

Bangladesh

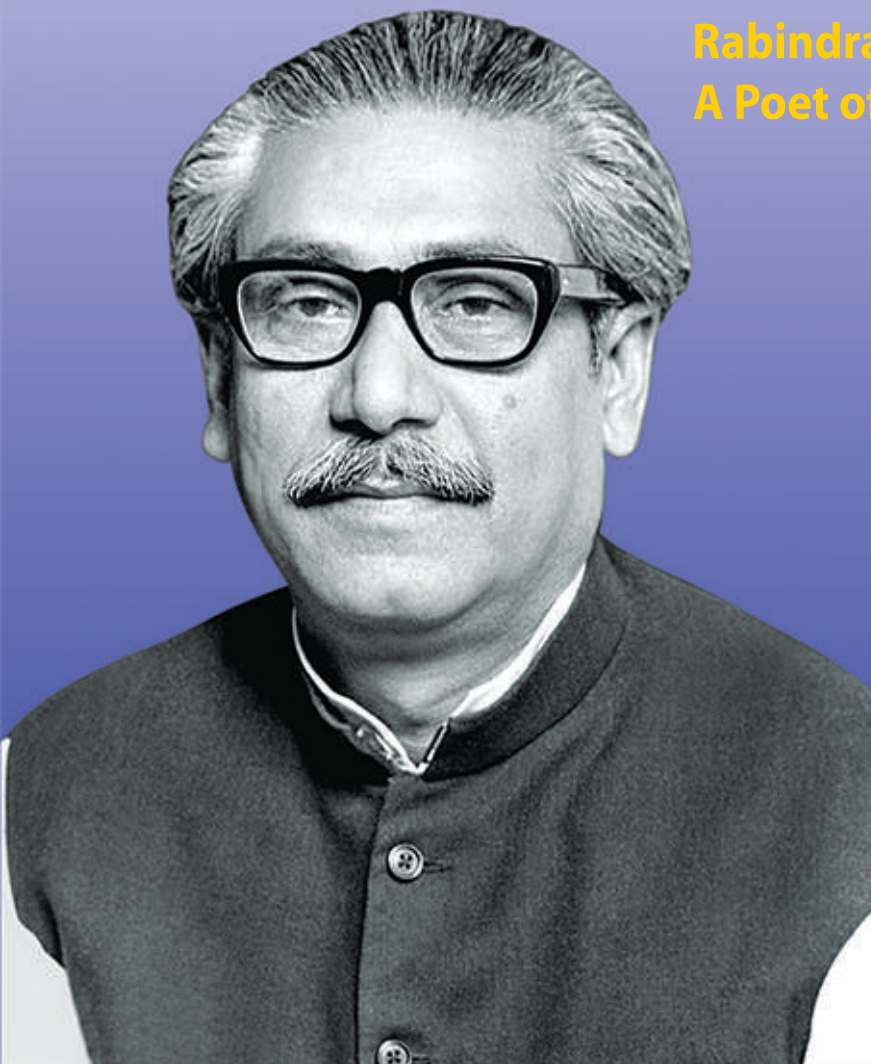
July-September 2018

Quarterly

The Legacy of Bangabandhu

**Civil Service Reforms in South Asia:
A Contextual Analysis**

**Rabindranath Tagore :
A Poet of World Vision**



Bangladesh

QUARTERLY

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The historic abode of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman on road 32 at Dhanmondi, Dhaka (now Bangabandhu Memorial Museum)



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**Editorial**

The National Mourning Day, 15 August, has been observed in a befitting manner throughout the country and the missions abroad. It reminds us of the heinous act of assassination of the Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and most of his family members in 1975. Bangabandhu is remembered for his political and socio-economic ideology and philosophy. He raised his voice against the ethnic and economic discrimination of Bangalees in the state of Pakistan. His leadership led to the independence of Bangladesh.

The practice and concept of governance and public administration in south Asia have strong background. In 1947, after independence of the subcontinent, the inherited Indian Civil Service (ICS) became the Indian Administrative service (IAS) in India, the Civil Service of Pakistan (CSP) in Pakistan and subsequently Bangladesh Civil Service (BCS) in Bangladesh. Administrative reform is very much needed for the sake of good governance. In this context a comparative study is presented in an article in this issue.

Nobel laureate Rabindranath Tagore was the multitalented personality in the field of Bengali literature. Though he was mostly known as a poet but he was a lyricist, a story writer, a novelist, a playwright and a painter as well. He was also a Brahma Samaj philosopher and a social reformer. Tagore was the first non-European, who won the Nobel Prize in literature. He is ever remembered among the Bengali poets and writers for his great contribution. An article on his literary work and thoughts is covered in this current issue.

Other than the above mentioned write-ups, articles on Shab-e-Meraj, World Population Day, agriculture, autism and wildlife have also been accommodated in this current issue.

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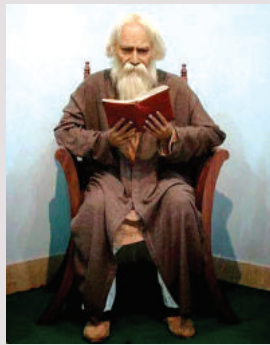


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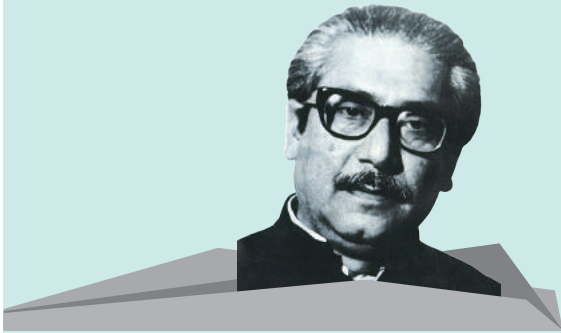
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The Legacy of Bangabandhu

Hasanul Haq Inu

long 21 years since 1975, the military dictators kept the name 'Bangabandhu' in exile from the nation he gave birth to. And the return of Bangabandhu commenced only when Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina formed elected government in 1996.

Apart from the heinous crime in 1975, four more incidents stained the nation's heart. War crimes in the war of independence in 1971, illegal accession of power and military dictatorship from 1975, scraping off the spirit of independence from constitution and intrusion of 'Rajakars' in politics and the grenade attack on Sheikh Hasina and political leaders on 21st August 2004.

Bangladesh has been struggling to move forward with these five stains in the heart of the nation.

Even today, we commemorate the tragic death anniversary of Bangabandhu amidst bleeding of the nation's soul and ongoing struggle of wiping out the five stains. Stains of communalism and military dictatorship are still to be eroded. The hypocritical theory of 'little democracy, little religion, little autocracy' is still fuming chaos in the air. We have a long way to go.

Knowing Bangabandhu perfectly is knowing Bangladesh. Bangabandhu is- a flag, a map, a country, the epic of Bangali nationalism, a movement, an architect of building a nation, a struggle to give home to a nation, a revolution, an uprising, a

In childhood, uncle Omar of our village used to remind us, 'Traitors are not to be forgiven and poisonous snakes are not to be let loose.'

Realization of this verse occurred when on 15th August, 1975, the Father of the Nation, the architect of Bangladesh was brutally killed along with his kith and kin. Killing Bangabandhu is the most heinous chapter of treachery in the history of our nation.

Acclaimed Indian writer Annadashankar Roy of West Bengal, hearing this tragic event called his friend writer Manoj Bose in Kolkata and said, 'Let's lament together, oh dear!' While people lamented abroad this way, tears of Bangladeshis froze in shock and horror.

Killing Bangabandhu was not mere killing of a person that the perpetrators and military dictators plotted through. They wanted to kill the soul of the nation. Thus the soul of our nation started to bleed, being stabbed with the cursed dagger of communalism. For



Bangabandhu with his family members

history, a pole star of Bangali nation, poet of political rise of the nation, a best friend of people, founder of the nation, symbol of independence, the great hero of time, the greatest Bangali of thousand years.

He was Bangabandhu, who corrected the historic mistake of 1947 partition of the sub-continent. The Hindus and the Muslims who were separated, Bangabandhu united them all and created one undivided Bangali nation. Bangabandhu said, 'I am human, I am Bangali and I am Muslim.'

Bangabandhu inspired Banglis to decorate their identity in three steps- humanity first, then nationality and then the religion. This was Bangabandhu's epic on the rise of the independent

Bangladesh. Everyone became Bangali, shedding off the cloak of obsolete two-nation theory.

On December 5th, 1969 at the death anniversary of Hussain Shaheed Suhrawardy at three-leaders tomb in Dhaka University, Bangabandhu declared, 'From today the name of the eastern part of Pakistan is not East-Pakistan, it is Bangladesh.'

In 1973 at Non-Aligned Movement summit in Algiers, President Sheikh Mujibur Rahman of the just born Bangladesh had a meeting with Saudi King Faisal. Bangabandhu asked the king, 'Bangladesh is the second largest Muslim-majority country after Indonesia. What may be the reason of Saudi Arabia not recognizing Bangladesh's independence as yet?'

King Faisal said, 'In order to obtain Saudi recognition, Bangladesh has to change the name into Islamic Republic of Bangladesh.'

