

## Rise in remittance a good sign

### Upskilling workers, easier migration process can further increase it

We are encouraged by the recent increase in remittance inflows into the country at a time when our economy is under significant pressure due to dwindling foreign exchange reserves and various external payment obligations. According to Bangladesh Bank data, in October, remittances sent home by our migrant workers rose 21.31 percent year-on-year to \$2.39 billion, following a 40 percent increase in August and 80 percent increase in September. Reportedly, from October 1 to October 26, Islami Bank Bangladesh received the highest amount of remittance at \$371 million, followed by Agrani Bank at \$185 million, Sonali Bank at \$143 million, and BRAC Bank at \$122 million. We now hope that this upward trend in remittance inflows will continue in the coming months, which will eventually help ease pressure on our forex reserves.

This achievement, of course, would not have been possible without the hard work of our migrant workers, who toil in foreign lands, often under unfavourable conditions and with low pay. Since our economy is heavily dependent on the remittances they send, it is our responsibility to ensure their rights are protected, both at home and abroad. The high cost of migration has long been a barrier for aspiring migrant workers, which the government should address urgently. Moreover, it is concerning that the number of workers who went abroad between January and September this year was significantly lower than during the same period last year—while 989,685 workers migrated in 2023, the figure dropped to 698,558 this year. The Ministry of Expatriates' Welfare and Overseas Employment must investigate the reasons behind this decline and take proactive measures to address them.

Currently, Bangladesh faces substantial challenges in paying its external debts and importing essentials such as gas, fertiliser, and raw materials for the garment sector due to the dollar shortage. Adani Power, for instance, has recently warned Bangladesh of a potential suspension of supply if overdue payments of around \$850 million are not cleared. Therefore, it is crucial that the government take all necessary steps to increase our forex reserves. To this end, the government should find new markets and focus on sending more skilled workers abroad to secure better jobs and enhance remittance flows. Additionally, it should promote the use of formal channels for remittance transfers. Previously, the gap between official and unofficial exchange rates led many migrants to favour informal channels, but this practice needs to change.

However, the government should not rely solely on remittances to alleviate the ongoing pressure on forex reserves. Simultaneously, it must also work to boost export earnings.

## Plan ahead for steady power supply

### Govt must take timely steps to keep power plants running

Amid the ongoing gas crisis in the country that has hit us on several fronts, including power generation, it is worrying that the coal-based power plants are also scaling down production, owing to a number of issues. According to a report in this daily, these power plants have been reducing production, and in some cases completely shutting down, due to financial, legal or technical difficulties. This has led to increased power outages in the country, especially in rural areas, affecting not just households but also businesses.

Per the report, Bangladesh gets power from seven coal-fired power plants, which have a combined generation capacity of 7,099MW. But lately they have been producing less than half—around 3,199MW. Production in Matarbari and Barishal power plants are completely off, while Rampal, SS Power, and Barapukuria are operating at a significantly reduced capacity. These power plants have been hit with either coal shortage, mechanical problems or maintenance issues. Only the Payra power plant has been operating at full capacity. Meanwhile, the Adani Godda power plant in India's Jharkhand cut its power supply by half on October 31 and has threatened to stop supply completely if Bangladesh does not clear its outstanding dues by November 7.

As a result, except for Barishal division, which is covered by Payra, the country has been experiencing increased power outages, which are impacting people's lives and livelihoods, especially in the rural areas. One onion trader in Dinajpur said he lost half of his imported produce due to frequent load-shedding. A rice miller in Mymensingh said his mill's output dropped significantly due to four to five hours of power cut daily. This does not bode well for the country.

The press secretary to the chief adviser said the government was working to expedite payment to Adani. This ought to help with the resumption of supply from Godda power plant. But what about the ones that can't operate due to coal shortage? Officials said coal procurement had been delayed by legal issues that were raised due to a change of supplier. They said it's unlikely that the Matarbari plant would resume production before mid-December. Given the time of the year, when power consumption is typically less due to reduced demand, we may not see the situation take a critical turn now. However, if it continues to persist, we are looking at a potentially worse situation from March onwards when the temperature is supposed to rise, and especially if the gas shortage continues. The government needs to figure out—and quickly—how to resolve the current situation. It should plan ahead to keep the power supply across the country stable and ensure that further power shortages are averted.

### THIS DAY IN HISTORY



## Restoration of Mughals in India

On this day in 1556, Mughal power was restored in India following Bayram Khan's victory at the second Battle of Panipat.

# What to expect at COP29?

## Reaching a new collective quantified goal will be critical



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As the impacts of climate change become increasingly evident, discussions on the critical role of climate finance in combating environmental degradation, supporting vulnerable countries, and promoting sustainable economic growth have received increased momentum. In the context of the upcoming 29th meeting of the Conference of Parties (COP29) of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) in Baku, Azerbaijan, from November 11 to 22, significant attention has been focused on the issue of climate finance.

