What 50 years of World Bank partnership meant for us

Anu Muhammad
is a professor of economics at Jahangirnagar University.

ANU MUHAMMAD

Fifty years of partnership between Bangladesh and the World Bank was celebrated recently. Events were held, praises were sung, and the organisation's managing director of operations visited the country to join celebrations. Now that we have crossed this landmark, perhaps it's time we analysed what this relationship has truly meant for Bangladesh.

The World Bank is generally known as a donor agency and a development partner. It is also an integral part of our foreign loan infrastructure. "Foreign aid" and "donor agencies" are frequently uttered terms, but their usage is actually misleading. If we take a loan from any bank, such as Sonali Bank or Krishi Bank or Agrani Bank, we don't call them donors. Neither do we say that they are providing aid to us. We say that we are doing our work using a loan from these banks. The World Bank functions in a similar way, and the money to pay them back comes from the taxpayers. Therefore, what is known as World Bank's money is actually people's money.

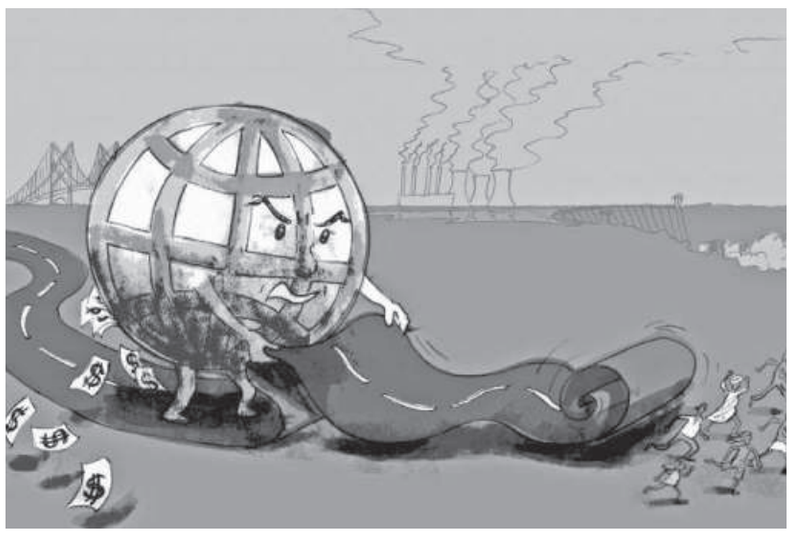
Officially, the World Bank lends money to countries for "development." The International Monetary Fund (IMF) is its closest ally in monitoring the monetary systems of different countries. There is the Asian Development Bank (ADB) for the Asian region, too. They are highly ideologically biased financial partners, so there are similarities between these three agencies in terms of policy outlines, methods of operation and their relationship with different countries. It is not possible to take a loan from one agency when another is hostile.

SCAN TO WATCH THE VIDEO

When a country takes loans from these organisations, the burden of paying off the debt and the incurring interests builds up. But this is not the major component of the whole process. The main agenda of these agencies is to carry out programmes to control and shape policy frameworks or push for structural changes in the countries seeking loans, to make it convenient for big capital. With various conditions and terms, they try to change the direction of the economies to make more space for big business groups.

To this end, these global agencies have been very successful in Bangladesh, accomplishing many things here that they could not in other countries. They have been able to create a strong support base among the elites – politicians, bureaucrats, university teachers, think tank leaders, policymakers, consultants, etc. – to push forward a neoliberal agenda. These agencies talk a lot about transparency and accountability, but they themselves have none of those qualities.

For example, the World Bank gave loans for the "development" of Bangladesh's jute sector, but people never knew the details of those loans – the documents were highly confidential. In approving USD 247 million as "Jute Sector Adjustment Credit" (JSAC), the bank did not ask to diversify the industry, remove corrupt officials, regularise jute purchase system, strengthen innovation and development, and modernise the mills. Rather, their conditions to disburse the loan in instalments included closing the public mills and downsizing others, reducing the number of permanent workers, wage restructuring, etc. What happened then? We saw a large number of jute factories close down since that loan was granted in 1994, including the world famous Adamjee Jute Mill, which was shut down in 2002. The present government closed down the remaining jute mills in 2020. The huge potential of this environment-friendly industry was sacrificed.



