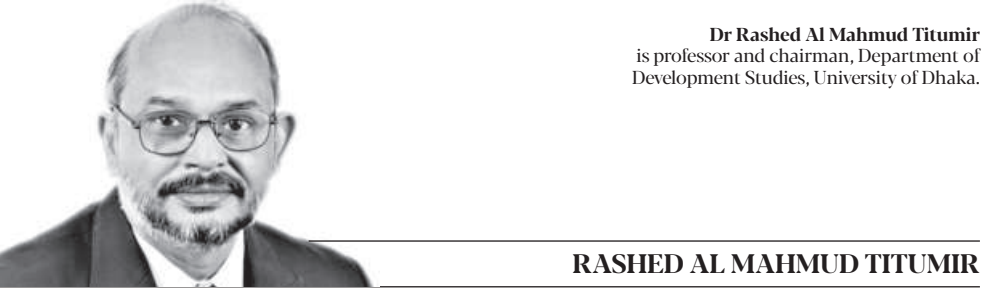


Navigating development pathways in the evolving global order



The world, at present, is in an indeterminate state. Covid-19 reaffirmed that no event can be predicted with certainty, and that the entire continuum of any event occurring is possible. There could be known-knowns, known-unknowns, unknown-knowns and unknown-unknowns. Thus, any projected outcomes can be inconclusive, uncertain, chaotic or stochastic. Maximum likelihood estimation or thought experiment could end up like the proverbial Schrödinger's cat—dead and/or alive. A paradoxical trajectory is also a possibility.

The known-unknown quandary has become subtle, with geopolitics and geo-economics added into the development discourse. Thus, knowns and unknowns characterise the global order. The prevalent known-unknown quandary, however, could also create perplexing situations.

These provoke, and agitate us with, many questions. Some of them are: What are the transformational strategies to navigate complexities of the evolving global order? What could be the ways to overcome democratic deficit and governance failure? What are the appropriate approaches for economic diversification for achieving equitable and sustainable development? How will the developing world attain green transition amidst geopolitical tensions and energy politics by charting a path for a planetary resilience? How would such a task be financed?

The fundamental principles of a country's development policy originate from the aspirations of the people through their struggles. Hence, an aspirational development policy is an understanding of the type of society people want to live in. The transformation is deeply rooted in economy, society and polity. There are, therefore, unceasing contradictions and struggles between the two polar opposites: aspirations vis-à-vis impositions.

In recent years, both state and market have become more coercive and unaccountable. Markets have adopted predatory routes. Again, states have been more coercive, and

violated their constitutions from which they derive their power. The fragile social contract, consequently, alienates the state from its citizens. Societal norms and values, over the years, have made citizens conform to discrimination, precipitating clientelist networks to accumulate power.

The configuration of power determines allocation and distribution of public resources. A rentier political settlement dismantles institutions in the absence of accountability, and thus, vested interest is prioritised over citizens' welfare.

The well-being of people is contingent upon "public society." Public society emerges when power lies in the median population, similar to the normal distribution. In reality, though, there is a skewed distribution.

The Covid-19 pandemic exposed fault lines, triggered significant income erosion, and gnawed away at the standard of living due to the absence of social protection, while governments were at a loss, exacerbating the economic divide. The ongoing conflicts have exasperated the woes further. The gap between the income groups is widening.

Some countries are recovering relatively quicker than others owing to existing social coping mechanisms—universal social security, well-structured healthcare, fiscal capacity and technological advancement. Most LDCs are stagnating, even recoiling in their path towards achieving the SDGs and struggling to address the new poor and defenceless population. Hence, between and within countries, the recovery is taking the shape of a diverging K-curve due to the disproportionate policies and embedded structural differences in economic, social and geospatial vulnerabilities.

Many developing countries are yet to acknowledge healthcare, education and social security as people's rights. Many constitutions endorse these as fundamental principles, with no obligation on the state. There is silence about establishing healthcare, education and social security as citizens' rights.

A skewed political settlement breeds unequal economic opportunities. Often,

policies, in effect, bail out the very system that causes the crisis in the first place. The rent distributing government favours Wall Street over Main Street, rescuing financial institutions and patronising ruling elites using public money as opposed to provisioning equal rights to all. Ill-fated citizens, consequentially, suffer through losses of their jobs, savings, and homes. Old orthodoxies are breaking down,

damages, technological uncertainties, and public health emergencies. The world is far away from convergence and entitlements of equality, human rights and social justice. Bangladesh has travelled over 50 years as an independent state. From the infamous "basket case," the country has transformed into a curious case of "development surprise." Alongside the achievements, major challenges loom large.

different geographies. Not only did the two different monsoons help in growing crops—the summer blowing from the southwest, and the winter from northeast—but also allowed for the shipping of goods. Rice, the monsoon's product, linked Asia. Rice is the least allergenic of grains and produces significant calories per hectare, feeding densely populated societies. Nevertheless, institution and political



VISUAL: REHNUMA PROSHOON

necessitating a new paradigm of development and a new form of cooperation for a course correction from the reversal of the gains made in socio-economic progress in the last three decades. A new social contract amongst and within nations could lead to having a greener, safer and better future for the people and the planet.

