



Dr Saleemul Huq with French President Emmanuel Macron, Friendship founder Runa Khan, and MP Saber Hossain PHOTO COURTESY: SUMAN GHOSH/FRIENDSHIP

Saleemul Huq was and will remain one of our strongest voices for the climate



is founder and executive director of Friendship.

RUNA KHAN

difficult even at the best of times. But this week began with the loss of one of the foremost warriors in this fight.

My first encounter with the maverick, Dr Saleemul Huq, happened about a decade ago. I had already been working for many years in the remotest, most vulnerable and unaddressed communities in Bangladesh, and it had become clear to us why the area was considered to be the "most vulnerable" and "poorest" region in Bangladesh. These communities mostly consisted of climate migrants. Over the years, they were displaced became poorer and poorer, and could

organisation, Friendship, Our and I did not set out to be climate activists. Our mission is to empower the most marginalised communities, and bring to them opportunities, dignity, and hope. But over the course of our work, I observed up-close each instance of displacement, the impact of each flood, and of each climate disaster. Everything around me was about the climate. We couldn't work without being in harmony with the environment, geography, biodiversity, and the people. And I started to wonder: Why had we not linked up with the community of climate academics and experts? And then, Professor Saleemul Huq came into the

I met Professor Huq by chance. He was aware of our work, and he wanted to learn more about it. He'd sent word to me several times. Then, he took the time to come and see us. Before long, he was completely on board. Dr Huq agreed to be on our advisory

The fight against climate change is committee on Climate in Bangladesh, as well as on our International Scientific Advisory Committee on Climate Change alongside other brilliant scientists and academicians such as Jean-Pascal van Ypersele, Dr Atiq Rahman, Prof Farid Dahdouh-Guebas, led by Friendship's Belgium Chair HRH Princess Esmeralda de Rethy of Belgium, Sandrine Dickson-Decleve (co-president of the Club of Rome), and Prof Tahseen Jafry.

There was immediately a deep connection between us. Dr Hug would always listen intently about our work, our successes, and difficulties. Over and, with each migration, their homes the years, we worked together on and possessions were destroyed. They many pursuits. I am also very proud of the fact that Saleemul Huq and myself not recover from the continuous were both selected together as the first ever members of the Club of Rome from Bangladesh.

At the international level, the impressive Dr Saleemul Huq continued to represent the case of countries facing the worst climate crises by attending 27 COPs. He began championing the case for a Loss and Damage fund. It was extremely difficult to get the richer nations to agree to a policy that would hold them responsible for the vast damages that were being caused by climate change in so many countries, in so many ways-countries which had contributed very little to the making of the crisis.

Coming from a country which is at the forefront of climate change, Saleemul Hug went beyond the usual decision-making based on long theoretical reports. His understanding was enriched by his genuine interest and commitment to learning about the situation on the ground and from his relationships with the frontliners. Prof Saleemul Huq not only had a

formidable understanding of climate issues, he also had an ability to present the situation convincingly in a global context. Such was the extent of his knowledge. He took the most localised narratives from the most vulnerable and isolated villages, and presented them simply at the highest decisionmaking forum. His was the voice that we'd needed, from among the scientific community and activists, which could reach everyone.

Finally, at COP27 last year in Sharm El Sheikh, world leaders agreed to the need for a Loss and Damage fund. Even though they did so without committing to any specifics, it was still a significant victory. Prof Huq was undeniably a driving force behind bringing Loss and Damage funding to the forefront at COP. He was able to show the international community that the people impacted by the climate crisis did not stand a chance of recovering or rebuilding without financing, and without the support of the global community.

But just as the world was beginning to accept his demands and finally understand the importance of loss and damage financing, Saleem bhai

I think back today to the days when we first joined hands, and our early realisations about the climate and the communities with which we worked. Since then, climate change has worsened. Not only do our communities face harsher and more frequent disasters, but the countries whose development came at the cost of our world's climate, are also increasingly being jolted by climate catastrophes.

