations/ Existing enterprises of EPZ(s) (Local/Joint Venture/Foreign) or any other interested persons/organizations from outside EPZ can take part in this auction who are interested to purchase the Structure, Machinery, Equipment & other Assets "as and where basis" of the company by observing the existing rules and regulations in this regard.
- Successful bidder will have to pay VAT, TAX and other payable fees as per custom rules for the duty free imported Assets of existing Assets of industry to be taken out to the Domestic Tariff Area (DTA).
- Auction documents attached with a single pay order/bank draft/FDD from any schedule bank of an amount of 15% as earnest money (non-refundable for successful bidder & refundable for unsuccessful bidder) must be submitted in favour of BEPZA. Auction documents without earnest money will be treated as rejected.
- Inventoried Structure, Machinery, equipment & other Assets under the inventory list may be seen on 22/06/2022, 23/06/2022 & 26/06/2022 from 10.00 AM to 3.00 PM. Information regarding the visit and the list of Assets may be collected by contacting with the Executive Director, Dhaka EPZ directly.
- If the auction is accepted by the Authority, the successful bidder will have to pay the remaining 85% amount of the quoted price along with applicable TAX & VAT within 15 days to BEPZA through Pay Order/Bank Draft/FDD. Accordingly, the delivery of Structure, Machinerics, Equipment & other Assets will have to be taken as per Customs & BEPZA rules.
- Auction Schedule may be bought by paying Tk. 5,000.00 (non-refundable) within 27/06/2022 during office hours from the Accounts Department of Dhaka EPZ, Chattogram EPZ, Adamjee EPZ, Mongla EPZ, Cumilla EPZ, Kamaphuli EPZ, Ishwardi EPZ, Uttara EPZ & Accounts Department, BEPZA Executive Office, Dhaka.
- Auction schedule may be dropped into the auction box kept at the office of Executive Director, Dhaka EPZ on 28/06/2022 from 10.00 am to 12.00 pm and Submitted Auction documents will be opened in the same date at 12:30 pm at the office of Executive Director, Dhaka EPZ in presence of the bidders (if any). Updated copy of VAT, TIN and Trade License shall have to be attached with the Auction schedule; but this condition may be relaxed by the Authority in case of fully new 100% foreign owned company interested to invest in the EPZ.
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- Successful bidder will have to take permission to operate the industrial unit in the EPZ by following the project sanctioning procedure of BEPZA as per rules.
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Sl. No	Tender ID, Reference No	Procurement Nature, Title	Type, Method	Publishing date & Closing date
I	702378, 51.00.0000.213.07.016.21.390	Goods, Supply of Desktop Computer, Laptop, Printer & Scanner.	NCT, OTM	22 May, 2022: 17:00 & 05 June, 2022: 11:30

(A S M Ashrafur Islam) 22-05-22  
Joint Secretary (Common Service)  
Ministry of Disaster Management and Relief  
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