Bangabandhu replied, 'This condition does not apply for Bangladesh. Though Muslims are a majority, but we have about a crore people from other religions. We



Bangabandhu with Saudi King Faisal

all fought together for independence and the war affected all of us. And the creator is no! In addition, your country is also not named as Islamic Republic of Saudi Arabia. Your country is named Kingdom of Saudi Arabia after a famed politician King Ibne Saud. And we haven't opposed to that', sharply added Bangabandhu.

Our Father of the Nation also had a surprising presence of mind. When Nigerian General Gawan said, 'Undivided Pakistan was a strong country, why did you have to divide that?'. Bangabandhu replied, 'Hon'ble President, you might have been correct, undivided Pakistan would have been stronger. But see, undivided Indian sub-continent would have been even stronger and undivided Asia would have been furthermore stronger and an undivided world would have been the strongest. So, hon'ble President, do we get everything as per our wish!'

In order to earn freedom of Bangali nation, Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman declared to stand firm on 6 points, for self-rule, abandoning military dictatorship and struggle for democracy. Bangabandhu perfectly combined three elements- Massmovement, Election and Armed struggle to achieve the nation's goal. He turned the 1970 Parliamentary Election as a people's mandate. And in the name of non-cooperation movement, Bangabandhu declared a self-ruled

Bangladesh. The unarmed people became ready for armed struggle under the command of Bangabandhu as he established the Bangali nationality at state level. That is why Bangabandhu is the father of modern Bangali nation and Bangabandhu and Bangladesh are one united soul.

French writer André Malraux in his last writings depicted an artist in the scaffold, waiting to be hanged, his toes barely touching the ground. From instinct, the artist drew a few mice with the tip of his toe. And miraculously the mice got alive, cut the rope and set the artist free. If ever Bangabandhu's toes had been in such condition, he would have drawn a map, the map of Bangladesh, the whole of which would have been covered by his greatness. As poet Rafiq Azad said, 'The huge figure lay all along the map of the motherland.'

The verses of Poet Bablu Joardar portrayed Bangabandhu as-

'So large a man was he-
Fifty five thousand square miles-
He could grasp in his bare hands,
As could grasp seven and half a crore souls,
And deep voluptuous summer clouds.'

After tragic death of Bangabandhu, famed writer Annadashankar Roy wrote, 'Bangabandhu Mujibur Rahman was not a common politician. He was the Father of a nation. It was not stepping down; it was supreme sacrifice, that was his last duty.'

But the country is not yet freed from the curse. The bleeding from the soul of our nation caused by stabbing with the dagger of communalism, has not yet stopped. The struggle is on. The homecoming of Bangabandhu will only be safe when the five stains of Bangabandhu killing in 1975, war crimes in 1971, illegal accession of power and military dictatorship from 1975, scraping off the spirit of independence from constitution and intrusion of 'Rajakars' in politics and the grenade attack on Sheikh Hasina and political leaders on 21st August will be completely eroded, the dagger of communalism and social imbalances will be fully removed. On that very moment, Bangladesh will come out of all shadows and stand with the smiling glory.

Translation: Mir Akram Uddin Ahammad

Courtesy: Press Information Department

Writer is the Minister, Ministry of Information, Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh

Road number 32

Kamal Chaudhury

This house belongs to the father of the nation, this house belongs to all
Named after Mujib, this house belongs to polash and rokto-joba blooms as well
This house is the grieving month of August, written only with tear drops
This house embodies our Fatherland, as also his sighs and cries!

This house means the vast waters of the Padma, the Meghna, and the Madhumati
In this house stays forever awake unrelenting courage
Liberator, head held high, like an over-stretched morning
When darkness descends this is the house that drives away all the drowsy feeling

In 1971 this house was as free as the blue skies
The terror of killers, enemy soldiers and razakars
If this house gives us hope and courage we'll stay forever awake
Taking our vows in the name of Bangla Mother, we'll resist and fight

Spurred on by the rage of alluvial deposits collecting over a thousand years
This house stands under the self-sacrificing sun—painted in grand strokes of red and green
This house means dust and mud, soil wet from shower
Under the banyan shade of boundless time we walk and don't cower.

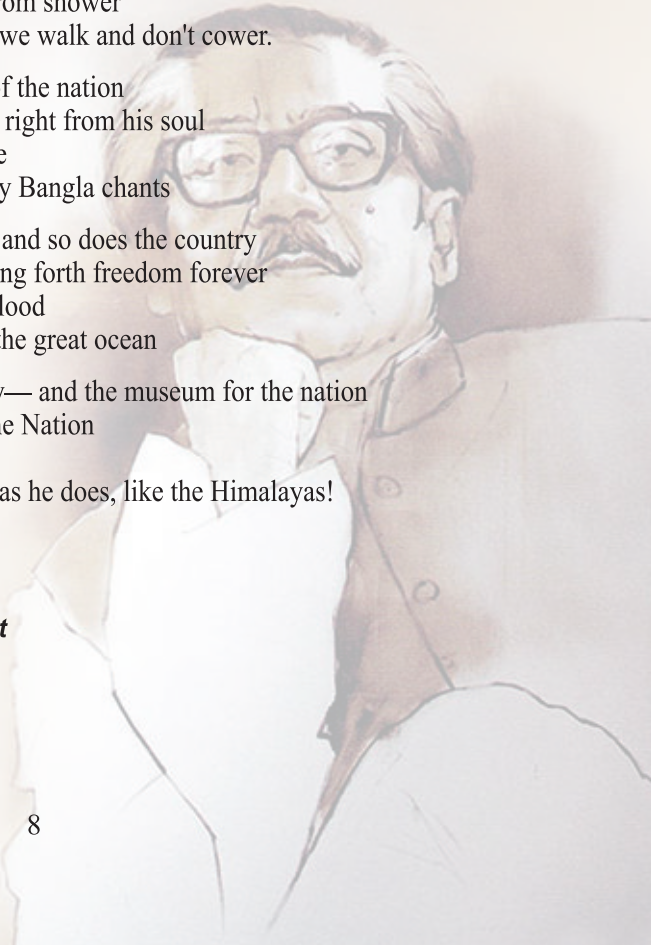
In this house lives Mujib—the lighthouse of the nation
Words of Robi Thakur and Nazrul emanate right from his soul
Comes a great man setting sail to this house
And his boat is kept afloat by the tide of Joy Bangla chants

If he raises his index finger the skies move and so does the country
This house is the stroke of lightning, bringing forth freedom forever
This house is Independence, written with blood
Peoples of the world witness in this house the great ocean

This house is a site of our soul and memory— and the museum for the nation
In this house lives Mujibur, the Father of the Nation
This house is our root, our self-identity
And it stands for Bangabandhu—towering as he does, like the Himalayas!

Translation : Rifat Munim

Courtesy: Press Information Department





Civil Service Reforms in South Asia: A Contextual Analysis

Dr. Helal Uddin Ahmed

Within the broader context of administrative reforms, civil service reforms have been a key area in the evolution of public administration and governance all over the world. As the backbone of public administration, the civil service in South Asia is a key legacy carried forward from the British colonial rulers. The inherited Indian Civil Service of the colonial era formed the basis of civil services in India, Pakistan and Bangladesh. A comparative study of the evolution of reforms in the civil services of the major sub-continental countries, viz. Bangladesh, India and Pakistan may, therefore, be a pointer to the successes or failures of governance in these South Asian countries.

Historical Background: The practice and concept of governance and public administration in South Asia have

strong historical basis. From the time of Kautilya (also known as Chanakya), who was the chief minister to the founder of the Mauryan empire in India Chandragupta (321-296 BC), to the Mughal empire, the British Raj and the independence of the subcontinent from British colonial rule, public administration have had different organizational forms and functions, administrative structures, power and authority relationships as well as political systems. After independence of the Indian subcontinent in 1947, the inherited Indian Civil Service (ICS) became the Indian Administrative Service (IAS) in India, the Civil Service of Pakistan (CSP) in Pakistan, and subsequently the Bangladesh Civil Service (Administration) following Bangladesh's independence in 1971.

Indian Context: The services inherited from the British were retained in pursuance of the Indian Independence Act of 1947 and the Indian Civil Service (ICS) was replaced by the Indian Administrative Service (IAS). Several reform initiatives in the civil service were undertaken by independent India, some through former civil servants, others initiated by the Lok Sabha, and a few as per

recommendations of international experts. Up to 1966, the attempts at civil service reforms were limited in scope, sporadic, uncoordinated, largely diffused, and of uneven pace. There was no comprehensive and coordinated examination of the total administrative machinery in this effort (Hanumanthaiya, 1970).

In 1966, the Government of India announced the appointment of Administrative Reforms Commission (ARC) that was modelled after the Hoover Commission of the United States. Notably, it was not created by parliament, rather it was a body appointed by the executive. The domination of the commission by politicians was considered to be an asset, as that was supposed to facilitate the passage of the commission's recommendations in parliament. Some recommendations of the commission were allegedly inspired by the Fulton Commission report of England published in 1968.

