



The UAE has appointed Sultan Al Jaber, Chief Executive Officer of the Abu Dhabi National Oil Company (ADNOC), to preside over COP28.

VISUAL: STAR

COP28: Asking a fox to guard the hen house



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QUAMRUL HAIDER

In the early 1990s, when concern about climate change first became widespread, the “signal” of human-induced effects did not unambiguously emerge from the “noise” of climate variability. However, because of our unbridled use of fossil fuels, we can now clearly distinguish between the signal and the noise, with the signal telling us loudly that the Earth's climate is changing for the worse. Indeed, with a temperature rise that has been especially pronounced in recent decades, we humans have taken the Earth's atmosphere into a regime that our planet has not witnessed for millions of years.

Armed with a host of irrefutable evidence – past climate reconstructions, computer model experiments, statistical inferences, socioeconomic information, scientific data and pattern-based fingerprint studies – that point to a hotter future, world leaders and their representatives have met 27 times, beginning in 1995, at the Conference of Parties to address the crucial issues related to climate change. As expected, the conferences failed to make any difference in the level of threat we are facing today because they usually ended without any unified strategies to mitigate the destructive impacts of climate change. In the meantime, our planet is heating up, causing extreme weather-related events that will create, in a very short order, a new planet – still recognisable, but violently out of balance.

Having said that, the 28th Conference of Parties (COP28), to be held in Dubai from November 30 to December 12, 2023, is advertised as a major global event of 2023. At the conference, besides brainstorming for the seventh time on how to put the world on course to meet the 2015

Paris Climate Agreement of limiting the rise of global temperature to 1.5 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels, the other hot-button issue will be how to implement the recommendations made by the Transitional Committee set up at COP27 for the Loss and Damage Agreement.

Arguably, Dubai, one of the seven emirates of the United Arab Emirates (UAE), is the most paradoxical choice as the venue for COP28. That is because the economy of UAE is heavily dependent on revenues from petroleum and natural gas that are major sources of planet-warming greenhouse gases.

To add insult to the injury, the UAE has appointed Sultan Al Jaber, the Chief Executive Officer of the Abu Dhabi National Oil Company (ADNOC), one of the world's largest oil producers, to preside over COP28. Under his leadership, ADNOC pumps about four million barrels of crude oil a day, with plans to expand its production capacity to five million barrels a day by 2027, leading to concerns about increased emissions of carbon dioxide. Also, according to media reports, while running the show at COP28, he will retain his position at ADNOC.

Given the role fossil fuels play in driving climate change, such an egregious appointment of a top oil company executive to lead the most important climate conference of the year has caused a backlash among many groups and activists concerned with the effects of climate change. They are justifiably angered by the decision, to say the least, with some comparing it to asking the owner of a tobacco company to enforce an anti-smoking law. Furthermore, they are worried that it could derail the negotiating process at COP28, much to the delight of the fossil fuel industry.

Although Al Jaber has played a key role in shaping UAE's pathway toward clean energy, his appointment nevertheless raises some serious questions about the credibility of the UN in tackling climate change. What guarantee is there that he will not use the conference to covertly advance the interests of the fossil fuel industry? How can a person heading an industry that is responsible for the climate crisis avoid conflict of interest? While Al Jaber will have to grapple with the question of conflict of interest, we should at the same time be apprehensive that he will be negotiating on behalf of humanity to save our planet, which requires phasing out the products of his own industry.

The Chair of the Fossil Fuel Non-Proliferation Treaty, an international climate policy proposal for a seamless transition away from coal, oil and gas, told ABC News that Al Jaber's appointment is a “devastating blow to the climate negotiations at a critical moment in history.” The UK-based humanitarian group ActionAid said that “For the summit hosts to be taken seriously as honest brokers for change, they need to go above and beyond to avoid a conflict of interest. This is vital for the safety and protection of our planet. Unfortunately, COP28 looks like it is off to a bad start in that regard.”

At COP27, held last year in Sharm el-Sheikh, Egypt, more than 600 lobbyists of the fossil fuel industry exercised outsized influence at determining the outcome of the summit. This time, activists warn that asking Al Jaber to preside over COP28 could undermine the outcome even without the presence of lobbyists. Hence, for achieving ambitious climate pledges, they want him to relinquish his oil industry job before taking up the post of the Chair of COP28. Otherwise, it will be tantamount to raising the white flag and surrendering to the oil companies and their lobbyists.

Finally, handing the gavel of the conference on climate change to an oil company honcho is like asking a fox to guard a hen house. Simply stated, it will be foolish to expect the fossil fuel industry to sign its own death sentence.

US SANCTIONS A ‘tonic’ for our security forces?



STRATEGICALLY
SPEAKING

Brig Gen Shahedul Anam Khan, ndc, psc (ret'd) is a former associate editor of The Daily Star.

