

# Spare us the hypocrisy



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SHAMSAD MORTUZA

Those who are familiar with my writing know that I am not a big fan of bureaucracy, either civil or military. Although I recognise the advantages of comprehensive systemic checks and balances for prudent decision-making, I believe the system primarily depends on institutional memory. Any incoming officer with idealist vision and indomitable passion to change the system soon learns that conformity and compliance are the rules of the game. They become a cog in the wheel, repeating what they are supposed to do.

In one series of *Asterix*, there is a satirical depiction of a young Roman officer who gets surprised that his colleagues are better off documenting everything in triplicate on stone tablets rather than going to fight. As a young soldier, he is dying to meet and kill his enemies. However, once battered, he simply picks up his chisel and begins writing reports in stone. The Roman centurion in *Asterix in Spain* experiences a harsh reality. The Romans taught the British. The British taught the use of carbon papers in typewriters to do the triplicates. Today, a digital CC is enough. And bureaucracy has not changed much.

Interestingly, I am writing this piece while sitting in what was once considered to be the Western tip of the world: A Coruna in Spain. The Galician flag represents the westernmost trading port with a setting sun. The Romans

BLOWIN IN THE WIND

later, in the ninth century, they built a cathedral in his honour. But it is also from Spain; Christopher Columbus dared to cross the Atlantic Ocean to open new frontiers for the West.

So here I am sitting in Spain, at the juncture of the end of the old world and the beginning of the new world. Here, I am surfing the internet to get news from home. This investigative report by DW on our

for them to conduct a background check on every member of their troops involved. The DW report was fuming at the idea that Bangladesh earned \$4.5 billion from its military personnel who might have been guilty of human rights violations.

At the height of political arson and anarchy that engulfed the country, Rab came into existence. Crossfire became a buzzword, and every day our national news parroted the

such as the contract killings by individual officers in Narayanganj. There are reports of the forced disappearance of political activists. Another DW report stemmed from the flow of such missing individuals.

However, DW's attempt to act as the moral police from a Western perspective leaves me wondering: are you overlooking the broader picture? I understand the burden of guilt with which Germany treads the Holocaust memory carefully. But how can you discuss human rights violations when you have nothing to say about 40,000 dead in Gaza? How do you respond to soldiers killing 45 refugees in a refugee shelter in Rafah, a father clutching his daughter's decapitated body against an inferno, or when 600 inmates perish by 2,000-pound bombs? At a time when the world is witnessing genocide, which will eventually need a UN intervention, you criticise a country that supplies soldiers for the most difficult areas where your own soldiers do not want to go? You criticise a government that earns its salaries through hard work in hazardous conditions. They are not your e-genies, trading in cryptocurrencies to make billions. Haven't you heard about what the British soldiers or the Americans have done in Kenya or Iraq? You must pick Bangladesh to prove your moral superiority. Seriously?

Human rights violations are a universal phenomenon. I find it problematic when individuals selectively promote certain ideas with the intention of harming a country's reputation and economy. A single accident at a garment factory can trigger—and rightly—a flurry of compliance issues. But as our entrepreneurs will tell you, our Western buyers will not give them any extra cent for the investments the factories are making in improving their working conditions. They will shove tons and tons of bureaucratic certificates at you to force you to comply. In the end, they will see their own benefits.

I am not a big fan of bureaucracy. I chose academia because I could distance myself from it. At a time when the International Court of Justice faces daily defamation and neglect by the West—the same West which has reached its nadir, revealing its hypocrisies daily—we require visionary global leaders who can defy the established hierarchy and devise a solution to protect human rights across the board. Change must come from the centre. If you fail to do so, there will be new centres to form new circles.

As I sit here at the intersection of the West, I begin to envision a future free from hypocrisy.



Palestinians search for food among burnt debris in the aftermath of an Israeli strike on an area designated for displaced people, in Rafah in the southern Gaza Strip on May 27, 2024.