My naive realisation 20 years ago, about the connection between poverty and climate, holds true across the world today. Our prosperity as the human race is deeply and intrinsically linked to the health of our climate. The loss of Saleem bhai is not a loss for our community or country alone. It is a loss for a world which is seeking to continue moving in the wake of constant climate crises.

Saleem Bhai, even though you are no longer with us physically, you will remain a resounding voice for the climate of this world—a voice that will echo on through ages to come.

Reversing the deficit of hope



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MIR AFTABUDDIN AHMED

To hope, one must

believe in their own

Young individuals are confronting a set of profound philosophical challenges in a world still reeling from the pandemic. Is it possible for them to realistically envision a brighter future while the global economy is in turmoil, and wars, conflicts, and political violence have taken centre-stage? Is it possible to maintain hope when even advanced nations are struggling to ensure basic needs for their citizens? Must they bear the burden of rectifying historic policy shortcomings, or should those in ivory towers be trusted to amend their own failures? Have the economic and political frameworks championed by our predecessors paved a path for our collective triumph or downfall?

Amidst these uncertainties, an underlying question warrants introspection: How can young people rekindle the societal embers of hope?

Exploring a path that actively promotes, protects, and preserves hope in society via public policy interventions deserves consideration. Taking a step back, the baseline goal within any policymaking ecosystem is, or ideally should be, to ensure a robust understanding of, and response to, the prevailing mood and needs of the public. This undertaking must surpass rhetorical surface-level gestures aimed at boosting public trust towards governments on paper. In particular, it requires the incorporation of policy visions that not only resonate with millennials and Gen X, but are also largely shaped by them.

But when have we truly centred the youth in the policymaking cycle? Is it not true that, despite their extensive experience in civil service or politics, those designing public policies often fail to fully embrace the perspectives of younger limits for elected representatives particularly as young people often tangible-redesigning, and not

power to effect positive change, but such agency seems absent today. The question then becomes: how can we tackle this prevailing deficit of hope? Honestly, I do not know. But what I do know is that this would entail addressing the tangible redesigning, and not simply reforming, our economic and political ecosystems by correcting historic policy failures—while concurrently nurturing the intangible, by validating and boosting the psychological wellbeing, hope, and aspirations of the

behavioural concepts, evolving much like a living, breathing, and adaptable field.

youth.

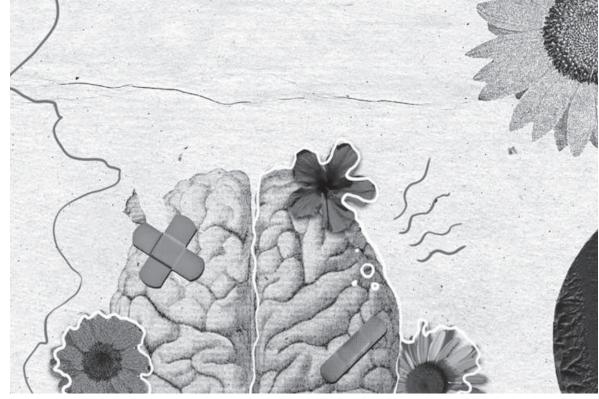
Making a distinction early on is important. Hope is not simply a synonym for optimism. Optimism is the broad belief that circumstances will improve, while hope digs deeper, calibrating on the conviction that an individual has the power to bring about that improvement. The latter aspect is what we, as an international individuals? Implementing age community, find hard to nurture,

individual subjectivity, and choices. Concepts like anticipatory feelings, consumer confidence, and aspirations have found their way into policy research. Consider the expected utility theory for a moment. It suggests that human beings base decisions on anticipated outcomes. Yet, research indicates that this is only part of the overarching human decisionmaking cycle: our past memories, experiences, and anticipations contribute in determining what we choose to do or not to do.

