Riddled with economic pitfalls

Can South Asia turn itself around in 2023?



Tasneem Tayeb is a columnist for The Daily Star.

LOOK

TASNEEM TAYEB

The year of 2022 was supposed to and riddled with pitfalls. As usual, the have been one that helped nations commodity price hike had a trickleaccelerate their recovery from Coviddown effect on the overall economic induced economic shocks. Asia parameters of countries across the was all set on the path of expedited world, and South Asia also found economic growth, with World Bank itself in uncharted waters. Inflation (WB) and International Monetary soon unleashed its impact on people's Fund (IMF) growth projections costs of living and purchasing power, resulting in nations revisiting and looking favourable. According to WB's "South reworking their economic and Asia Economic Focus, Fall 2021," monetary policies and their overall

outlook for 2022. published in the ending quarter of Bangladesh, India, Pakistan, Nepal was expected to reach 6.4 percent Bhutan, and Maldives all suffered. But the fate of Sri Lanka was perhaps the most unfortunate and climactic.

Sri Lanka, due to an already crumbling system riddled with corruption, nepotism, and incompetence resulting from years of unchecked dynastic political misadventures simply gave up. Unable to pay the huge amounts of external debt, the country declared bankruptcy, as its economy teetered on the brink of collapse. There was a A hike in energy prices in the shortage of food, halted sale of fuel, and no papers for students to write the uncertainties resulting from a on during exams. Sri Lankans were

People in Pakistan, too, took to the streets in the face of rising inflation. As food and fuel prices shot up. Pakistan's inflation reportedly reached a staggering 13.8 percent in May 2022. Protests broke out across the country, calling on the government to rein in the prices. As 2021 and from August 14, 2022 of the

A CLOSER point they drove home in only a few prices within the purchasing power transportation fare has increased by Economic Focus, Fall 2022" report, of their respective populations. In both countries, the urban poor and the lower-middle and middle income groups have been hit hard by the ongoing global crisis.

A price comparison study by *The* Business Standard, based on price lists of essentials from November 4,



South Asian countries need to rise above seeking short-term internal gains and look at the bigger picture of achieving a strong regional growth trajectory and the benefits this will bring about for every player.

the country's inflation rate shot up to 27.3 percent in August, the highest since May 1975, the IMF warned of further protests. The country's inflation rate of 23.8 percent (as of November 2022) is still a pain point for the people and the government.

Bangladesh and India, while not war unfolding in Europe - made our out in the streets demanding the in such a dire strait, are facing their economic journey into 2022 perilous dismantling of the government - a own problems in pushing down

Trading Corporation of Bangladesh (TCB), revealed the grim reality of the Bangladeshi people. Between the two dates, the price of coarse rice increased by 14 percent, lentils by 23 percent, bulk soybean oil by 19 percent, eggs by 45 percent, broiler chicken by 18 percent, atta by 38 percent, and potatoes by 20 percent.

The report further added that

up to 55 percent post the double hike of fuel prices.

And this has adversely impacted people's disposable income and their ability to save money. A report by *The* Daily Star suggested that deposit growth rate has slumped to just eight percent in the July-September quarter of this year – a five-year low. Unable to make ends meet, the urban poor and those in the lower-income bracket are having to skip at least one meal a day.

India, where inflation is keeping food and fuel out of the reach of lower-income and middle-income people, turning dietary essentials such as milk into luxuries. It has been reported in *The Swaddle* magazine that 32 percent of households are having a tough time meeting their monthly expenses, including rent and mortgages. And companies producing entry-level consumer goods have also witnessed a decline

In Nepal, the rising prices has resulted in a unique problem: more and more people are now falling For this, South Asian countries victim to cholera, as they are not able to boil drinking water due to the increased price of energy and its supply scarcity, and also because they are not able to afford bottled water.

Maldives is still counting on increasing tourism to cope with the economic shocks of the Covid pandemic and the Russia-Ukraine

According to the WB's "South Asia

the region's growth is expected to slow down to a 5.8 percent average - a two percent drop from the projection of 7.1 percent stated in the aforementioned 2021 report.

The way ahead for South Asian economic recovery is clearly fraught with perils and, if anything, at this rate and with no end in sight to the European conflict, things might only get more difficult for the people and for policymakers.