SOURCE: **BRETTON WOODS PROJECT**

We hear the organisation works as a "development partner in the energy sector" by giving us aid and loans. But, in reality, it works to hand over public resources and services to profit-making private entities. Since the early 1980s, it has been pushing for privatisation and commercialisation of this sector. The first elaborate report by the World Bank on Bangladesh's energy sector, released in 1982, assessed that the size of the country's gas reserves was 10 trillion cubic feet and asked to "secure the participation of foreign oil companies in this area." It also argued that since the supply of gas is "likely to remain well in excess of Bangladesh's expected internal needs," exporting gas was the best option. Later, during the late 90s, there was huge pressure from the bank, company, consultants and embassies to export gas through a pipeline to India.

These agencies also tried to push for open pit mining in Phulbari to export coal by destroying three crop lands, water resources, and evicting about a million people to give business to a fraudulent British company. All those would have happened and made the situation worse had the people not put up a resistance.

These organisations don't like the growth of national capability; they consider it an obstacle to the free market process. Instead of developing our national capacity to explore and produce natural gas in still-unexplored areas, and also developing institutional capabilities to mainstream renewable energy, the government opted for highly expensive, import-oriented "solutions": coal, nuclear power and LNG. This whole policy structure that came from their energy sector policy guidelines gave big profits to some local and foreign businesses, but put our whole industry and businesses in a vulnerable position and the country in a severe energy and financial crisis.

The same World Bank took another initiative in the late 1980s to "help" Bangladesh after the massive floods of 1987-88, and finalised a megaproject titled "Flood Action Plan" in 1990. The plan was all about the construction of 4.5-7.5-metre high and nearly 4,000km long embankments on both sides of three major rivers in the country, with the initial loan of USD 5-10 billion. This was a disastrous plan for the country's river system which people also had to resist. But they have still seeped into the government policies under different names and projects.

Drinking water has also become a costly commodity as an outcome of their projects. Dhaka Wasa, for example, has increased its water tariff a total of 15 times since 2009. Dhaka Wasa has undertaken many projects with foreign loans; these projects brought good fortune for many people including the officials, consultants, contractors and suppliers, but could not ensure safe drinking water for the people.

There are allegations that these agencies, not only in Bangladesh but worldwide, have an incentive programme for various key people as a form of bribes, and they prefer corrupt partners as it is convenient for them to sell their agenda, as described by John Perkins in his book *Confessions of an Economic Hit Man*, or as narrated by Graham Hancock in his book *Lords of Poverty*.

From the very beginning, Bangladesh needed to work on three things: national capability, universal public education, and universal healthcare. These three could never flourish because of the dominant development model. Instead, in the last 50 years, a superrich class was consolidated, inequality deepened, and environmental disasters made people's lives miserable. This is the result of the policy structures formulated and/or supported by these agencies.

The World Bank et al like to claim that all of these responsibilities fall on the governments. Yes, governments must bear the primary responsibility for all anti-people, anti-environment policies, looting and wastage, but these agencies must also be brought under scrutiny, because they play the key role behind all these. Therefore, people in many countries, including the US and Europe, organised people's tribunals to make them accountable; we also did so in 2007. Unless we make these organisations along with their local partners accountable, we cannot claim true freedom or create a development policy that will serve all of our people.

Transcribed and translated by Anupam Debashis Roy.

Politics of aid

How Syria suffers due to shortage of critical aid

A CLOSER LOOK

Tasneem Tayeb
is a columnist for The Daily Star. Her Twitter handle is @tasneem_tayeb

TASNEEM TAYEB

The three devastating earthquakes last week that rocked Turkey and Syria have claimed the lives of more than 41,000 people (as of 3:30 pm Bangladesh time, February 15) and caused the displacement of millions in the region. While the international community did come forward with aid and rescue efforts to support the affected people, Syria – war-ravaged and in the grips of abject poverty and inexplicable human sufferings – was given a second-class treatment.

From sanctions imposed by the West, including the US, to the international community's slow response in pledging aid and support and mobilising resources – except for a few countries including Bangladesh – to the earthquake-ravaged Bab al-Hawa land crossing connecting northwest Syria with Turkey (the only access point internationally acknowledged), aid reaching Syria has been inadequate, to say the least.

In the aftermath of the earthquakes, volunteer group the White Helmets, also known as the Syria Civil Defence, which operates in the rebel-held northern areas, took on the rescue operations and saved thousands from under the rubbles of levelled infrastructure with their bare hands, thanks to an acute shortage of rescue tools. Videos and pictures flooded the internet as White Helmets struggled to rescue as many people as they could. Meanwhile, in the critical first 72 hours, when chances of saving lives and rescuing people are the highest, the world watched the human tragedy intensify in Syria, like silent spectators.