At Baku, the new collective quantified goal on climate finance (NCQG) is expected to be launched. According to the United Nations Global Policy Model (GPM), developing countries will need around \$1.1 trillion for climate finance from 2025, which will increase to around \$1.8 trillion by 2030. The multilateral development banks (MDBs) will be a significant source of the NCQG. This new goal will replace the current climate finance target of \$100 billion annually by 2020, set at COP15 in Copenhagen in 2009. During COP21 in Paris in 2015, countries agreed to establish the NCQG by 2025, with a higher level of ambition to address the financing gap needed to manage climate-related shocks.

While the NCQG represents a major step towards fulfilling climate finance needs, several related issues must be addressed to improve the effectiveness of this new funding goal. The \$100 billion annual target for climate finance was achieved in 2022—two years after the target year 2020. The seventh assessment report of the Organisation of Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), published in May 2024, reveals that in 2022, developed countries provided and mobilised \$115.9 billion in climate finance for developing countries. This was the first time the annual target of \$100 billion in climate finance was exceeded.

Besides the delay, various concerns have been raised about the quality and effectiveness of climate finance, with particular focus on the overall impact. Key areas for improvement within the NCQG include a clear definition

of climate finance, criteria for fund distribution, eligibility requirements for recipients, and distinctions between grants, concessional loans, and non-concessional loans.

Another important point is that the landscape of climate finance has changed over time. MDBs have now become the main source of climate finance, surpassing the bilateral climate



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finance and multilateral funds. The MDBs are allocating more funds for climate change as their overall financial capacity has increased. Global leaders encouraged MDBs to further enhance their financial capacity through the "Independent Review of MDBs' Capital Adequacy Frameworks" launched by G20 leaders in 2022. The OECD report indicates that climate finance from MDBs increased more than threefold between 2013 and 2022. Since 2013, MDBs have accounted for nearly half of the increase in climate funding raised by developed countries. A key focus at COP29 will be on how MDBs can scale up their commitments, leverage private finance, and enhance support for climate resilience and adaptation projects in the most affected regions.

It is expected that the NCQG will establish a comprehensive definition of climate finance, promoting consistency

and transparency in climate finance reporting. The quality of the \$100 billion in climate finance has often been questioned, as funds for climate initiatives were sometimes redirected from other development areas. Additionally, funds have been labelled as climate finance without clear justification. And in many cases, the amount of funding has been insufficient to make a significant impact.

Therefore, some critical issues will need to be negotiated during discussions on the NCQG during COP29.

First, transparency and accountability are essential to ensure that climate finance is used effectively and reaches the communities most in need. Establishing robust mechanisms for tracking funds, reporting expenditures, and assessing investment

and strict eligibility criteria.

Third, a balance between funding for climate adaptation and mitigation must be ensured. Historically, most climate finance has been directed toward mitigation, while adaptation has received less support. For many developing countries, however, adaptation is a more immediate priority, as they face challenges such as rising sea levels, extreme weather events, and other climate impacts. Although funding for adaptation is growing, it remains lower than funding for mitigation. Developed countries provided \$32.4 billion in adaptation finance to developing countries in 2022, compared to \$10.1 billion in 2016 (OECD, 2024). However, 60 percent of total climate finance was still allocated to mitigation in 2022.

Fourth, equity and fairness must be at the centre of discussion—climate finance distribution should be equitable, ensuring that vulnerable populations and countries most affected by climate change receive the support they need without excessive bureaucratic hurdles. And COP29 will need to address ways to make it more equitable, including acknowledging historical injustices related to emissions and resource exploitation.

Fifth, leaders must demonstrate strong political will to reach a consensus on a robust climate finance mechanism through the NCQG. The success of climate finance initiatives depends on political commitment from both donor and recipient countries.

Sixth, ensuring the sustainability of funding is essential so that climate finance is not only adequate but also resilient over the long term. Discussions at COP29 should focus on creating funding mechanisms that can withstand economic shocks and political changes.

Seventh, capacity building should be an integral part of climate finance because developing countries often require support not just in terms of finance but also in building the necessary institutional capacity to implement climate projects effectively. Capacity building through knowledge sharing and technical assistance should feature prominently in climate finance discussions.

As the world grapples with the realities of climate change, the NCQG to be launched at COP29 will play a pivotal role in shaping a sustainable future. The success of this initiative will depend on the willingness of developed countries to meet their financial commitments, the establishment of fair and transparent systems, and a collective resolve to ensure that climate finance reaches the most vulnerable population.