The asymmetries—like Covid-19 and artificial intelligence—have stirred public debates in favour of fostering socio-economic, financial and technological resilience against future complex shocks and uncertainties. In order for a transformative change with inter-generational equity, policies require addressing compound risk multipliers such as climate change vulnerabilities, economic and financial shocks, ecological

Bangladesh is the eighth most populated country in the world, although it ranks 94th in terms of geographic size. Most of the land area is bordered by India and some parts by Myanmar, with China in close vicinity. It occupies a strategically significant position in the Bay of Bengal. It lies at the centre of South and Southeast Asia, and is a source of connecting China's southern landlocked region. The Bay is also a reservoir of huge natural resources. Bangladesh, having experience in engagements with actors in the region and beyond, is now passing a critical moment in its quest for prosperity.

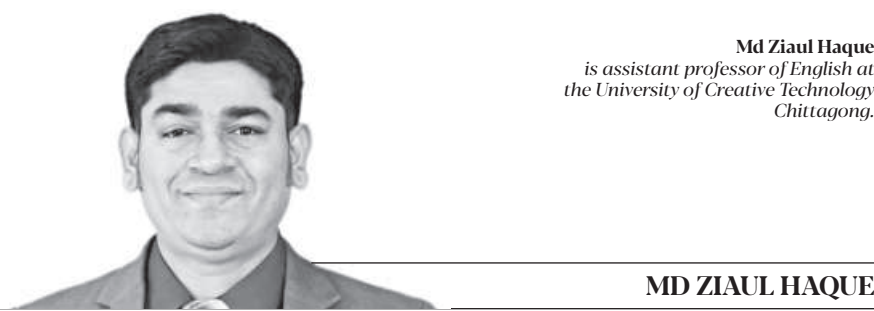
The rise and fall of civilisations, based on scientific historiography, can be a pointer. The grain-based agriculture connected civilisations of Asia, joining civilisations of

settlement are key. For example, in Angkor, the hydraulic system broke down and the empire fell.

A recent systematic archaeobotanical evidence, from Wari-Bateshwar ruins in Bangladesh, found Japonica rice, indicating diffusion from the East. This indicates the two-way connectivity of the past. This could herald an optimistic future since the aspirations of the people of Bangladesh are immense.

This article is an abridged version of a presentation prepared for the First Development Studies International Conference, to be held on May 5-6, 2024 by the Department of Development Studies, University of Dhaka, and daily Bonik Barta.

Why five-hour SSC exams will not be in students' best interest



The Ministry of Education in Bangladesh has officially declared that, commencing in 2025, the duration of the Secondary School Certificate (SSC) examinations will be prolonged to five hours. This resolution has sparked considerable disapproval from multiple sectors, prompting inquiries into the underlying justification for this adjustment.

Historically, the SSC examinations in Bangladesh have adhered to a three-hour format, placing students under significant stress within a fiercely competitive scholastic landscape. Nevertheless, the recent initiative to prolong the duration of these assessments by an extra two hours is widely perceived as a misguided endeavour aimed at enhancing educational standards within the nation.

According to a Somoy News report, the National Curriculum and Textbook Board (NCTB) recommended that students will have to take five-hour-long Secondary School Certificate (SSC) and equivalent examination tests starting next year under the new syllabus. While the education ministry justifies the move as a means to enhance a more thorough evaluation of students' knowledge, many argue that it may contribute to heightened levels of stress and anxiety among students.

The upcoming academic year will introduce a curriculum consisting of 10 subjects for Grade 10 students, including Bengali, English, mathematics, science, history and social science, digital technology, life and livelihood, religious teachings, health safety, and arts and culture. These subjects will form the basis for the SSC exams. Students will undergo assessment through project work, problem-solving tasks, assignments, and written tests. The evaluation process will encompass activities such as investigation, exhibitions,

model preparation, presentations, examinations, and planning.

A primary critique of the decision pertains to the potential imposition of extended examination durations on students. The prospect of enduring a five-hour exam, despite an allotted recess period, is deemed excessively taxing and raises concerns regarding its adverse impact on students' mental and physical health.

Additionally, there is apprehension regarding the potential adverse effects of the prolonged examination period on students' academic outcomes. Enduring a five-hour exam may lead to fatigue and diminished focus, potentially hindering students' capacity to demonstrate their full potential.