It is high time the countries of The situation is also similar in this region looked towards finding localised solutions to support each other and navigate these challenges through strategic bilateral and multilateral initiatives, especially in trade. All of these countries have very strong geopolitical and socioeconomic unique selling points (USPs) which they should revisit and assess how best they could utilise to cushion the South Asian region from prevailing economic pitfalls.

We need to open up to possibilities available outside the ones offered by the West. These are uncertain times, and would require unique solutions. need to rise above seeking shortterm internal gains and look at the bigger picture of achieving a strong regional growth trajectory and the benefits this will bring about for every player. With national elections on the horizon for many of these countries, this could pose a challenge of its own. The question remains: do we have the appetite and the desire for it? Only

A slap on the face of our democracy

An AL leader's actions unmask the sorry face of our political culture



last year, Bangladesh's growth rate

in FY 2021-22. Similarly, India was

expected to grow at 8.3 percent.

Riding on the back of rebounding

tourism, Maldives' prospects looked

bright at 22 percent. And although

stuck in the range of three percent,

the growth potential of Pakistan, Sri

Lanka, Nepal and Bhutan seemed

But for the South Asian region,

these opportunities soon turned into

global market - mostly driven by

behemoth challenges.

THE OUTSPOKEN ONE Islam, was inhumanely attacked directly or indirectly, encouraged

Anupam Debashis Roy team at The Daily Star.

ANUPAM DEBASHIS ROY

On Christmas Day, a video started where M Inamul Haque, a senior engineer and former director general of the River Research Institute, was slapped by a Krishak League leader in front of the national museum in Shahbag. The man supposedly slapped Haque while the latter was distributing leaflets criticising the government on behalf of the Sharbajan Biplobi Dol party, of which Haque is the convenor.

In the video, Inamul Haque can be seen shocked and distraught after being slapped. The viewers of the video, judging by their social media comments, were shocked as well to see the senior citizen being openly assaulted this way, and that too while he was speaking to a reporter. This seemingly small incident gives us a view of what the condition of our democracy currently is, and how random acts of violence against political opponents have become part and parcel of our political activities.

In fact, people who are willing circulating on social media to assault others in the name of the ruling party have been incentivised by their leaders.

> Very recently, Saddam Hossain from Dhaka University was made president of the Bangladesh Chhatra League (BCL). Previously, members of Bangladesh Sadharon Chhatra Odhikar Songrokkhon Parishad had named him for leading an assault against them at the DUCSU vice-president's office at DU in December 2019. Even after the Parishad leaders filed a case against Hossain, he was never arrested, and now he is the BCL president. So, not only has he not been punished for his actions, he has seemingly been rewarded for his "leadership" in allegedly attacking the opposition.

have observed many other cases where attackers and instigators of political violence our country. have been spared.

by a group of BCL men with to violently suppress dissenting sticks, bamboo poles, a dagger and a hammer, leaving his right Haque is merely a result of that leg broken and his spine severely injured. However, the police said that he was hurt in a "scuffle" with leader, who came to Dhaka only some members of the public. But to attend his party's council The Daily Star was able to identify meeting, somehow deemed it 11 of the attackers, 10 of whom fit to hit an elderly man because were BCL activists and leaders.

Opposition politicians face attacks from the ruling party regularly, and students who dare to voice dissenting opinions are attacked on university campuses, especially in the guestrooms and public rooms. But, somehow, the affiliates of the ruling party almost always get away scot-free.

While the assault on Inamul Haque may be nothing new, it will leave a lasting mark on our democracy. It is part of a wider ongoing assault on spaces for dissent and opposition politics in Bangladesh, which have been continually shrinking during the ruling party's time in office. This stifling of dissenting voices, be it through legal means (by means of the Digital Security Act, for example) or through physical violence, has drastically reduced the overall space for politics in

The political culture that has Back in 2018, a leader of the been bred in the country by the Rajshahi University student and ruling party is one of impunity, doubt the existence of any intent quota reform movement, Toriqul where party members are, of theirs to act as such.

voices. The slapping of Inamul attitude. It is an act of arrogance. The union-level Krishak League he thought that he was right to do so, and also because he was sure that nothing would happen to him as a consequence. This sentiment is mirrored in the victim's statement, who said that he would not be seeking any redress since he has no hope of justice. Is this where we are at as a nation?