The ARC took four years to examine the administrative structures and processes, and presented 20 reports with 680 recommendations (based on the outputs of 33 study teams and working groups). Some perennial issues like generalists versus specialists, parity of scales and the superiority of IAS had plagued and dogged the ARC throughout its existence (Tummala, 2013). The notion in circulation was that the IAS and other generalists were the only ones fit for administrative jobs. The specialists/technocrats contested this privileged status of the IAS and claimed that they were equally capable of administrative and leadership positions at the top. The ARC made recommendations for functional classification of civil servants as well as for filling up senior management positions in specialist agencies by the specialists. Scopes for lateral entries were also suggested as opposed to a closed system. But as opposed to ARC recommendations, the subsequent Third Pay Commission tilted towards the time-honoured generalist administrators and disagreed with the arguments for parity of scales. Therefore, despite the laborious work done by the ARC and its 33 study teams cum working-groups, the administrative structure in India remained as it had been before.

In the backdrop of the New Economic Policy (NEP) of 1990 led by the then Finance Minister Manmohan Singh, the nature of administrative work in India started to change as the private sector wielded more influence and power in the country's socio-economic growth. Therefore, in line with this changed state philosophy, the second Administrative Reforms Commission (ARC) was constituted on 31 August 2005. This commission presented 15 reports until 2009. To consider the recommendations and review the pace of implementation of reform, a Group of Ministers (GoM) was then constituted (GOI, 2004). But nothing substantive has materialised out of all these efforts till today.

Pakistan Context: Administrative and civil service reform efforts in Pakistan between 1947 and 1977 were guided by the development administration model (Jadoon & Jabeen, 2013). Several reports were submitted by various administrative reform commissions from 1947 to 1972, the main thrust of which

continued to be civil service reform. None of these recommendations for structural changes were, however, implemented with the exception of some procedural changes, setting up of training institutions and creation of some state enterprises. Moreover, there had been around 20 studies on administrative reform in Pakistan over the period 1947 to 2012, where many problems had been identified, but very limited efforts were made for their implementation.

After Pakistan's independence following the partition of India in 1947, a reorganization committee headed by Sir Victor Turner was instituted for examining the procedures of government. Likewise, a pay commission was established under the chairmanship of Justice Muhammad Munir to prepare recommendations on the salary of civil servants. Rowland Egger and Bernard Gladieux were invited in 1953 and 1955 respectively to submit opinion on improving the public administration system in Pakistan. Then in 1958, a report on reorganization of the federal government was presented by G. Ahmad. The 1962 Cornelius Report dwelt on issues related to the services, structure and organization of the provincial and federal governments. After the promulgation of a new constitution in 1962, another report on the reorganization of functions and structures of federal government was submitted by M. Shoaib. General Yahya Khan appointed a working group in 1970 for drafting a report on reorganizing the public service structure in Pakistan.

Major and sweeping administrative reforms were initiated by the Bhutto government in 1973. It resulted in abolition of key reserved posts in federal and provincial governments for the CSP cadre, and replacement of the CSP cadre by the DMG and Secretariat groups in ways that represented all occupational groups. The reforms also introduced a unified service structure for all occupational groups and a unified national pay-scale of grades 1-22. A Civil Service Commission was constituted in 1978 to revisit the 1973 reforms. Another Service Reforms Commission was set up in 1989, but the recommendations of that commission were not implemented. An Economy Commission was set up in 1991, which recommended decreasing the number of divisions in the federal government and abolishing 75 organizations. The Chattah Commission re-emphasized the necessity of reducing the number of divisions in the federal government. Another Commission on Administrative Restructuring was constituted in 1997, but its recommendations could not be considered following the dismissal of the Nazwaz Sharif government in 1999. The National Reconstruction Bureau prepared a Devolution Plan in 2000; it included the Local Government Ordinance of 2001 and the police reforms, which were incorporated in the Police Ordinance of 2002.

The National Commission for Government Reforms (NCGR) was appointed in 2006 that focused on the effective functions of a holistic government. The NCGR submitted a complete report on civil service reforms that included: (1) open and transparent merit-based recruitment, performance-based promotions, and career progression for all public sector employees, with mandatory training at initial,

mid-career and senior management levels; and (2) equal opportunities for career development of all employees irrespective of gender or other variations. The report also suggested replacing the concept of superior services, introducing equality among all cadre and non-cadre public servants, granting a living compensation package including decent retirement benefits and strict adherence to security of tenure. The recommendations also included a separate cadre of regular civil services at the federal, provincial and district levels and creation of a Pakistan National Executive Service (NES) for senior management positions drawn through a competitive process involving the civil servants as well as professionals from other sectors. It also recommended introduction of three specialised cadres under the NES for economic management, social sector management and general management for effective implementation of reforms. However, little has come out of these recommendations till today.

Political instability, political interference and dearth of planning and strategy have been identified as road blocks to civil service reforms in Pakistan (Jabeen & Jadoon, 2013). Historically, no reform report presented by any commission could be implemented as the governments changed within a short period. The unwillingness of the executive branch to implement the reforms effectively has been the main area of concern (Wilder, 2009). Subservience of the civil service to military rulers has also been a dilemma that made the military support the civil service (Hussain, 2008). It has been observed that civil servants themselves resisted the implementation of reforms when they perceived an uncertainty factor or greater degree of potential for loss of privilege. It has also been observed that reforms have often failed in Pakistan when they were associated with external organizations, based on borrowed ideas, or imposed by international lending authorities like the IMF and the World Bank, without adapting those to the indigenous context (Iqbal, 2006).

Bangladesh Context: The government of newly independent Bangladesh formed the Civil Administration Restoration Committee (CARC) in 1971 to examine and recommend measures for restoration of civil administration in the country. The CARC presented its report in 1972 after examining different issues related to civil administration for consideration of another committee appointed by the prime minister. The pre-1971 provincial secretariat was then transformed into a national secretariat with 20 ministries and subordinate departments, directorates, corporations and autonomous/semi-autonomous bodies in accordance with the recommendations of CARC (GOB, 1973).

The other two administrative reform committees during the first parliament of independent Bangladesh were the Administrative and Service Reorganization Committee (ASRC) and the National Pay Commission (NPC-1). The key recommendations of ASRC included a classless grading structure covering all services in ten grades, appropriate number of salary levels linked to skills and responsibilities, and proper grading of posts done through job analysis. The



Bangladesh Public Service Commission

highlights of ASRC recommendations were abolition of the elite cadre, non-reservation of posts for any particular cadre and democratisation of administration at all levels. Unfortunately, the ASRC recommendations had no impact on governance as the report remained shelved as a classified document in the official circles (GOB, 1973a).

A National Pay and Services Commission (NP&SC) was appointed in 1976 to undertake a fresh inquiry into the services and salary structures of public services and to suggest necessary reforms. The commission recommended fundamental changes in the staffing positions as well as a uniform pattern for pay-scales and promotions, so that the longstanding generalist-specialist controversy could be resolved. The government of the time implemented some NP&SC recommendations in a modified manner leading to the creation of 28 functional cadres in Bangladesh Civil Service (BCS), setting up of the Senior Service Pool (SSP), and the introduction of new national pay-scales (Kalimullah et al, 2013). The SSP was, however, abolished in 1989 due to resentment expressed against it by certain officials of BCS Administration cadre.

The following Table shows various administrative reform committees and bodies constituted since the country's independence in 1971:

1.	Civil Administration Restoration Committee (CARC), appointed on 27 December 1971, submitted its report on 4 January 1972.
2.	Administrative and Services Reorganization Committee (ASRC), appointed on 15 March 1972, submitted its report in two phases in April 1973 and in May 1974.
3.	National Pay Commission-1 (NPC-1) was appointed in 1972 and submitted its report in 1973.
4.	National Pay and Services Commission (NP&SC) was appointed on 20 February 1976, and submitted its main report on 27 May 1977.
5.	Martial Law Committee on examining organizational set-up of ministries/divisions, departments, directorates, and other organizations (MLC-1), 1982.
6.	Reorganization Committee for Administrative Reform (CARR), appointed on 28 April 1982, submitted its report on 22 June 1982.
7.	Martial Law Committee for examining organizational set-up of public statutory corporations (autonomous/semi-autonomous bodies and allied organizations) (MLC-2), 1982.
8.	Committee for examining irregularities in appointments and promotions of officers and staffs in the government (CEI), 1983.
9.	National Pay Commission-3 (NPC-3) was appointed on 31 May 1984, and submitted its report in 1985.
10.	Secretaries' Committee on Administrative Development (SCAD) was appointed on 20 April 1985, and submitted its report in 1985.
11.	Special Committee (SC) to review the structure of the senior service pool (SSP) was appointed on 23 December 1985, and submitted its report in 1986.
12.	Cabinet Sub-Committee (CSC) on the Civil Service was appointed on 3 June 1987, and submitted its report on 22 June 1989.
13.	National Pay Commission-4 (NPC-4), 1991.
14.	Administrative Reorganization Committee (ARC) was appointed in August 1993, and submitted its report in August 1996.
15.	National Pay Commission-5 (NPC-5) was appointed in August 1996, and submitted its report in December 1996.
16.	Public Administration Reform Commission (PARC) was appointed in December 1996, and submitted its report in June 2000.
17.	National Pay Commission-6 (NPC-6) operated during 2004-05.
18.	National Pay Commission-7 (NPC-7) was appointed in December 2013, and submitted its report in December 2014.