Another concern is the decision's oversight of the disparities present in the educational framework. Discrepancies in resource availability and support structures among students have not been duly acknowledged and may lead to unequal preparedness for a five-hour examination. Consequently, this may exacerbate the existing divide between individuals hailing from different socioeconomic backgrounds.

The decision made by the education ministry is particularly concerning because of the absence of engagement with key stakeholders. The lack of consultation with students, parents, and educators suggests a unilateral approach taken by the ministry. This exclusion has resulted in feelings of marginalisation and disregard among those affected.

Moreover, there is limited evidence supporting the notion that extended exam durations contribute to improved educational quality or student achievement. Rather than being grounded in evidence-based practices, this decision appears to be driven by a

flawed assumption that longer exams automatically translate to enhanced educational standards. In reality, such a strategy is likely to have adverse effects, placing undue pressure on students and diminishing the overall learning environment.

Furthermore, the choice to prolong the SSC examination period appears to diverge from global educational trends. Many nations are shifting towards more adaptable and inventive assessment approaches that prioritise assessing students' analytical thinking, problem-solving skills, and ingenuity rather than solely depending on conventional, time-constrained exams.

Apart from the apprehensions regarding the impact on students' well-being and health, there are also pragmatic factors to consider. Extending examination durations will necessitate substantial logistical modifications, such as revising exam timetables, employing additional invigilators, and enhancing security measures. All of these adjustments will entail a significant financial burden for the government. Instead, the money could be allocated more effectively towards other endeavours aimed at enhancing the educational standards in Bangladesh.

For instance, the education ministry may contemplate incorporating more frequent assessments throughout the academic year, rather than depending solely on a solitary, extensive exam. Instead of fixating solely on exam lengths, emphasis should be placed on tackling more urgent concerns like enhancing teacher preparation, modernising the curriculum to align with contemporary requirements, and allocating resources and infrastructure for schools nationwide.

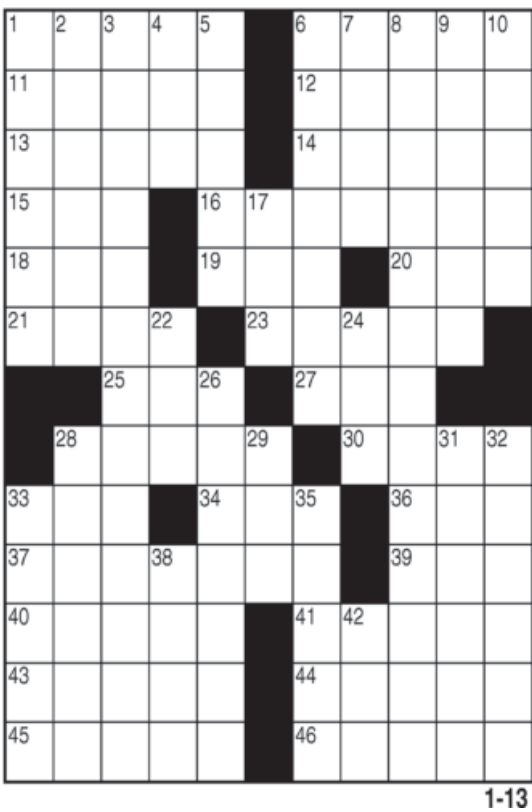
The recent announcement by the ministry to prolong the duration of SSC not only imposes additional pressure on students but also overlooks the disparities present in the education sector. Instead of enforcing lengthier exam periods, it is recommended that the education ministry investigates alternative approaches that are equitable and accommodating to students. The perspectives of students, parents, and educators must be taken into consideration when making decisions concerning the educational framework.

CROSSWORD BY THOMAS JOSEPH

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1 Mongoose foe
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11 Bars on cars
12 Makes sound
13 Swindles
14 Physics bits
15 Pouchlike part
16 Door-opening phrase
18 Tick off
19 Puppy sound
20 Sine qua —
21 Goblet part
23 Nation on the Red Sea
25 Agreeable answer
27 Singer Orbison
28 Harvests
30 Test version
33 Curtain holder
- 34 Saloon order
36 __ Moines
37 Napoleon, for one
39 Motorist's buy
40 Spa treatments
41 Poker ploy
43 Wipe off
44 Snowy wader
45 Also-ran
46 Block-heads
- DOWN

1 Currant liqueur
2 Rustic transport
3 "Imma Be" band
4 Sleep state
5 Test for purity
6 Ticket seller, of a sort
- 7 Lot buy
8 Van Morrison hit of 1967
9 "The Apartment" actor
10 German steel city
17 Put down
22 "Cry __ River"
24 Unruly crowd
26 Less dense
28 Horror director George
29 Start for pitch or mo
31 China collection
32 Useful skills
33 Drive off
35 Blundered
38 Different
42 Previously



1-13

YESTERDAY'S ANSWERS

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