SHAHEDUL ANAM KHAN

Countries have been sanctioned by the US for various reasons – economic, political, diplomatic, human rights related, for alleged support to terrorists, etc. Apart from countries, the US has also sanctioned individuals or firms of other countries, on the grounds of violation of human rights, for breaking sanctions imposed on another country, or for links with certain organisations.

Unfortunately, Bangladesh finds itself in the unenviable list of countries whose senior officials or state agencies have come under US sanctions, for the first time in its history. As of November 2022, there are 22 such countries. The Rapid Action Battalion (Rab), along with seven others, were put under US sanctions for alleged violations of human rights on Dec 10, 2021. In fact, we came under the cosh from two US agencies – the US Department of Treasury, which imposed sanctions on Rab and seven of its current and former officers for alleged serious human rights violations, and the Department of State, which imposed sanctions on two persons, a former head of Rab and a former commanding officer of a Rab unit.

However, the oft repeated question regarding sanctions is, does it work? History tells us that sanctions are seldom effective. On the contrary, they prove counterproductive in most cases and hurt the common people more than the actual targets – the country's leadership, particularly when the sanction is against a country as a whole. The first recorded sanctions were imposed in 432 BC, when Athens denied traders from Megara entry to its harbours and markets. It was counterproductive in that it was a big factor in creating the Peloponnesian War.

One could well say that when

the US talks about human rights in other countries, it itself is on slippery grounds, for its own record of human rights, particularly in its neocolonial role, is deplorable. The question we should ask ourselves now is whether the grounds on which the leading security agency and the sanctioned individuals stand are equally shaky.

Admittedly, our record in this regard is dismal. Tomes have been written about the many cases of extrajudicial killings, enforced disappearances and so-called crossfire deaths. The numbers – which, not unsurprisingly, have been contested by the administration – are alarming. Reportedly, Rab and other Bangladeshi law enforcement forces are responsible for more than 600 enforced disappearances since 2009, and nearly 600 extrajudicial killings since 2018. They are also accused of torture.

Let us take the last year of the current government's second term. In 2018, 466 people became victims of extrajudicial killings in Bangladesh, according to Ain O Salish Kendra (ASK). It was the highest number of extrajudicial killings ever recorded in a year in Bangladesh. The previous year's figure was 162, according to the same source. Out of those killed in 2018, nearly 300 were killed in the anti-drug operations carried out in the first seven months of the year.

It is unfortunate that security agencies have been used in a manner that has generated more fear in people's mind than confidence and faith in them. As the name suggests, security agencies, paid by the people, are supposed to provide security to the state, and only when people feel secure and safe can a state be secure. Unfortunately, the state's coercive arms have been mostly used to coerce people, particularly the political

opposition, and of course, journalists. But Rab, one must admit, is not without its achievements, especially in its tackling of terrorism. But successes have been overshadowed by alleged violations of human rights.

Now to the question of whether the US sanctions have worked. Rights activists say that sanctions have “worked like a tonic”. According to ASK, only four to five people have been killed in crossfire since, and a few people had disappeared, but they were also later handed over to the court or released subsequently.

The administration, though, is not willing to concede any correlation between the drastic decrease in extrajudicial killings or enforced disappearances, and the sanctions. One must admit, grudgingly though, that the sanctions have apparently had their effect, and the figures would substantiate the claim. I say this grudgingly to express my resentment and exasperation as to why it should take a “tonic” dispensed by another country on us, for us to work by the book.

I believe that instead of going into denial mode, as the administration is wont to do, the allegations should be taken seriously. Comments like, “there are no instances of enforced disappearance in our history... the victims of disappearance went into hiding or fled after committing heinous crimes” doesn't wash with the public. If that be so, how come some of them were handed over to the police later, and some of them returned home after being absent for some time, only to be inflicted with temporary amnesia? They couldn't recall anything about their disappearance.

The US sanctions are a slight on the country. And no self-respecting person can accept that security agencies should be driven by “tonics” from outside. While no one contests that extremist, of whatever hue they may be, must be neutralised, and the security agencies need to take all necessary measures for the sake of public safety, providing more security to the people should not mean fewer rights, or that the law enforcing agencies should act as judge, jury and executioner.

Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh
Non Communicable Disease Control Program
Directorate General of Health Services
Mohakhali, Dhaka-1212.