The following Table shows the Reports on administrative reforms in Bangladesh prepared with the assistance of development partners:

Sl. No.	Name of the Report	Year	Agency Involved	Main Focus
1.	Public Administration Efficiency Studies	1989	USAID	Secretariat system, relationships between ministries, departments and corporations.
2.	Report on Public Administration Sector Study in Bangladesh	1993	UNDP	Public administration reform in the government with emphasis on certain specific areas.
3.	Towards Better Government in Bangladesh (Four Secretaries Report)	1993	DFID	Administrative reform of priority areas in the short term; advice on preparation of a comprehensive medium-term action context of a long-term vision of redefined role of the state.
4.	Government that Works: Reforming the Public Sector	1996	World Bank	Comprehensive administrative reform, privatization, and reduced levels of government.
5.	Local Government in Bangladesh: An Agenda for Governance	1996	UNDP	Local government issues.
6.	Taming Leviathan: Reforming Governance in Bangladesh	2002	World Bank	Ensure accountability and transparency in government operations.
7.	Public Administration Reform in Bangladesh	2004	UNDP	Civil service reform issues.

It has been pointed out by many experts that reforms implemented in Bangladesh since independence have been mostly routine and procedural ones, as the basic structures and processes of civil service management have been kept almost intact till now. However, two successful reform efforts resulted from the recommendations of NP&SC (1977) and CARR (1983). The former recommendations led to the establishment of 28 functional cadre services and the latter recommendations culminated in devolution of civil service at the grassroots upazila level under elected local government. Interestingly, both the reforms occurred during two military dictatorships, which gives the impression that democratic governments are either incapable of or not willing to implement major reforms.

The Public Administration Reform Commission (PARC) was constituted by the previous Awami League-led government in January 1997 to recommend policies, programmes and activities for improving the level of efficiency, effectiveness, accountability and transparency in public organizations of Bangladesh. The then government displayed great pragmatism by setting up the Commission on the eve of the 21st century, when there was a global movement towards adoption of the concept of New Public Management (NPM), i.e. performance-based and result-oriented administration with 'outsourcing' and 'contracting out' wherever possible by upholding the right of citizens' for better and cheaper services.

The Commission submitted a comprehensive 3-volume report to Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina in June 2000, covering many areas such as improvement of public services delivery, civil service reforms, reorganizing institutions and rationalising manpower, restructuring field administration and decentralization, combating corruption, reducing wastage and promoting value for money, strengthening parliamentary oversight, facilitating private investment and devising a mechanism for implementing PARC recommendations. It was a world-class report which synthesised many previous reports on public sector reorganization and reforms since independence and incorporated the latest trends in public management all over the world. The then government was committed to implementing these recommendations, but unfortunately that could not materialise as the subsequent government which came to power in 2001 shelved those on political considerations. Thus ended a brave and bold attempt to overhaul and reform the country's age-old public administrative system.

No less than seventeen reform committees and commissions have been formed in Bangladesh since independence, but in reality marginal progress have been achieved in the implementation of civil service reforms. Some of these reforms have been minor adjustments intended to maintain system equilibrium. Among others, two basic reasons have been identified as barriers to civil service reform. These are lack of political commitment and bureaucratic resistance to reform. It is believed that political regimes are beneficiaries of the existing administrative system that allows them to use the civil service apparatus to nourish their patron-client chains across the political ranks and files. Besides, programs having immediate and concrete outcomes are favoured by the politicians in power over radical administrative reforms (Khan & Haque, 2013).

Bureaucratic resistance to reforms has also been a major impediment. The elite civil servants have grown as a powerful and institutionalised interest group in society ever since the colonial era. Any reform that attempts to decrease its power, prestige and status is opposed in an organized and systematic manner (Khan & Haque, 2013). The abolition of the Senior Service Pool is a good example in this regard. Similarly, many other obvious reform-needs are bypassed in order to retain the administrative privileges of relevant civil servants. Risk avoidance has been another major hindrance to reform, as both politicians and bureaucrats are afraid of making mistakes while attempting any reform that might negatively impact on their careers and prospects.

Dr. Helal Uddin Ahmed is a retired Additional Secretary in charge of reform, research and law wing at the Ministry of Public Administration; he is currently a freelance writer cum translator. Email: hahmed1960@gmail.com



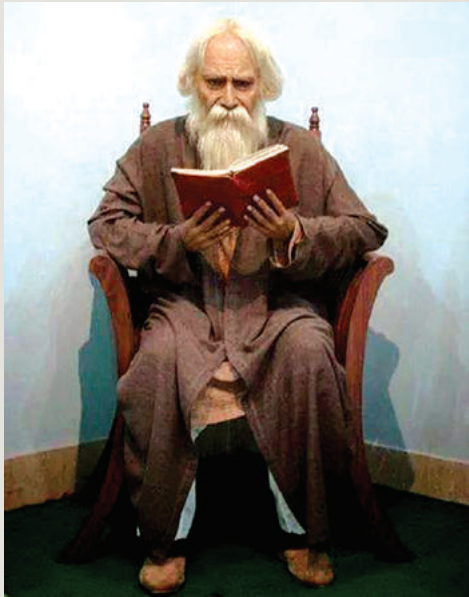
Rabindranath Tagore

A Poet of World Vision

M. Mizanur Rahman

Among the Bengali poets, writers, and lyricists, Nobel laureate Rabindranath Tagore will remain ever unforgettable. We remember him from his own poem as if he had his future expectation from us that we would be enjoying fragrance of flowers from his garden even after a hundred years. Of course he was right to say-

“Who are you, reader, reading my poems a hundred years hence? I can not send you one single flower from the wealth of the spring, one single streak of gold from yonder clouds. Open your doors and look abroad. From your blossoming garden gather fragrant memories of the vanished flowers of a hundred years before. In the joy of your heart may you feel the living joy that sang one spring morning, sending its glad voice across a hundred years?” (Gardener-R. T.1913).



Nobel Laureate Rabindranath Tagore

Rabindranath Tagore was born in 1861 in a rich aristocratic Tagore family at Jorasanko in Calcutta. His father Debendranath Tagore was a devout Hindu reformist to have become monotheist in Brahmmo Samaj (Community). Rabindranath followed his father to the end of his life. His family environment was culturally and intellectually favorable to his mindset. He became poet from the very childhood as it appears from his family records. He was sent to English-medium school from the beginning but he could not make up his mind. It was felt by his family that if he studied in London he would do well in life. For prosecuting studies he visited Europe in 1878 for the first time. But he could not do well there. So he came back home. However his art of writing poetry was excellent. Only at the age of twenty he became the author of an anthology of

poem, '*Bonoful*.' Traditionally he grew up in a cultural and artistic mode of intellectual life. Within a very short period he became a good poet, and a writer of short stories, novels and plays that earned him quick popularity among his readers. During this period he traveled rural Bengal to manage his paternal Zamindary estates at Selaidaha of Kushtia, Sahjadpur of Pabna, and Patisor of Rajshahi of eastern Bengal occasionally. All these are riparian countries having scenic beauties of emotive topography compatible to poet's heart that favored Tagore to a great extent.

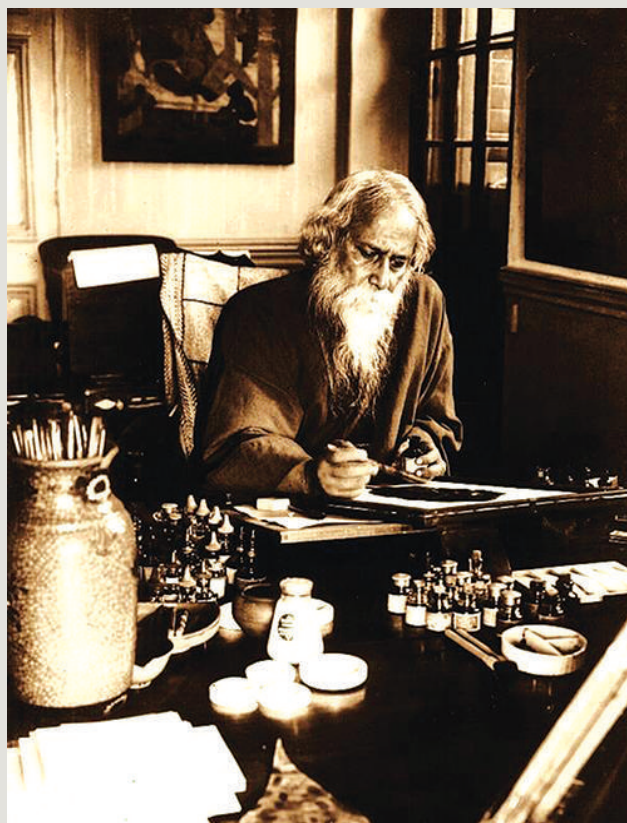
Rabindranath got married a girl Bhabotarini (later Mrinalini) on December, 1883 at Dakhsindihi of the then Jessore (now Khulna) from the descendant of the Tagore family called Pirally-Brahmin. Meanwhile Rabindranath became famous for his powerful writings. He excelled in almost all literary works in Bengali viz poetry, essay, short story, music, song, plays, art of painting and in the performance of stage-acting of his own drama. In his own house a paper titled '*Bharati*' edited by Dijendranath Tagore had been published since 1877 in which Rabindranath published a lot of his literary works frequently. He joined in Swadeshi Movement in 1900 against the British rule in India but he could not continue because of its violence and anarchism. He was always in favor of non-violence and peaceful process of the movement. So he became closed to Mr. Gandhi in his political opinion while Gandhi called him the greatest sentinel of India though Tagore himself remained aloof from politics. He passed a very troublesome period between 1905 and 1911 in the movement leading to oppose the dismemberment of the then Bengal. In 1902 his wife Mrinalini died. And only after eight months he lost his most affectionate daughter Rani. But these sad deaths of his nearest ones did not move him anyway. However during this period he composed his most famous songs '*Amar Sonar Bangla Ami Tomai Bhalobasi*(1905)' and '*Jono Gono Mono Adhinaoko Joyo Hey Bharoto Bhagy*