# US election outcome's likely impact on the Russia-Ukraine war



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*"Without Ukraine, Russia ceases to be a Eurasian empire. Russia without Ukraine can still strive for imperial status, but it would then become a predominantly Asian imperial state, more likely to be drawn into debilitating conflicts with aroused Central Asians, who would then be resentful of the loss of their recent independence and would be supported by their fellow Islamic states to the south."*

— Zbigniew Brzezinski

Zbigniew Brzezinski, a Polish-born American diplomat and political scientist, counsellor to Lyndon B Johnson from 1966 to 1968 and Jimmy Carter's national security adviser from 1977 to 1981 studied the complex geopolitical landscape of Eurasia and its significance in shaping global power dynamics. Brzezinski argued that control over this region is crucial for maintaining American dominance in his book, *The Grand Chessboard: American Primacy and Its Geostategic Imperatives*. Following this argument, the US support for Ukraine is part of a strategy to counter Russian influence and maintain a balance of power in the region.

The Russia-Ukraine war began in February 2014, following Ukraine's Revolution of Dignity, which ousted the pro-Russian president Viktor Yanukovich. This revolution was triggered by Yanukovich's sudden

decision to suspend the signing of an association agreement with the European Union (EU), favouring closer ties with Russia instead. This decision sparked widespread protests in Kyiv's Independence Square, known as Euromaidan, driven by a desire for closer integration with Europe, rejection of corruption, and a demand for democratic reforms. The situation escalated, leading to violence and the eventual ousting of Yanukovich in February 2014.

Russia responded by annexing Crimea and supporting pro-Russian separatists in the Donbas region. The conflict escalated dramatically in February 2022 when Russia launched a full-scale invasion of Ukraine, marking the bloodiest conflict in Europe since World War II.

The US has played a pivotal role in supporting the protests in Ukraine, with reports indicating that it has invested billions of dollars to promote democracy (read undermine Russia) in the country.

Crimea holds immense strategic value for Russia. It gives Moscow control over the Black Sea Fleet's base in Sevastopol, a warm-water port crucial for its naval operations. The port allows power projection in the Black Sea and beyond, enhancing Russian geopolitical influence. Crimea also has historical and cultural significance for Russia, with a majority

ethnic Russian population.

From the start, Washington has supported Ukraine with billions in military, financial, and humanitarian aid. The Biden administration has maintained a firm stance against Russian aggression, emphasising the importance of defending democracy and the international order.

Donald Trump's dealings with Ukraine have been controversial. He was impeached during his presidency for allegedly pressuring Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy to investigate Joe Biden and his son Hunter in exchange for military aid. Trump has also claimed that he warned Russian President Vladimir Putin against invading Ukraine, though these assertions are disputed. His relationship with Ukraine has been marked by scepticism and transactional diplomacy.

Hunter Biden's business dealings in Ukraine have been a focal point of political controversy. While serving on the board of Burisma, a Ukrainian gas company, Hunter Biden's role raised concerns about potential conflicts of interest. Critics argue that his position may have influenced US policy, though investigations have found no evidence of wrongdoing by Joe Biden. Nonetheless, the issue remains a point of contention in US politics.

Kamala Harris has also consistently supported Ukraine in its fight against Russian aggression. She has emphasised the importance of standing by Ukraine and maintaining strong alliances with NATO. Harris has condemned Russia's actions as "barbaric and inhumane" and has pledged to continue providing military and humanitarian aid. However, she has been cautious about committing to Ukraine's NATO membership, focusing instead on immediate support.

If Donald Trump secures the election, his approach to the Ukraine war could significantly shift. Trump has been critical of the scale of US support for Ukraine and has hinted at the possibility of negotiating a swift end to the conflict. His suggestions of reducing military aid and advocating for a settlement that might involve territorial concessions to Russia have raised concerns among Ukraine's allies about the potential weakening of Western support, adding a layer of uncertainty to the situation.

The endgame of the Ukraine war remains uncertain. Some analysts argue that a negotiated settlement is the most realistic outcome, given the current stalemate on the battlefield. However, any agreement would likely require significant compromises from both sides, including potential territorial concessions by Ukraine. A Trump victory could potentially lead to a more isolationist approach, significantly altering US foreign policy in the region.

The other issue is the possibility of a Russian nuclear attack, that significantly impacts White House policy. The Biden administration has made it clear that any use of nuclear weapons by Russia would have devastating consequences. This stance is rooted in the principle of nuclear deterrence, aiming to prevent escalation by making the costs of nuclear use prohibitively high. If elected, Kamala Harris and Donald Trump must navigate this delicate balance.

I will end this piece with another Brzezinski quote, "However, if Moscow regains control over Ukraine, with its 52 million people and major resources as well as its access to the Black Sea, Russia automatically again regains the wherewithal to become a powerful imperial state, spanning Europe and Asia."