If so, we have only reached this situation due to a lasting trend of denial of justice, and assaults on the rights to dissent and to engage in opposition politics.

With the political field heating up ahead of the national election in 2023 and major opposition political figures behind bars, the situation is likely to get worse. The onus remains on the government and the ruling party to ensure that the latter's activists do not stand in the way of political freedoms and do not engage in political violence in the run-up to the elections. Of course, one cannot help but

গণপ্রজাতন্ত্রী বাংলাদেশ সরকার

নৌ পুলিশ হেডকোয়ার্টার্স

পুলিশ প্লাজা কনকর্ড, টাওয়ার-১, ফ্লোর-১২, প্লট-২, সড়ক-১১৪, গুলশান-১, ঢাকা

পুনঃ উন্মুক্ত দরপত্র বিজ্ঞপ্তি

প্রচলিত পাবলিক প্রকিউরমেন্ট আইন ও বিধিমালা মোতাবেক ২০২২-২০২৩ অর্থ সালে নৌ পুলিশ, ঢাকা'র নিমুবর্ণিত আইটেম ভিত্তিক কাজ/সেবা সরবরাহের জন্য (৩য় কোয়ার্টার, জানুয়ারী ২০২৩ মার্চ ২০২৩ পর্যন্ত) প্রকৃত যোগ্যতা ও অভিজ্ঞতাসম্পন্ন ব্যবসায়ী/ঠিকাদার/সরবরাহকারী/প্রতিষ্ঠানের নিকট হতে পৃথক-পৃথক সীলমোহরকৃত খামে কাজের নাম উল্লেখপূর্বক প্রতিযোগিতামূলক পুনঃউন্মুক্ত দরপত্র আহবান করা যাচ্ছে

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١.	মন্ত্রণালয়/বিভাগ	স্বরেষ্ট্র মন্ত্রণালয়, জননিরাপত্তা বিভাগ
٤.	সংস্থা	বাংলাদেশ পুলিশ
٥.	দরপত্র সম্পাদনকারীর প্রধান	অতিরিক্ত আইজিপি নৌ পুলিশ, বাংলাদেশ পুলিশ, ঢাকা
8.	কি কারণে দরপত্র আহবান	কোয়ার্টার অনুযায়ী গ্রুপ ভিত্তিক খাদ্যদ্রব্য (অর্থনৈতিক কোড ৩২৫৪১০২) সরবরাহ কাজ
œ.	দরপত্রের সূত্র নং	নৌ পুলিশ স্মারক নং-নৌ/প্রশাসন/২০২২-২৩/১২০৯৯
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ъ.	বাজেট ও অর্থনৈতিক খাত	রাজস্ব খাত (জিওবি), পুলিশ হেডকোয়ার্টার্স হতে প্রাপ্ত বাজেট সাপেক্ষে
তথ্যাদিঃ	8	
ð.	দরপত্র বিজ্ঞপ্তি প্রকাশের তারিখ	২৮/১২/২০২২খ্রিঃ
٥٥.	দরপত্র বিক্রয়ের শেষ তারিখ	০৮/০১/২০২৩খ্রিঃ অফিস চলাকালীন সময় পর্যন্ত (ছুটির দিন ব্যতীত
22.	দরপত্র জমা প্রদানের সর্বশেষ তারিখ ও সময়	০৯/০১/২০২৩খ্রিঃ ১২.০০ ঘটিকা পর্যম্ভ
32.	দরপত্র খোলার তারিখ ও সময়	০৯/০১/২০২৩খ্রিঃ ১২.৩০ ঘটিকা
অফিসে	র নাম ও ঠিকানাঃ	
১ ৩.	দরপত্র ভকুমেন্ট/সিভিউল বিক্রয়কারী অফিস	১) পুলিশ সুপার, এ্যাডমিন এক ফাইনান্স, নৌ পুলিশ, পুলিশ প্লান্ত কনকর্জ, টাওয়ার-১, ফ্লোর-১২, গুলশান-১, ঢাকা ২) উপ-পুলিশ কমিশনার (লজিস্টিকস), ডিএমপি, ঢাকা, ৩) পুলিপ্রপার, ঢাকা জেলা, ঢাকা ৪) অধিনায়ক (অতিরিক্ত ডিআইজি), ১ এপিবিএন, উত্তরা, ঢাকা ৫) পুলিশ সুপার, নৌ পুলিশ, ঢাকা অঞ্চল, ঢাকা
\$8.	দরপত্র গ্রহণকারী অফিস	নৌ পুলিশ হেডকোয়ার্টার্স, পুলিশ প্লাজা কনকর্ড, টাওয়ার-১, ফ্লোর ১২, তলশান-১, ঢাকা
S&.	দরপত্র খোলার স্থান	নৌ পুলিশ হেডকোয়ার্টার্স, পুলিশ প্লাজা কনকর্ড, টাওয়ার-১, ফ্লোর ১২, গুলশান-১, ঢাকা
১৬.	প্রি-টেভার সভার স্থান, তারিখ ও সময়	০৩/০১/২০২৩খিঃ বেলা ১১.০০ ঘটিকা, পুলিশ প্লাজা কনকর্ড টাওয়ার-১, ফ্লোর-১২, প্লট-২, সড়ক-১১৪, গুলশান-১, ঢাকা
দরপত্র :	প্রাপ্তি সম্পর্কিত তথ্যঃ	
۵٩.	দরপত্রের যোগ্যতা	১। হালনাগাদ ট্রেড লাইসেল ২। আয়কর সনদ ৩। ভ্যাট রেজিট্রেশ সনদ ৪। ব্যাংক সলভেন্সি সনদ ৫। অভিজ্ঞতা সনদপত্র ৬ নাগরিকত্ব সনদপত্র এবং অন্যান্য যোগ্যতা যা টেভ ডকুমেন্ট/সিডিউল এ উল্লেখ আছে।
Sbr.	খাতসমহের বিবরণ	I n w