Bidhata(1911)' He joined the coronation of the British Raj, the King George V at Delhi Darbar in 1911 with his later song to present it to the King. The first song is now the national anthem of Bangladesh and the second one is the national anthem of India. He rendered Gitanjali into English 'Offerings' in 1910. He sailed for London along with his elder son Rathindranath and the daughter-in-law Pratima Devi. In London he got a rented house with the help of his bosom friend Sir William Rothenstein, then a famous English painter. This Rothenstein endeavored to a great extent to have the publication of the 'Offerings.' It was first published by the Indian Society in London with an introduction by W.B. Yeats in 1912. Later on in 1913 it were published by the Macmillan Press that earned Nobel prize for Tagore in 1913 immediately after its publication. Since it were reprinted and rendered in several foreign world languages in huge editions. Earlier Rothenstein introduced Rabindranath to almost all famous personalities of England namely Earnest Rees, John Galsworthy, Robert Bridges, Alice Menel, Henry Nevinson, Ezra Pound, May Sinclair, Charles Trevellian, C.F. Andrews, W.B. Yeats, Sir Oliver Lodge (scientist), H.G. Wells, Bartarned Russel, W.H. Hudson, Barnard Shaw, Meshfield, Stafford Brook, Andrew Messil Bradley, Thomas Starge Moore, Evelin Underhill etc.

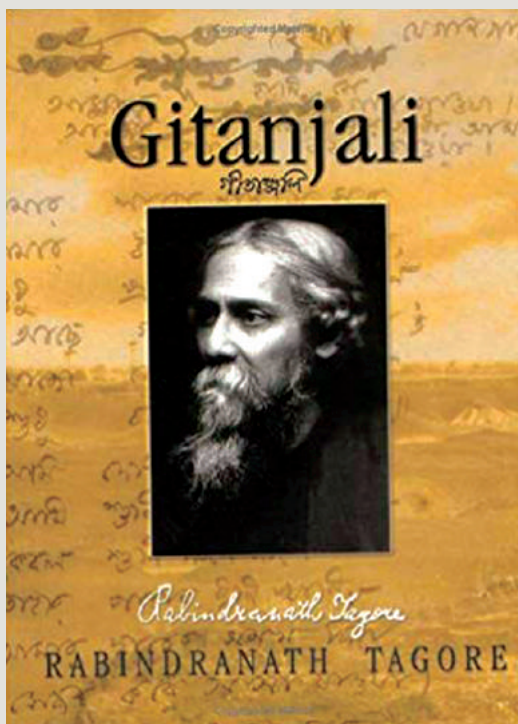
Rabindranath's lyrics are blended mystically that attracted Europe within no time after his literary works were translated into different foreign languages world wide. Since its acclamation knew no bounds. It bore tremendous but endless significance

that Rabindranath had his fascination for Europe from his early boyhood. Might it be cropped up in his English medium school at home. He could have perceived at that time that the positive but co-ordinate relation between the East and the West would set free all intellectual impediments from each mindset. Culturally his emotive thoughts sprayed ideas of love bestowed by nature's divinity instead of conflicts by erroneous feelings of hatred between human beings. His mysticism was adored by the conflict ridden western world.

"When thou commandest me to sing it seems that my heart would break with pride; and I look to thy face, and tears come to my eyes.



Rabindranath Tagore at his painting desk



Gitanjali

All that is harsh and dissonant in my life melts into one sweet harmony- and my adoration spreads wings like a glad bird on its flight across the sea.

I know thou takest pleasure in my singing. I know that only as a singer I come before thy presence.

I touch by the far-spreading wing of my song thy feet which I could never aspire to reach.

Drunk with the joy of singing I forget my self and call thee friend who art my lord.”(*Gitanjali*, p2).

His soft and compassionate heart beacons a harmonious prayer soothing the soul absolutely- by an humble approach to Him with the humanistic appeal with somberness- “Here is thy footstool and there rest thy feet where live the poorest, and the lowliest, and the lost.

When I try to bow to thee, my obeisance can not reach down to the depth where thy feet rest among the poorest, the lowliest, and the lost.

Pride can never approach to where thou walkest in the clothes of the humble among the poorest, and the lowliest, and the lost.

My heart can never find its way to where thou keepest company with the poorest, and the lowliest, and the lost.(*ibid*,p.6).”

Rabindranath felt well that the so called unkind wealthy, rich people who exploits the poor to make them the poorest, the lowliest and the lost must be deprived of divine soul because the source of divinity is far above the reach of those who deny humanity due to their earthly lust for power and money and to whom peace of mind is out of reach. And this mysticism manifests the missionary zeal in conflicting western mind to accept and appreciate Tagore.

Tagore was awarded Nobel prize for literature on his lyrics, *Gitanjali* : Song Offerings in 1913 by the Nobel committee. *Gitanjali* is a collection of song offerings to the creator. Tagore uses the images common to classical Indian love poetry to symbolize his yearning to merge with God. So the mud-stained traveler, the parched earth in summer, the bride waiting in the empty house for the return of her lord, the first monsoon shower, the flowers and rivers and conch shells are images which gain a mystical depth in these poems.

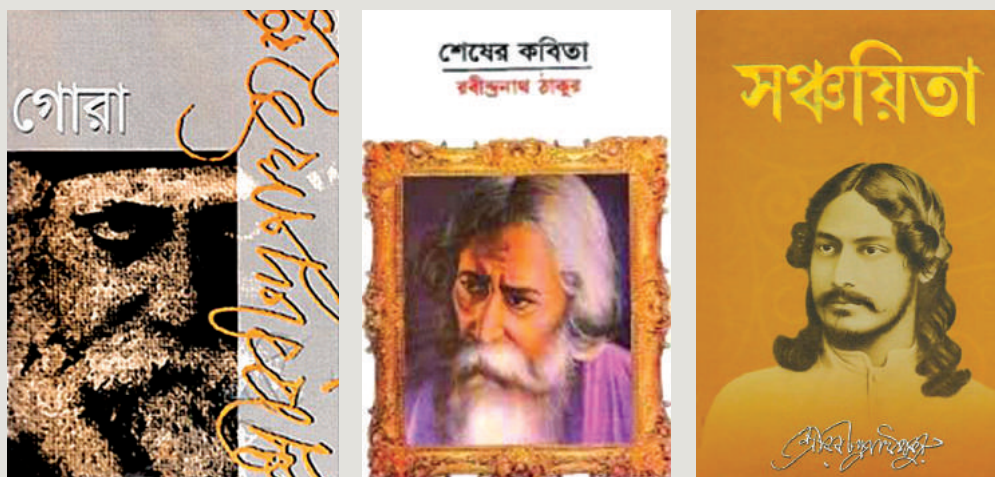
The Nobel Prize was not coveted to Tagore. He did not go himself to receive the Nobel prize from Sweden. The royal representative came to Calcutta to present him the prize. He received it cordially. But he refused vehemently a grand reception given to him by the Bengali elites of Calcutta in recognition of this

fabulous prize. He could not tolerate the hypocrisy of his countrymen who did not appreciate his works earlier. They wanted to give him ovation after the foreigners did it.

Tagore was honored with Knighthood by the British King George V in 1915 in recognition of his great literary works.. But it was renounced by the poet in protest against the massacre of a great number of Indian demonstrators at Jaliwanabag of Amritsar in Punjab in 1919.

Rabindranath though translated many of his Bengali literary works in English but the flavor of its sweet Bengali sound and symphony were marred in the raucous rigidity of English language. Due to its mildness of sweet melodious tones, Bengali language is most adorable everywhere. A noted Germany researcher, Dr. Martin Campchen learnt Bengali at Rabindranath's Visva Bharati Institution of Santiniketon, said, "If we examine the kind of poems Tagore selected for translation, we realize that they were predominantly his "spiritual" or "mystical" poems. He must have presumed that they especially appeal to Western readers, and he was not mistaken. But in the bargain, Tagore sacrificed a large spectrum of his themes, styles and moods which he did not present to the non-Bengali public. Tagore's selection of poems helped to reinforce the image of Tagore as a mystic. In memoirs of his father, Rathindranath wrote, "from each country of Europe invitation was pouring in the desk for my father's visit." During his European tours Rabindranath came in contact with a good many European artists, litterateurs, playwrights, thinkers and philosophers. The subjects of his lecture in Holland were 'The Meeting of the East and The West', 'The Village mystics of Bengal', 'The Poet's Religion'. He came in Holland on 9 September, 1920 along with his son and daughter-in-law. He delivered lectures in the cities of Rotardam, Amasterdam, Heigh, Liden, Jutrecot etc. According to Rathindranath, "...the translator of my father's book in Dutch language, Dr. Frederick Van Eden was an ideal man. He lost faith in human beings in observing inhuman barbarism at war."