A salient tangent to the discussion on hope is the concept of aspirations, which captures our desires and objectives. Our aspirations are influenced by our environment and societal benchmarks. They are a reflection of both our inherent desires and external pressures, fluctuating between what we want and what society expects us to achieve. Taking on a macro viewpoint, hope has been positioned as a form of psychological capital. Within business economics, it is perceived as a driving force that can enhance employee productivity, resilience, and overall well-being. It is not a stretch to argue that hope can be a catalyst for economic behavior, propelling individuals towards innovation, risk-taking, and business investments.

Yet, the vocabulary around hope in economics remains a tad muddled. Terms such as optimism, expectations, and confidence are used interchangeably, but they are not identical in meaning. Hope is multidimensional. It combines desire, a probability assessment, and a recognition of intrinsic uncertainty. It is not just about what we want, but also about the perceived hurdles on the path to achieving it.

The bottom line being that, without hope, we are nothing. To hope, one must believe in their own power to effect positive change, but such agency seems absent today. The question then becomes: how can we tackle this prevailing deficit of hope? Honestly, I do not know. But what I do know is that this would entail addressing the



VISUAL: SALMAN SAKIB SHAHRYAR

CROSSWORD BY THOMAS JOSEPH

ACROSS 1 Miles off 5 Matt of movies 10 Begets 12 In the know 13 All of a company's goods 15 Outback bird 16 "The Raven" writer 17 Wee bit 18 Finland neighbor 20 Airport area 21 Lowly workers 22 Told tales 23 Stylishly quaint 25 Exceptional 28 Burton of "Roots" 31 Some

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DOWN 1 According to 2 Make definite, as plans 3 Incite 4 Spectrum color 5 Calendar

6 Piercing tool

WRITE FOR US. SEND US YOUR OPINION PIECES TO

reading

7 Rum cocktail 8 Decorative 9 Not optional 11 Flat on one's back 14 Country's edge, sometimes 19 Tender spots 20 Fielder's aid 24 School break 25 Scamp 26 God of light 27 Put in more ammo 29 On the go 30 Came down 33 Jury makeup 35 Resistance units

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is an idea that has received traction for this very reason. While enforcing such restrictions may not be universally accepted on rational grounds, the origin of this proposal stems from an undeniable truth: older generations have navigated different times, contexts, and circumstances, moulding an image of the "common good" that fundamentally differs from how today's youth envisions it.

Circling back to the notion of hope, conventional wisdom might label it as a sentimental, fleeting feeling, removed from the realities of our world. However, a few social scientists are trying to paint an advanced empirical narrative: hope is not just an emotion, but a quantifiable driver of decisionmaking. Emotions, it turns out, define a range of human choices. We see this in our everyday lives. Thankfully, economics, a discipline that, in fairness, is not meant to have all the answers but rather serves as a framework or channel to organise

feel powerless about their futures. On the other hand, the study

of well-being within economics has prioritised aspects like life satisfaction. While such dimensions somewhat overlap with hope, they do not fully encompass its essence, which is acutely rooted in individual agency and its potential to influence life outcomes. Economics has long favoured the notion of the homo economicus, a theoretical person who acts out of self-interest and possesses complete knowledge of their surroundings. Within this paradigm, emotional or virtuous considerations such as hope were sidelined. Economic models were based on a rational and selfinterested human caricaturedeliberately overlooking the role of emotions.

However, there is a counterargument making rounds in academia. Driven by heterodox approaches, including but not limited to behavioral economics, there is a growing emphasis on human thinking, is incorporating the interplay between emotion,

simply reforming, our economic political ecosystems by correcting historic policy failureswhile concurrently nurturing the intangible, by validating and boosting the psychological wellbeing, hope, and aspirations of the

Pushing the boundaries of economics as a discipline and redefining our understanding of human beings as economic actorsbevond utilitarian models—is an academic area which, when more thoroughly researched and analysed by social scientists, can undeniably inform policymakers about how we can reverse the deficit of hope and empower the younger generation to take ownership of a world that is very much theirs to shape.

Views expressed in this article represent the author's personal opinions and do not reflect the views or opinions of any organisation, institution or entity associated with him.