Request for Expression of Interest (EOI) on survey activities of Non Communicable Disease Control through DGHS for the year 2022-2023

1. Ministry	Ministry of Health and Family Welfare (MOHFW)	
2. Division	Health Services Division	
3. Agency	Directorate General of Health Services	
4. Procuring Entity Name	Line Director, Non-Communicable Disease Control Program	
5. Project / Program Code	224021008	
6. Procuring Entity District	Dhaka	
7. Expression of Interest for Selection of:		
Thematic area	Objective	Expected Outcome
Assess the individual and synergistic health impacts of saltwater intrusion of climate change on human health in coastal areas of Bangladesh.	To find a way to reduce the individual and synergistic health impact of saltwater intrusion and climate change on human health.	(1) Development of a way to reduce climate change-related adverse health outcomes such as hypertension, diabetes, stroke, etc, (2) Reduction of the synergistic health effects of water salinity on communities of coastal areas of Bangladesh, (3) Assessment of the changes in knowledge, attitude and practice regarding salt intrusion and climate change of the people living in the coastal areas of Bangladesh
8. EOI ref. no.	GOB_SD-19	
9. Date	24/01/2023	
KEY INFORMATION		
10. Procurement Method	Consulting Firm will be selected in accordance with the Public Procurement Act 2006 & Public Procurement Regulation 2008 of the Government of People's Republic of Bangladesh (Followed by QCBS Method)	
FUNDING INFORMATION		
11. Budget & Source of	As per ADP allocation 2022-2023: GOB, NCDC (4*HPNSP);	
12. Development Partners	N/A	
PARTICULAR INFORMATION		
13. Program Name Code	224021008	
14. Project / Program Name	Non Communicable Disease Control Programme, 4*HPNSP.	
15. EOI Closing Date & Time	06/02/2023 (Up to 02:30 PM), EOIs shall be submitted in sealed envelope to Line Director, Non Communicable Disease Control Programme, Room No#609, DGHS (Old Building, 5 th Floor), Mohakhali, Dhaka-1212 and be marked clearly as name of the task with EOI reference number (GOB_SD-19)	
INFORMATION FOR APPLICANT		
16. Brief Description of Assignment	(1) To identify the feasibility and acceptability of a method to reduce the health impact due to saline water intrusion in coastal areas of Bangladesh, (2) To evaluate a method to reduce the synergistic health effects of water salinity and climate change on communities of coastal areas of Bangladesh, (3) To determine the effectiveness of a way to reduce various health consequences and quantify their potential health impact on coastal communities of Bangladesh, (4) To compare the effectiveness of the method before and after the study, (5) To assess the changes of health outcomes of the people living in the coastal areas of Bangladesh, (6) To assess the changes in knowledge, attitude and practice regarding salt intrusion and climate change of the people living in the coastal areas of Bangladesh	
17. Experience, Resources & Delivery Capacity required	The applicant shall have to submit the EOI with the following documents: (1) Category of the firm: Research/Survey organization/Consulting firm; (2) Brief description of the firm with proof of working in the relevant areas and of conducting Research/survey; (3) Valid Trade license/Registration; (4).Updated Income Tax certificate/Certificate of VAT; (5) 10 (Ten) years experience in the relevant survey/research; (6) List of major clients working in last Ten (10) years with contact reference; (7) Bank solvency certificate; (8) Name of the central key personnel with C.V. who will be involved with the assignment; (9) Relevant documents in favor of organizational strength of the firm.	
18. Association with other firms	Consultant firm may associate with other consultants to enhance its qualifications.	
19. Association with foreign firms	N/A	
20. Name of Official inviting EOI	Prof. Dr. Mohammad Robed Amin	
21. Designation of Official inviting EOI	Line Director, Non Communicable Disease Control, Directorate General of Health Services	
22. Address of Official inviting EOI	Line Director, Non Communicable Disease Control, Directorate General of Health Services, Mohakhali, Dhaka-1212.	
23. Contact details of official inviting EOI	Tel No: +88-02-222299207, E-mail: ncdc@ld.dghs.gov.bd	

N.B: An Institute/Organization/Farm is requested to submit only oneEOI for a single package. For any breach of the above condition, procuring entity preserves the rights to cancel the EOIsand may disqualify the Institute/Organization/ Farm (The Procuring Entity reserves the right to reject any or all of the EOIs).

GD- 111

22.1.2023
(Prof. Dr. Mohammad Robed Amin)
Line Director
Non Communicable Disease Control
DGHS, Mohakhali, Dhaka-1212.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Send us your letters to letters@thedailystar.net

Footsteps of a global recession are sounding. How ready is Bangladesh?

Various international organisations have not only predicted a global economic recession this year but also predicted a severe food crisis. Bangladesh is suffering greatly economically due to the impacts of the changing global environment. Rising import costs have nearly doubled our trade deficit since 2019. The Bangladeshi taka has

depreciated by 18 percent since last June and forex reserves have fallen by USD 8 billion, pushing inflation to 8.7 percent in December, according to World Bank data.

As such, in Bangladesh, unnecessary expenditures in the public and private sectors should be reduced. Investment in agriculture should be increased in a

planned manner. At the individual level, we need to reduce the rate of consumption and be frugal. Effective action of the government and united efforts of the people can save Bangladesh from the dire effects of the global recession.

Mridul Kanti Dhar
Jahangirnagar University