From Holland Rabindranath accompanying Willie Pearson went to Brussels and delivered lecture on 'The meeting of the East and the West' at Palais De Justice. From Brussels he came back to London on 13 October and went to America by



Book of Tagore: Gora, Shesher Kobita and Sanchayita

plane on 29 October. in Newyork, Brooklin, Philadelphia, Brenmar, Swarthmore and Houseton. He delivered the same lectures as he delivered in Holland. He met Hellen Keller and Leonard K. Elmhirst in Newyork on 4 January 1921 and came back to England. Hereafter he went to Geneva on 30 April and here he enjoyed his birth-day ceremonially on 25 Baisakh. From here he traveled Darmstat, Lusan, Bassle, Jurich, Humburg and Kopenhegen. He delivered the same lecture in Berlin too.

According to Kampchen "...Before entering Germany, Tagore expressed that he empathized with the German people in their hour of crisis and that he had come to strengthen her. So there was a clear symbiotic relationship even before Tagore began his month-long trip from city to city. Tagore mesmerized and fascinated his German audiences. Wherever he spoke, the halls were packed. Indeed, the newspapers reported scuffles and regular fights by people who were refused entry. The German press rose to the occasion by reporting Tagore's every movement.

Tagore's poetry had a direct appeal to Germans of that generation because his poetry (or whatever he chose to give to the West) was exotic, had a romantic flair, was imbued with spiritual idealism –and yet in all its strangeness it was still easily accessible."

Towards concluding his article Dr.Martin Campchen acknowledged the great literature of Tagore and in appreciation he came to the conclusion as saying:

I wish to identify three areas in which Tagore's ideas and ideals have strong relevance for us today:

(a) Ecology

Rabindranath Tagore's love of nature was inspired by the awareness that all living beings, including animals, trees and plants, are endowed with a soul. On this level of consciousness, human beings are equal with "low" creatures and plants. We are all co-creatures of God's creation. Accordingly, Tagore's praise and worship of nature is born of a deep spirit of togetherness and feeling of a creational bond between humans and nature. Such a sense of unity is missing in modern Western ecology. It tends to emphasize the usefulness of nature and necessity of a natural environment for the practical survival of mankind. Thus, with his poetry and his essays, Tagore can inspire a deeper understanding of and togetherness with the natural environment.

(b) Education

Rabindranath Tagore's ideas of education continue to be relevant. He wanted to unfold the entire personality through music, songs, dance, theatre, art, contemplation of nature, meditation and social service. The Indian subcontinent has strayed from these ideals, and from Western countries, too, the demons of "usefulness" and "efficiency" have to be tamed by the intentness, playful activity of Tagorean education.

(c)International understanding

Rabindranath Tagore's deep yearning for harmony among men, achieved through mutual tolerance and simplicity of life, is as worthy of imitation now as it was then. It is not enough to nourish dreams and circulate hopes. Tagore has demonstrated to us how much one inspired human being is capable of achieving among men. Tagore descended from his dreams into reality and gradually worked

out an understanding between human beings in his school, his university and his interaction with the wide world.”

Tagore created that Visva Bharati or International university at Santiniketon, Bolpur. He founded this institution in 1901 to stem the wrong system of education and to set up the right type of educational system as he perceived proper. It however started from school level at the beginning. Most of the great educationists and researchers from home and abroad used to come here in search of learning on various discipline.

In addition to reforms in education, Rabindranath had his outstanding contribution in respect of rural development and co-operative movement. In the foreword of the book, ‘Poet and Plowman’ authored



Rabindranath Tagore and Leonard Elmhirst

by Leonard K Elmhirst, the writer Krishna Kripalini mentioned, “Rabindranath Tagore was fortunate in his many foreign friends, English, European and American. Some of them came to be closely associate with his new famous experimental centers of education and rural reconstruction at Sriniketon. The memory of Charles Andrews, Willie Pearson and Sylvain Levy each with his unique contribution, are now part of the history of Sriniketon and Visva-Bharati. In the same way and indeed more basically and vividly, the contribution of Leonard Elmhirst is an integral part of the history of Sriniketon. One can hardly think of Sriniketon without recalling the debt it owes to Elmhirst’s dynamic zeal’ devotion and initiative. He did the spade work (literally too) and helped Rabindranath lay the foundation of a complex of activities, seemingly rustic and lowly but in the long run vital for national regeneration.”

Rabindranath being Zamindar himself could understand wherein poverty and unhappiness of the downtrodden rural people lies. So he elaborated in his version like a poet and a man of means as saying, “...Villages are like women in their keeping is the cradle of the race, according to us, the poverty is not the most important, the problem of unhappiness is the great problem. Wealth, which is the synonym for the production and collection of things, men can make use ruthlessly. They can crush life out of earth and flourish. But happiness, which may not compete wealth in its list of materials, is final; it is creative. Therefore it has its

source of riches within itself. Our object is to try to flood the choked bed of village life with the stream of happiness.”

In this context Rabinranath could think positively wherein lies the actual poverty and how to solve that in pragmatic way. So he said, “Most of us who try to deal with the poverty problem think of nothing but a greater intensive effort of production, forgetting that this only means a greater exhaustion of materials, as well as of humanity. This only means giving exaggerated opportunity for profit to a few at the cost of many. It is food which nourishes, not money; it is fullness of life which makes one happy, not fullness of purse. Multiplying materials intensifies the inequality between those who have and those who have not, and this deals a fatal wound to the social system, through which the whole body is eventually bled to death.”

Rabindranath Tagore had extended his reforms of education and reforms in the field of agriculture and co-operative movement beside his cultural activities at Selaidaha, Shahjadpur and Patisor through his indomitable spirit of life. The success story of it depends on the continuation of its activities provided it is based on the strong foundation and the background of one’s own private enterprise. Though the poet could not proceed on duly to fulfill his scheme but his philosophy beacons rays for the present genre. He paved the ways for us, we are to follow him for our enlightened prospects.

Rabindranath Tagore, as I have mentioned above, started traveling abroad at the age of seventeen years from 20 September 1878 accompanying his second brother Satyandranath Tagore, I.C.S., brother’s wife Ganoda Nandini Devi and playmates Surendranath and Indira. At first he was admitted to a school at Brighton in England and later shifted to University College in London. During this period he used to visit British Museum to study and attain knowledge on various subjects. Meanwhile he learnt English language and literature under the supervision of his dearest teacher Prof. Henry Morley. Beside he attended a School of English song where he learnt the techniques, art, rhymes and rhythms of English Songs. Those were of English, Irish and Scotch tunes. That he later applied in his composition of Bengali songs called Rabindra Sangeet.

Tagore’s Bengali literary works are versatile and boundless in different themes and ideals. Rabindranath was the first poet in Bengal who introduced English music and tones in his Bengali version of songs. So far he composed more than two thousand Bengali songs and gave their tunes of his own original creation. Those songs are heart-soothing and each one of them is having its exceptional form of inimitable rhythmic melody. The very depth of its impact at the recess of one’s heart is perennial. He is still a unique and unchallenging poet- litterateur, artist –painter, educationist, and a reformer of Indian rural co-operative movement ever born in Bengal. He passed his last few years of life in the art of making sketches and painting different images of nature beside other literary works. He breathed his last to eternity on 6 August 1941 as on 22 Srabon of the Bengali year. We Bengali people, in all walks of our life, love him as our heart’s poet. Let his departed soul rest in peace in eternity.

The entire Bengali people are proud of their great poet Rabindranath Tagore.*

The author of this article is a poet, translator, researcher and columnist



The World Population Day

Dr. Shilpi Bhadra

The World Population Day is celebrated on 11th July every year by the United Nations' initiative. Population is said to be wealth but not excess population, which is rather burdensome. Malnutrition, inadequate education opportunities, unemployment, inadequacy of medical services, etc. are considered the root of the problem of excess population. Therefore, since the year 1989, The World Population Day is being celebrated with the aim of creating awareness among the people. The theme of the World Population day of this year is 'Family Planning is a part of human rights'.

On 11th July, the Health and Family Welfare Ministry took a detailed programme to raise awareness among the people. Rally and discussion meetings were held on this occasion. The main event of this day was held in Osmani Memorial Auditorium in the capital. Speaker Dr. Shirin Sharmin Chowdhury attended the programme as the chief guest. Apart from this, Bangladesh Television, Bangladesh Radio and Private Television channels broadcast special events and various national daily newspapers publish special supplement.

On the occasion of the World Population Day-2018, President Md. Abdul Hamid and Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina gave separate messages and wished the success of the day's programme. President in his message said, "Well planned Family has been recognized as a fundamental right worldwide today. He also added, In order to establish this right, the family planning service must be reached at the doorstep of the people, which will play an important role in providing health services to the people and reducing the rate of mother and infant mortality in the country. In the message, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina said, "Well planned family is one of the prerequisites for the development of a country. There is no alternative to well planned family development in the context of the size, location, population, natural resources, environment and the socio-economy of Bangladesh.

