



Dr Saleemul Huq with French President Emmanuel Macron, Friendship founder Runa Khan, and MP Saber Hossain Chowdhury.

PHOTO COURTESY: SUMAN GHOSH/FRIENDSHIP

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



Runa Khan is founder and executive director of Friendship.

RUNA KHAN

The fight against climate change is 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 and, with each migration, their homes and possessions were destroyed. They became poorer and poorer, and could not recover from the continuous losses.

Our organisation, Friendship, 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 picture.

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

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 HRRH 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 Huq would always listen intently about our work, our successes, and difficulties. Over the years, we worked together on many pursuits. I am also very proud of the fact that Saleemul Huq and myself 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 Huq 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 decision-making 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 left us.

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

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 individuals? Implementing age limits for elected representatives

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 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 well-being, hope, and aspirations of the youth.

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

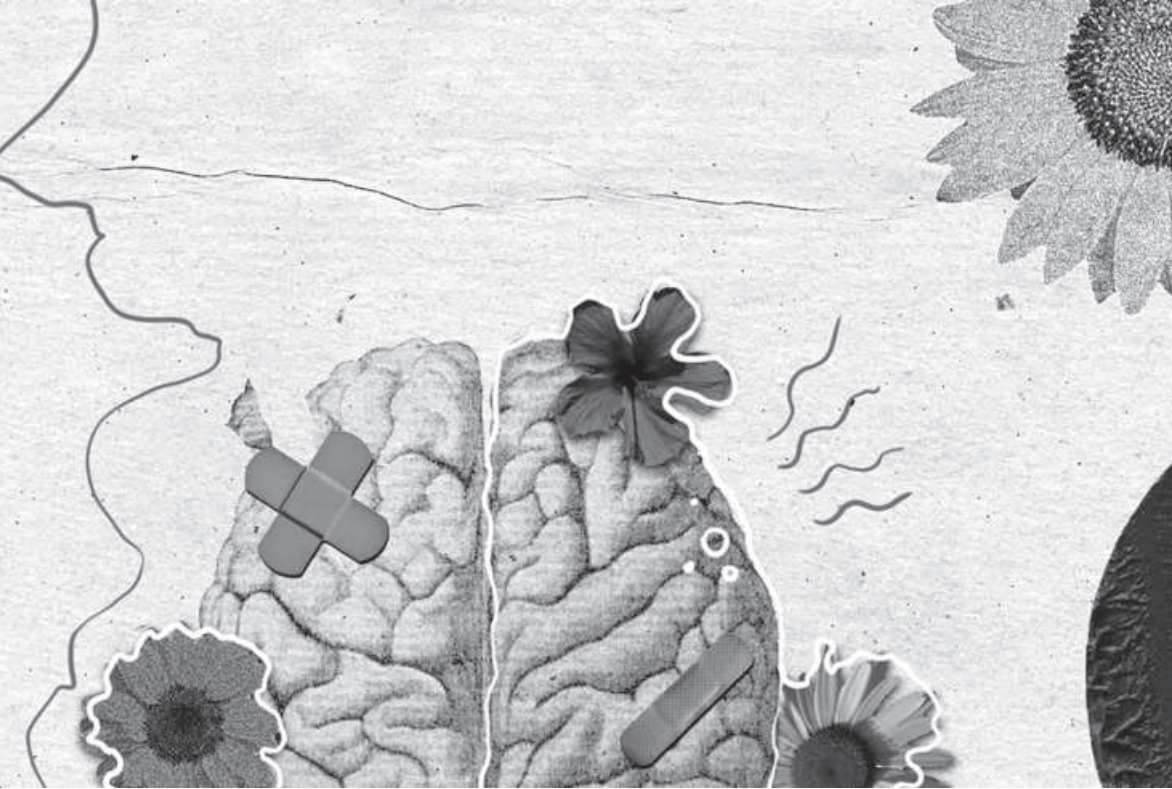
Making a distinction early on is important. Hope is not simply a synonym for optimism. Optimism is the broad belief that circumstances will improve, while hope digs deeper, calibrating on the conviction that an individual has the power to bring about that improvement. The latter aspect is what we, as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

subjectivity, and individual 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 decision-making 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 tangible—redesigning, and not



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

primates

32 Pole feature

34 Note above fa

35 Low number

36 Even score

37 Spot for laundry

40 Burglar's bane

41 Thrifty person

42 Mine finds

43 Nap sacks

DOWN

1 According to

2 Make definite, as plans

3 Incite

4 Spectrum color

5 Calendar reading

6 Piercing tool

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

38 Uno plus due

39 Chemist's place

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10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30 31 32 33 34 35 36 37 38 39 40 41 42 43 44 45 46 47 48 49 50 51 52

10-11

SUNDAY'S ANSWERS

A L E C B I R D O N

R I C H U R A N E U S

I S L E S E N E C A

S T A Y S I N A L L

E S T E L L E C E O

S T E N A Y C R A M

A V A N T W H E R E

S I R E T I E

P O R D E G R A D E

E L I I T S O P E N

N A V A J O K O L A

S T E P O N K E R I C

E D E N S E T A T

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 decision-making. 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 human thinking, is incorporating

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 self-interested human caricature—deliberately overlooking the role of emotions.

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

simply reforming, our economic and political ecosystems by correcting historic policy failures—while concurrently nurturing the intangible, by validating and boosting the psychological well-being, hope, and aspirations of the youth.

Pushing the boundaries of economics as a discipline and redefining our understanding of human beings as economic actors—beyond 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.

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