FILE PHOTO: REUTERS

called the tip of the Iberian peninsula Cape Finisterre, to denote “*finis terrae*” (End of the Earth). Hence, Julius Caesar thought it important to build a lighthouse, named after Hercules, on the shore of the North Atlantic, thinking this was the place where the world ends. The belief was so strong that one of Jesus Christ's apostles, St James, wanted to be buried here, which led to the construction of Santiago de Compostela. His disciples brought his remains from Jerusalem, and

military personnel who serve in the UN Peace Corps is available. The gist of the report is pretty straightforward: some of the military soldiers participating in these missions in various conflict-ridden territories around the world were allegedly involved in extrajudicial killings while they were serving in the Rapid Action Battalion (Rab). DW sought a comment from the UN to verify the allegations, but the international bureaucratic organisation responded by stating that it was not feasible

same old narrative of killing in self-defence. I asked one of my army friends why they used the same narrative every time there is a crossfire. He replied candidly that their legal team had suggested it. Their plights bear a striking resemblance to those of the Roman soldier in *Asterix*: documentation precedes action. But facts remain: Rab's intervention helped us get out of a dark phase of a national crisis. Indeed, there are allegations of institutional and individual abuses of power,

## SBTi debate has major implications for RMG suppliers



Mostafiz Uddin  
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He is also the founder and CEO of Bangladesh Denim Expo and Bangladesh Apparel Exchange (BAE).

RMG NOTES

MOSTAFIZ UDDIN

A row has broken out about the Science Based Targets initiative (SBTi), a corporate climate action organisation, which could have significant implications for garment manufacturers around the world, depending on how it plays out. The SBTi is the world's best-known initiative that supports global enterprises in their efforts to reduce carbon emissions in line with sciences aligned with global agreements such as the Paris Agreement. Many of the world's largest fashion brands have set science-based targets for 2030 and beyond.

The biggest challenge in meeting these targets has been in reducing Scope 3 emissions—in supply chains, essentially. For fashion brands, reducing the amount of CO2 emissions related to garment production and textile processing is a huge task, especially given that so much of this manufacturing takes place in countries that use “dirty” energy such as fuel and gas.

Up until now, the SBTi has indicated that in order to meet their science-based targets, signatories must make absolute reductions in their carbon emissions. In order to do this, they would need to support their supply chains in the transition to renewable energy sources.

This is no easy task. It also explains why fashion brands have been in prolonged conversations with their suppliers in recent years to look at how they can measure and reduce carbon emissions.

Recently, however, the SBTi issued a statement suggesting they would, moving forward, allow voluntary carbon offsetting schemes to contribute to CO2 emissions reduction targets in supply chains. This news was significant for the fashion industry as many brands are

indeed struggling to reduce Scope 3 emissions while also hitting business growth targets.

The SBTi said that, when properly supported by policies, standards and procedures based on scientific evidence, the use of environmental attribute certificates for abatement purposes on Scope 3 emissions could function as an additional tool to tackle climate change. Consequently, SBTi decided to extend their use for the purpose of abatement of Scope 3 emissions.

After the SBTi issued this statement, there was a huge uproar among environmental activists. They claimed that by allowing carbon offsetting to contribute towards emission abatement, the SBTi was taking a huge risk. Why? Because it has long been argued that carbon offsetting schemes are not trustworthy and poorly regulated.

Indeed, in recent years, we have seen a number of scandals whereby such schemes were shown to be bogus and/or contributing very little to environmental causes. Environmentalists are also concerned that many such schemes take place in remote parts of the world, so are difficult to monitor.

After the backlash, the SBTi responded quickly and issued another statement. This time, it said it was reviewing the situation and would update its guidance later this year. For now, it seems that we are back to a situation where carbon offsets are not allowed to be used in lieu of absolute reductions in carbon emissions.

Why is all this important? It's actually a huge debate for fashion supply chains—and suppliers in Bangladesh.

If the SBTi were to choose to allow carbon offset schemes to be used

to help brands meet their climate goals, the pressure to directly cut supply chain emissions would be greatly reduced. I am not suggesting that fashion brands would take the easy road and rely solely on offsets in order to meet their climate targets. What I do think, however, is that brands would suddenly feel they had breathing space after several years during which they have struggled to balance business priorities with the need to reduce their carbon emissions.

So what now? From what I have learnt so far, even many Western nations are finding it challenging to meet the ambitious climate goals they have signed up for. Shifting to renewable energy is a slow and cumbersome process. We are talking about a completely new way of doing things as we dismantle the energy infrastructure which fuelled the industrial revolution.