'Family Planning is a part of human rights' – with this perspective, World Population Day is being celebrated around the world on July 11th. The overall development and economic condition of a country mostly depend on the population and its performance and the ability to utilize that power as well.

Bangladesh is one of the most densely populated countries. The population density in this country is 1,126 people per square kilometre. Though the population is considered to be the main obstacle in the path of development, but this population have huge potentials.

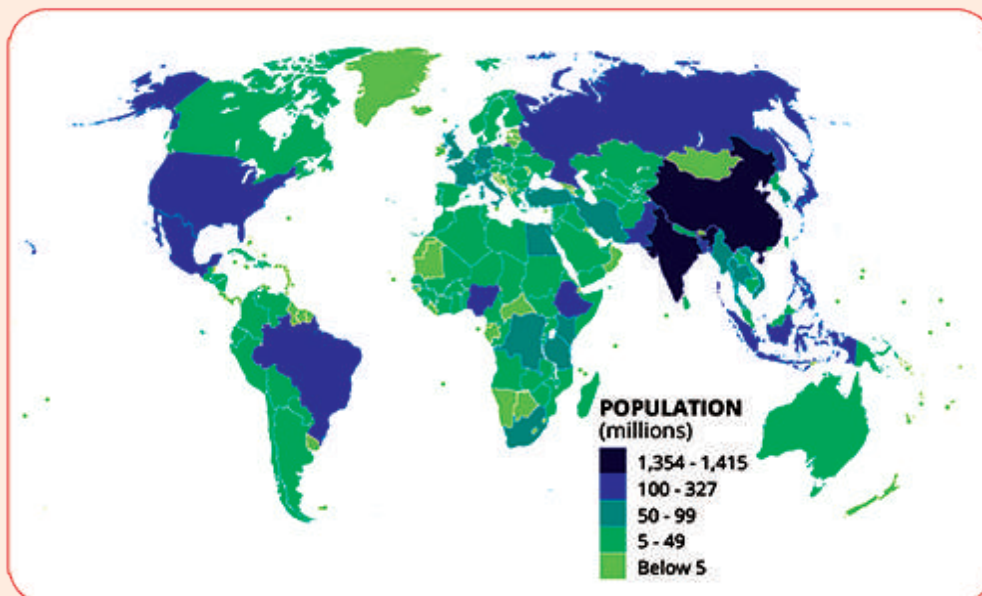
According to the Family Planning Department, in 1951, the population of Bangladesh (the then East Pakistan) was 20.3 million. Presently the population of the country is about 170 million. In 2050 it will reach 220 million. Bangladesh's population growth rate was upward from 1950 to 1991. However, since 2001, the population growth rate has decreased, but it did not fall at the expected rate.

According to the World Health Organization, in the world, 250 children are born every minute and 9 children are born in Bangladesh. A survey of the organization found that 97 out of 100 children are born in the Third World and developing countries. These are the countries where the population is basically large. Therefore, population growth in developing countries like Bangladesh has become a social problem. At present, Bangladesh is the seventh populous country in the world. It will reach to the sixth position by 2050.

According to UNDP data, the world population will reach 8 billion in 2025, 9 billion in 2043 and 10 billion in 2083. According to the UN, in the poorest areas, the population will increase abnormally. The population of LDCs will be doubled than the present. According to the World Population Reports, in the beginning of the next century, there will be 16.60 billion people in the world. In the last one century (1900-2000), the world population increased from 11.6 billion to 6.1 billion.

Experts say that the standard of living cannot be maintained due to the over population. Many times, the food crisis arises. Apart from this, the state has to struggle to ensure the basic rights for the citizens. The Population growth rate of Bangladesh is currently moderate. Every year 2 to 2.5 million new faces are added to its population.

In the year 2018, the theme is 'Family Planning is a Human Right'. Despite various limitations, Bangladesh has achieved remarkable progress in the health sector. For example, the average fertility rate of a woman in Bangladesh has reduced from

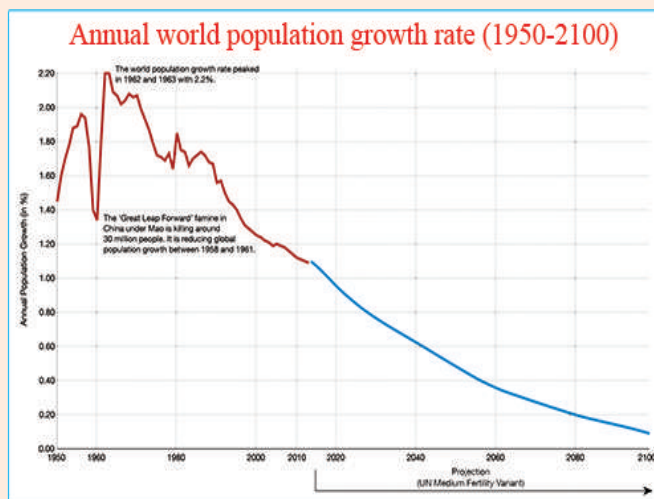


World Population 2018

6.30 to 2.10. As per available data, the birth rate of the country is now 18.80/1000 and the death rate is 5.40/1000. The average life expectancy was 47 years in 1971, which is now 72.05 years in 2017. The population growth rate has dropped from 3 percent to 1.1 percent. The literacy rate of Bangladesh has doubled than the past, which is now 72.76 percent.

The theme of World Population Day is to give the next generation a reminder of the relationship of Family Planning with human rights and development. Besides, currently 62 percent of couples are using modern family planning methods in Bangladesh, but still then 59 percent of the girls are getting married before 18 years. Again, 31 percent of them are pregnant for the first or the second time. Considering these aspects, the government has taken various programmes to reduce early marriage and reduce the pregnancy in adolescent age. A call center, which can be reached by the number 16767, 24 hours a day and 7 days a week, provides information on family planning, mother and child health, has added a new dimension.

Referring to the Prime Minister's success in this sector, the State Minister said that Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina has already achieved the MDG award for reducing mother and child mortality. The rate of malnutrition has dropped to 20 percent and the rate of education is on the increase, which is above 60 percent. Maternal mortality rate decreases to 50 percent compared to the previous year. The rate of child mortality decreased significantly.



Currently 40 percent of the delivery is done in the public and private hospitals. The remaining 60 percent delivery cases are done at homes by the midwives particularly in remote rural areas. Again, 85 percent delivery is being done through caesarian operation at private clinics. However, according to the policy of the World Health Organization, caesarian operation should not be exceeded 15 to 20 percent of the total delivery cases in a country. The Bangladesh government is determined to solve this issue and success is gradually coming in this case. International organisations including the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) supports to solve the problem and UNFPA's Country Representative Asa Torkelsson said, 'we are working to protect every mother and child during the birth-time.

If the population of a country is transformed into skilled manpower, human civilization will become more prosperous than the past. Over and unplanned populations are treated as the main problem for many countries while some of the western and developed countries are suffering from lack of manpower.

A large number of our population is working abroad. About 10 million people are



Maternal & Child Welfare Centre (MCWC)

working in the Middle East and European countries. Still there is a huge demand for the skilled manpower in those countries. The remittance sent by the Bangladeshi workers helps to increase the foreign currency reserve of the country which is now more than US\$ 32 billion.

Currently software development is the most evolving industry. The country's 800 to 900 companies manufacture and export software on their own initiative. In this sector, export targets have been increased to 5 billion dollars in the next five years. Software export

will accelerate the country's development by creating job opportunities. Bangladesh is the second largest country in exporting the ready-made garments in the world. A large number of women workers are engaged in this sector who are contributing to the economy and development of the country.

According to many, it is necessary to reduce the population of the world gradually. In other opinion, population is never a problem rather it is wealth. According to them, with the increase modern technology there is no food problems for all human beings living in the earth. It is necessary to give everyone the access and right to the production tools. The current economic system in our world is such that most of the time the over produced grains and food items are destroyed due to lack of conservation whereas many people die due to want of food. It is possible to reduce the sufferings, poverty and misery of the world by properly utilizing the population.

Many people think the present population of Bangladesh is a burden. Educated and skilled population of a country is never a burden. But it is said that the population of the country should be retained in tolerable level. Recently, the operational population of the developed countries are gradually decreasing and contrary the number of dependent people are increasing. Some countries have been identified as the country of older people. The people in the age group of 15 to 59 years of age is called dividend, who are the most operational and can contribute to national economy. The government of our country has taken various projects with special emphasis on the creation of human resources to utilize the people of this age group. The formation of an efficient and public based society is the main objective of the present government as it is necessary to develop the growing population in the context of competitive world. If this population is converted into manpower, then our country's population will be the biggest asset. However, it requires quality education and vocational training to make them skillful. They can take the country forward with their innovative ideas and skill. Every private and government sector should come forward to make the country's population an asset for the sake of overall development of the country.

Dr. Shilpi Bhadra is fellowship researcher and writer



Shab-e-Meraj

Dr. Md. Matiur Rahman Khan

Masjid-al-Haram to Al- Masjid-al-Aqsa...” (surah 17, ayat 1). So, there is no doubt about the truth of the journey of Meraj by the Prophet (SM).