Death toll in Syria currently stands over 5,800 (as of 3:30 pm Bangladesh time, February 15). With every passing hour, chances of finding survivors are becoming slimmer.

While initially adamant, in the face of continued criticism from various quarters, including the United Nations – Secretary-General Antonio Guterres said, "This is a moment in which everybody must make very clear that no sanctions of any kind should interfere with relief to the population of Syria in the present moment." – international organisations, relief and rescue organisations, and human rights bodies, the US has finally relented and exempted earthquake aid into Syria from sanctions for 180 days. But not before the damage has been done and the critical 72-hour window has closed.

Even the UN acknowledged their failure to reach the much needed aid and relief supplies to Syria, in the face of the denunciation from the rescue workers working night and day. "We have so far failed the people in northwest Syria. They rightly feel abandoned. Looking for international help that hasn't arrived," tweeted Martin Griffiths, UN's aid and relief chief.

It was shocking to see that no aid convoys reached the affected areas in Syria for the first three days after the earthquakes. Damage sustained by the Bab al-Hawa crossing have been cited as the reason. However, this could have been avoided had the West, for once, risen above the politics of aid and worked hands-on with the Assad regime and the opposing forces to provide for the victims, equitably.

Syria is already struggling from the shocks of a 12-year civil war; the Syrian people have been subjected to the vicious trauma of war, death, poverty and displacement—6.9 million people are internally displaced and about 13,000 children have endured death or sustained injuries since 2011. A UN report released last year revealed that more than 306,000 civilians have been killed in the civil war that began in March 2011. Around 13 million people – about half the country's population – have been forcibly displaced during this time.

Some of the people have been displaced up to 20 times since the civil war unfolded. They have very limited access to food (more than 12 million people are food-insecure in Syria, which has seen an increase of 51 percent since 2019), safe accommodation, medical care or basic utility supplies.

These should have been enough reasons for the international community to rise above politics and come to the aid of the Syrian people in the aftermath of the earthquakes. Unfortunately, that was not the case. Even before the earthquake, only 50 percent of the required USD 4 billion aid could be secured. And even as lives in Syria got buried – perhaps forever – under the wreckage of the earthquake, the White Helmets could do little to save lives, despite their best efforts, due to a lack of resources.

"We could have saved many more people if we had the technology and heavy machinery needed to lift debris... All of the aid and necessary provisions given to the overcrowded relief centres are donated by volunteers, civil organisations and charities on the ground," shared a 26-year-old White Helmets volunteer, Fatima Obeid.

Perhaps kindness and compassion are afforded only to a selected few, and the helpless Syrians are certainly not among them. Had this been the scenario in some Western country – victims with whom people in power can relate to – perhaps it would have elicited empathy and prompted forthcoming support.

The West once again failed the people of Syria, and it did not even come as a surprise. But where the West failed, the others – governments, organisations, and individuals from various corners of the world – rose to the occasion. But Syria needs more. The shortages of aid and relief supplies are acute. The least the countries that have taken advantage of the civil war – directly and indirectly, by participating or by selling arms to and partnering with the attackers – can do is repay the people of Syria for everything they have taken from them.

গণপ্রজাতন্ত্রী বাংলাদেশ সরকার
কাস্টমস, এক্সাইজ ও ভ্যাট কমিশনারেট, খুলনা।
ই-মেইল : khulnavathq@gmail.com

নথি নং- ১(১)২৩-জিএস/গাড়ীভাড়া/সদর দপ্তর/২০২০/ ৬০৩ তারিখ : ১৫ /০২/২০২৩ খ্রিঃ

"মাইক্রোবাস ভাড়ার দরপত্র বিজ্ঞপ্তি"

কাস্টমস, এক্সাইজ ও ভ্যাট কমিশনারেট, খুলনা এর অধিক্ষেত্রভুক্ত এলাকায় রাজস্ব আদায় তত্ত্বাবধান ও রাজস্ব ফাঁকি নিরোধ, কর্মকর্তাগণের যাতায়াত এবং দৈনন্দিন দাপ্তরিক কার্যক্রম-এর মাধ্যমে রাজস্ব আহরণ বৃদ্ধির লক্ষ্যে কার্যাদেশে উল্লিখিত তারিখ হতে ৩০.০৬.২০২৩ খ্রিঃ পর্যন্ত মাসিক ভিত্তিতে ০১ (এক) টি মাইক্রোবাস ভাড়াদাতা প্রকৃত মালিক/প্রতিষ্ঠান-এর নিকট থেকে নিজস্ব প্যাডে সিলমোহরকৃত খামে দরপত্র আহ্বান করা যাচ্ছে।