I am all for progress and as many of my colleagues and friends will know, I have spent more than a decade championing environmental causes. I am also, however, a pragmatist. The way I see it, the only way some industries are going to reduce their emissions in the short term is to stop growing, period. This would mean recession and major societal upheaval. Do we want that?

Perhaps there is a middle way. Maybe the climate offsetting schemes that have been discredited in the past could be improved. What if countries collectively pump billions into tree-planting and reforestation? What if huge amounts of money is invested in new carbon capture technologies so we can find out whether they work or not, and the level of impact they can have? I see no reason why such schemes could not at least provide a partial solution. There is always a way, but I agree fully that poorly regulated offset schemes cannot be allowed to derail environmental goals.

My advice to the SBTi would be to open up a debate on this issue. Invite the experts on board and ensure that all discussions take place in an open and transparent manner. These issues affect us all, and discussions around them should not take place behind closed doors.

Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh

Office of the Divisional Forest Officer

Chittagong Hill Tracts South Forest Division

Rangamati

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Invitation for Tender

শেখ হাসিনার নির্দেশ

জলবায়ু সচিব বাংলাদেশ

Memo No. 22.01.8400.856.05.001.2024.1442

Dated: 02/6/2024

	Ministry/Division	Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change.			
2	Agency	Bangladesh Forest Department.			
3	Procuring entity name	Divisional Forest Officer, Chittagong Hill Tracts South Forest Division, Rangamati.			
4	Invitation for	Supply of service workers through outsourcing			
5	Invitation Ref No.	12/Revenue (Outsourcing) of 2023-2024 Date: 02/6/2024.			
KEY INFORMATION					
6	Procurement method	Open Tendering Method (OTM)			
FUNDING INFORMATION					
7	Budget and source of funds	GOB			
PARTICULAR INFORMATION					
8	Tender Package No.	South/2023-24/S1			
9	Tender package name	Supply of service workers through outsourcing			
10	Tender publication date	03/6/2024			
11	Tender last selling date	23/6/2024 up to 4.00pm			
12	Tender dropping & closing date and time	24/6/2024, 09.00am to 1.00pm			
13	Tender opening date and time	24/6/2024, 2.00pm			
14	Name & address of the office(s)				
	- Selling tender document	Rangamati Sadar Range, CHT South Forest Division, Rangamati.			
	- Receiving tender document	(1) Office of the Conservator of Forest, Rangamati Circle, Rangamati. (2) Office of the Divisional Forest Officer, CHT South Forest Division, Rangamati.			
	- Opening tender document	Office of the Divisional Forest Officer, Chittagong Hill Tracts South Forest Division, Rangamati.			
INFORMATION FOR TENDERER					
15	Eligibility of tenderer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Tenderers will be the firms having minimum 3 (three) years experience of manpower supply through outsourcing.</li><li>Tenderers shall have the legal capacity to enter into the Contract under the Applicable Law.</li><li>Tenderers will be the firm having licence from Department of Inspection for factories and establishments.</li><li>Tenderers shall have fulfilled its obligations to pay taxes &amp; VAT under the Provisions of laws and regulations of Bangladesh.</li><li>Others eligibility are mentioned in Tender Document.</li></ul>			
16	Brief description of services	Supply of service workers through outsourcing (Despatch Rider-01 No. & Mail - 08 Nos.)			
17	Price of tender document	Tk. 1000.00 (one thousand) Taka only (non-refundable)			
	Package No.	Identification of Package	Location	Tender security amount	Completion time in weeks/months
	South/202324/S1	Outsourcing service workers	Chittagong Hill Tracts South Forest Division, Rangamati	56000.00 (fifty-six thousand) Taka only.	12 months
PROCURING ENTITY DETAILS					
18	Name of official inviting tender	Dr. Md. Zahidur Rahman Miah			
19	Designation of official inviting tender	Divisional Forest Officer			
20	Address of official inviting tender	Chittagong Hill Tracts South Forest Division, Rangamati.			
21	Contact details of official inviting tender	Phone: 0233-3371125, E-mail: <a href="mailto:dfochts@gmail.com">dfochts@gmail.com</a>			
22	Work order is subject to be issued upon releasing of fund.				

The procuring entity reserves the right to reject all the tenders or annul the tender proceedings.

Dr. Md. Zahidur Rahman Miah

Divisional Forest Officer

Chittagong Hill Tracts South Forest Division

Rangamati

Phone: 0233-3371125

GD- 914