খাতসমূহের বিবরণ দরপত্রের নিরাপত্তা কাজ সম্পন্ন করার সময় (দিন) জামানত (টাকা) (টাকা) চাহিদা ২০২২-২০২৩ অর্থ সাল (৩য় পোলাও চাল 800 \$0,000 সরবরাহ মোতাবেক কোয়ার্টার, জানুয়ারী/২৩ হতে চিনি সরবরাহ Q. মার্চ/২৩) 00,000 क्रानानी कार्ठ 000 00,000 গম-পেষাই কাজ 20.000 কুলি (লোড-আনলোড) কাজ দরপত্র সম্পাদনকারীর বিবরণঃ দরপত্র আহ্বানকারী কর্মকর্তার নাম যাসমা আক্রার দরপত্র আহবানকারী কর্মকর্তার পদবী পুলিশ সুপার (এ্যাডমিন এন্ড ফাইনান্স), নৌ পুলিশ, ঢাকা 20.

79. পুলিশ প্লাজা কনকর্ড, টাওয়ার-১, ফ্লোর-১২, প্লট-২, সড়ক দরপত্র আহবানকারী কর্মকর্তার ঠিকানা ১১৪, গুলশান-১, ঢাকা দরপত্র আহ্বানকারী কর্মকর্তার ফ্যাব্রঃ ০২-৪৮৮১১৬১৩, ফোনঃ ০২-৫৫০৪৫৪০৬ যোগাযোগের মাধ্যম বিশেষ শর্তাবলীঃ

ক) নির্দিষ্ট সময়ের পর আর কোন দরপত্র গ্রহণ করা হবে না

খ) কারণ দর্শানো ব্যতিরেকে কর্তৃপক্ষ যেকোন দরপত্র গ্রহণ বা বাতিল করার ক্ষমতা সংরক্ষণ করেন গ) দরপত্র কার্যক্রম প্রচলিত পাবলিক প্রকিউরমেন্ট আইন ও বিধিমালা মোতাবেক পরিচালিত হবে ঘ) অনিবার্য কারণবশতঃ নির্দিষ্টি তারিখে দরপত্র খোলা না হয় তাহলে পরবর্তী কার্যদিবসে একই স্থান ও সময়ে দরপত্র উন্মুক্ত করা হবে

> বিপি-৭৯০৬১১৯৮২৪ পুলিশ সুপার (এ্যাডমিন এন্ড ফাইনান্স) নৌ পুলিশ হেডকোয়ার্টার্স, ঢাকা

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