০১	সংগ্রাহক সত্তার নাম	:	কাস্টমস, এক্সাইজ ও ভ্যাট কমিশনারেট, খুলনা।
০২	কাজের নাম	:	ন্যূনতম ০৭ (সাত) আসন বিশিষ্ট ১৮০০ সিসি এর নিম্ন নহে এবং ২০১৬ বা তার পরবর্তী সনের ভাল কন্ডিশনের মডেলের ০১ (এক) টি মাইক্রোবাস (চালক সহ) ভাড়া।
০৩	ব্যয়ের উৎস	:	সরকারি অনুমোদিত বাজেট।
০৪	দরপত্র পদ্ধতি	:	উন্মুক্ত দরপত্র পদ্ধতি।
০৫	দরদাতাদের যোগ্যতা	:	নিজের বা প্রতিষ্ঠানের নামে গাড়ীর মালিকানা সম্পর্কিত মূল দলিলাদি অবশ্যই থাকতে হবে (হালনাগাদ নবায়নকৃত ট্রেড লাইসেন্স, হালনাগাদ আয়কর সার্কেল সনদ (টি, আই, এন), ভ্যাট রেজিস্ট্রেশন সার্টিফিকেট, সরবরাহকৃত গাড়ীর হালনাগাদ ব্লু-বুক, ট্যাক্স টোকেন, ফিটনেস, ইন্সুরেন্স এবং গাড়ি চালকের মূল ড্রাইভিং লাইসেন্স সহ অন্যান্য কাগজপত্র বা দলিলাদির সত্যায়িত ফটোকপি)।
০৬	দরপত্র দাখিলের সর্বশেষ তারিখ, সময় ও স্থান	:	০২/০৩/২০২৩ খ্রিঃ তারিখ ১২.০০ ঘটিকা পর্যন্ত রাজস্ব কর্মকর্তা(সদর), কাস্টমস, এক্সাইজ ও ভ্যাট কমিশনারেট, খুলনা।
০৭	দরপত্র খোলার তারিখ, সময় ও স্থান	:	০২/০৩/২০২৩ খ্রিঃ তারিখ ১২.৩০ ঘটিকা কাস্টমস, এক্সাইজ ও ভ্যাট কমিশনারেট, খুলনা (সম্মেলন কক্ষ)।

দরপত্রের শর্তাবলী

০১। দরপত্রে অংশগ্রহণেচ্ছু আগ্রহী ব্যক্তি/প্রতিষ্ঠানকে যুগ্ম কমিশনার, কাস্টমস, এক্সাইজ ও ভ্যাট কমিশনারেট, খুলনা বরাবরে সীলমোহরকৃত খামে তাদের নিজস্ব প্যাডে লিখিতভাবে আবেদন করতে হবে। আবেদনের সাথে উপরে 'দরদাতাদের যোগ্যতা' এর বিপরীতে উল্লিখিত সকল কাগজপত্র/দলিলাদির ফটোকপি (১ম শ্রেণীর গেজেটেড কর্মকর্তা কর্তৃক সত্যায়িত) অবশ্যই দাখিল করতে হবে।
০২। সীলমোহরকৃত খামের উপর দরদাতার নাম ও ঠিকানা, টেলিফোন নম্বর উল্লেখ করতে হবে।
০৩। মাইক্রোবাসের জন্য প্রস্তাবিত দর হিসেবে দৈনিক ভাড়ার হার এবং মাসিক ভাড়ার হার সুস্পষ্টভাবে (অংকে এবং কথায়) উল্লেখ করতে হবে (জ্বালানী ও সকল প্রকার খরচ সহ)।
০৪। দরপত্রে কোন প্রকার ঘষা-মাজা এবং ওভার রাইটিং করা সম্পূর্ণ নিষিদ্ধ এবং কোনরূপ শর্ত আরোপ করা যাবে না।
০৫। সিলমোহরকৃত খামে দরপত্র আগামী ০২/০৩/২০২৩ খ্রিঃ তারিখে বেলা ১২.০০ ঘটিকার মধ্যে এ দপ্তরে রক্ষিত টেন্ডার বাক্সে ফেলা যাবে, যা একই দিন ১২.৩০ ঘটিকার সময় দরপত্রদাতাগণের উপস্থিতিতে (যদি কেউ উপস্থিত থাকেন) খোলা হবে। উক্ত দিন তাঁদের সংশ্লিষ্ট গাড়ি এ দপ্তরে পরীক্ষা/যাচাইয়ের জন্য উপস্থিত রাখতে হবে।
০৬। মাইক্রোবাস ভাড়ার মেয়াদ কার্যাদেশে উল্লিখিত তারিখ হতে ৩০/০৬/২০২৩ খ্রিঃ তারিখ পর্যন্ত মেয়াদ বলবৎ থাকবে।
০৭। মাইক্রোবাসটি মূলত খুলনা কমিশনারেটের সকল জেলায় ব্যবহৃত হবে। তবে প্রয়োজনে পার্শ্ববর্তী অন্য কোন জেলায়ও ব্যবহৃত হতে পারে। মাইক্রোবাসটি প্রতিদিন সকাল হতে রাত ১০.০০ ঘটিকা পর্যন্ত প্রয়োজনে চালাতে হতে পারে।
০৮। সাপ্তাহিক বন্ধের দিন এবং সরকারি ছুটির দিন প্রয়োজনে মাইক্রোবাস সরবরাহ করতে হবে। এ জন্য মাসিক ভাড়ার অতিরিক্ত ভাড়া দাবী করা যাবে না অর্থাৎ ঐ দিনের ভাড়া মাসিক ভাড়ার মধ্যে অন্তর্ভুক্ত থাকবে।
০৯। মাইক্রোবাস সরবরাহকালীন সময়ে যান্ত্রিক ত্রুটির কারণে গাড়ি চলাচলে বিঘ্ন ঘটলে কিংবা গাড়ি চালক অসুস্থ থাকলে, গাড়ি চালক/বিকল্প গাড়ি চালকসহ বিকল্প গাড়ির ব্যবস্থা করতে হবে।
১০। মাইক্রোবাসের মালিকানা, চালকের ড্রাইভিং লাইসেন্স ও কোন প্রকার দুর্ঘটনা সংক্রান্ত যে কোন প্রকার আইনগত জটিলতার দায়ভার মাইক্রোবাস ভাড়া প্রদানকারী প্রতিষ্ঠানকেই বহন করতে হবে। টেন্ডার ওপেনিং টিমের নিকট যে নম্বর প্লেট বিশিষ্ট গাড়ী প্রদর্শন করেছেন উক্ত গাড়ীর নম্বর উল্লেখ করে কার্যাদেশ দেয়া হবে।
১১। সরকারি বিধান অনুযায়ী প্রযোজ্য মূল্য সংযোজন কর (ভ্যাট), অগ্রিম আয়কর (এ আই টি) ও প্রযোজ্য অন্যান্য করাদি প্রাপ্য বিল হতে কর্তন করা হবে।
১২। দরপত্র সম্পর্কিত সকল কার্যাদি The Public Procurement Act-2006 and The Public Procurement Rules-2008 অনুযায়ী পরিচালিত হবে।
১৩। কোন কারণ দর্শানো ব্যতিরেকে যে কোন দরপত্র আংশিক বা সম্পূর্ণ গ্রহণ বা বাতিলের ক্ষমতা কর্তৃপক্ষ সংরক্ষণ করেন।

15.02.2023
মোঃ মাহেদুল হক
যুগ্ম কমিশনার
কমিশনারের পক্ষে

GD-281

Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh
Office of the Principal
Sylhet Polytechnic Institute, Sylhet-3100
www.spi.gov.bd.com
E-mail: principalsylhetpoly@gmail.com

"শিক্ষা নিয়ে গড়ব দেশ
শেখ হাসিনার বাংলাদেশ"

Memo No. 37.03.9131.304.07.001.22.443

Date: ০২ ফাল্গুন ১৪২৯ বঙ্গাব্দ
15 February 2023

e-Tender Notice (Re-Tender)

e-Tender Notice will be invited in the National e-GP System Portal (http://www.procure.gov.bd) for following procurement.

Sl. No.	Re-Tender ID No.	Description	Tender security	Online notice publication date & time	Online tender opening date & time
1	758187	Supply of Computer for Establishing New Lab	270000	16-Feb-2023 23:50	09-Mar-2023 10:00
2	759030	Supply of Raw Materials and Spare Parts of CT Technology	4000	16-Feb-2023 23:50	09-Mar-2023 10:00

This is an online tender, where only e-Tender will be accepted in the National e-GP Portal and no offline/hard copies will be accepted.
To submit e-Tender, registration in the National e-GP System Portal (http://www.procure.gov.bd) is required.

Sd/-
Mohammed Rehan Uddin
Principal (Additional Charge)
Phone: 02-996632529

GD-282