Background of Shab-e-Meraj

In the 12th year of Muhammad’s (SM) prophethood, on the 27th Rajab, Monday past night, revelation from Allah came to Jibrail (AS) Gabriel , wherein Allah Rabbul Alamin intended that Hazrat Muhammad (SM) would visit the firmament, and Allah would show him on that night the most wonderful creations. With that end in view, Allah asked Gabriel (AS) to go to the Prophet (SM) accompanied by 50 thousand angels and a wonderful Buraq of the speed of electricity, from heaven. Accordingly Gabriel (AS) came to Makkah and the whole of Makkah became resonant with the praise of the angels. It is learnt that Hazrat Muhammad (SM) at that time was at the Kaba. On going there, Gabriel (AS) informed the

The Muslim Ummah celebrates Shab-e-Meraj on the glorious and dignified night between the 27th and the 28th of Rajab the seventh month in the Islamic calendar. It is celebrated on that night because the Prophet (SM) took the journey of Meraj on the night of the same date. And the journey that the Prophet (SM) took with the help of Gabriel (AS) on the 27th day past night of Rajab in the 12th year of his prophethood, on a Buraq and other celestial transports from the Baitullah (Kaba, Makkah) to Baitul Muqaddas (Masjid-al-Aqsa, Jerusalem) and from there to the throne of Allah in the firmament to exchange salam and best wishes, is known as Meraj. This Meraj is a unique precedent for the Muslims to put faith in Allah. Moreover, this occasion has given the Muslims new ideas and knowledge about the present life and the life hereafter. The truth of the Meraj is found in the holy Qur’an which refers to: “Glorified is He (Allah) Who took his slave (Muhammad (SM) for a journey by night from Al



Masjid-al-Aqsa, Jerusalem

Prophet (SM) of the message of Allah. On the receipt of the message, the Prophet (SM) as recognition of gratitude to Allah, offered two rakat (part of the prayer which includes standing, bending and two prostrations) of salat Then Gabriel (AS) opened the chest of the Prophet(SM), brought out the heart and washed it thrice with zamzam water, then filled it with power, knowledge and wisdom and replaced it in the chest of the Prophet (SM). In that process the Prophet (SM) was made fit for the night journey of Meraj.

Observation of some bizarre and terrible things during journey of Meraj

Thus, the Prophet(SM) filled with power, knowledge and wisdom, came out of the Kaba with Gabriel (AS) and rode at his request on the celestial Buraq made of light. Then the Buraq started moving very swiftly. While seated on the Buraq, tears came out of his eyes thinking that he was going so comfortably, but how would cross his followers and devotees on foot on the day of judgment! Then and there, Gabriel (AS) on behalf of Allah informed him that his virtuous followers would approach Allah riding on such a Buraq. So, anxiety for those people was needless.

Then the Prophet (SM) from the Buraq noticed a big field where men and women were working. The working men and women on one hand prepared the field, broadcast seeds; and on the other hand, the seeds then and there grew up and yielded crops, and the crops were automatically reaped and heaped up. The Prophet (SM) with wonder asked Gabriel (AS) the reason. In reply the Gabriel (AS) explained that those were the good and virtuous souls, and those souls on earth would spend money in the way of Allah and their expenses were shown in the form of seeds in the land of hereafter.

After a while, when the Buraq proceeded ahead, then the Prophet (SM) viewed a stony field where men and women were lying on their back and their heads were hurt with big stones. As a result of hurt, their heads were broken and next moment their heads were healed and cured again as good as before. The Prophet (SM) wanted to know the reason; the Gabriel (AS) informed the Prophet (SM) that those people did not offer their prayers rather spent their time idly on bed.

Again, the Buraq went a little ahead, and then the Prophet (SM) viewed that a thorny tree was spreading like a bush. He also saw that when some people tried to pass through the thorny bush, the branches of the bush-like tree surrounded the people and pricked the thorns into the heads of the people. On enquiry, the Prophet (SM) came to know from Gabriel (AS) that those people were punished because they committed dacoity and robbed of the travelers.

Again, after a while, the Prophet (SM) saw innumerable naked men and women with very little clothes on their private parts. They were so hungry that they ate creepers, thorny grass and whatever they got before them, yet they could not assuage their hunger, and suffered a lot from hunger. On enquiry, the Prophet (SM) from Gabriel (AS) came to know that those people were very miserly and niggardly on earth.

Thereafter, the Buraq proceeded ahead, and the Prophet (SM) observed a group of people with camel-like appearance. Angels were punishing them by pushing big



The holy Ka'bah

burning charcoals into the mouth of the people and those burning charcoals were coming out through their anus and they were suffering from severe torment and were crying bitterly. The Prophet (SM) wanted to know why those people were punished in that cruel way. Gabriel (AS) informed the Prophet(SM) that those people on earth embezzled the assets of the orphans.

Elsewhere, the Prophet (SM) saw that the necks of a group of people were split and their tongues were pulled up through the necks from the opposite direction. The Prophet(SM) came to know that they were punished in that way because those people bore false witness on earth.

Again the Buraq took the Prophet (SM) ahead, and the Prophet(SM) found that a group of people were burnt into ashes, and again revived into life, and punished them again and again by burning into ashes. On enquiry, the Prophet (SM) came to know from Gabriel (AS) that those people were disobedient to their parents and tortured them in various ways. After seeing many other terrible incidents on the way, the Prophet (SM) came to the Masjid Al-Aqsa in Jerusalem.

In the mosque, the Prophet (SM) met many great religious personalities. He found Hazrat Adam (AS), Hazrat Ibrahim Khalilullah (AS) and Hazrat Isa (AS). He met them all and exchanged salam with them. Then Gabriel (AS) called to prayer, and then the doors of the high sky opened. Innumerable angels came down into the mosque to offer prayers. There Hazrat Muhammad (SM) was preferred to lead the congregational prayer as imam in the mosque where 1 lakh 24 thousand Prophets and innumerable angels from the 7th sky participated in the prayer behind the Prophet (SM).

Visit to different skies and observation of many miracles

After the prayer was over, the Prophet (SM) came out of the mosque, found a special vehicle of light, and got in that and within a moment he reached the first sky. To his utter astonishment, he found a deep sea suspended to the sky. The name of the deep sea is “Kajja” and the colour of the water of the sea is blue. Then he saw a white special cock “TawsalMalika” whose one wing extends to the east and the other wing to the west. Towards the end of the night, this angel in the form of a bird raises sound and then all the cocks on earth wake up.

Then he went to the second sky and met Hazrat Isa ibne Maryam (Jesus) (AS) and Hazrat Yahya (AS). He found an angel with 70 heads and each head had 70 mouths and each mouth had 70 tongues. The name of the angel is Kashem.

Then he visited the third sky where he watched a number of angels. He also found Hazrat Yusuf (AS) and Hazrat Idris (AS) and then exchanged salam with them.

Then he went to the fourth sky where he saw and met Azrael (AS) and observed the moon and the sun in the fourth sky.

After that he entered the fifth sky and found a sea of fire. Its name is “Baharus sa ak”. Sea cyclone hits from here.

Thereafter, he went to the sixth sky and met Mosa (AS) and exchanged salam with him.

Then he went to the seventh sky where he met Hazrat Ibrahim Khalilullah (AS) and exchanged salam there. Then he offered two rakat salat with the angels in Baitul Mamur, the Kaba of the angels in the seventh sky. In this perspective, Allah conferred three special titles on Hazrat Muhammad (SM):

a.Saidul Mursalin (leader of all prophets)b.Immamul Mutaquins (Imam of all Mutaquins) c.Rahmatullil Alamin(compassion for all world, hereafter, the sky and the land).

Visit to Sidrat al-Muntaha

Then he left the seventh sky for “Sidrat al Muntaha” situated above the seventh sky. For his journey to “Sidrat al-Muntaha” a luminous vehicle was ready for the Prophet (SM). That vehicle was made of light, the Prophet (SM) got in that vehicle which covered a distance of 500 years within a short time. (According to Islamic Shariat, the distance of the way in a day is 16 miles. Therefore, according to this calculation the distance of 500 years is $16 \times 360 \times 500$ years = 28 lakh and 80 thousand miles (approximately). He found a lot of wonderful creations of Allah. He saw fruits of pure gold and the “Sidra” a wonderful creation of Allah, “Sidra” looks like a plum tree. Here, the Prophet (SM) saw the real figure of Gabriel (AS) whose length extended from the land to the sky. There are 500 wings on each arm and each wing contains the writing “Allah-huakbar, He is with a very beautiful face and his face contains the writing “Kalama-taiab”He could come up to Sidrat al-Muntaha and could not go beyond it. However, when the light of Allah fell upon the “Sidra tree” then all the angels, the land and the sky including the “Sidra tree” began trembling in fear. At that time the luminous vehicle Jamrud by name was provided to the Prophet (SM) by an angel. Then he went to the first destination where he found an angel in the shape of a cock. Then he saw Hazrat Azrael (AS) in the second destination and in the third destination he met an angel named “Ruho” whose head contained one lakh faces and each face contained one lakh mouths, and each mouth contained one lakh tongues and each tongue had 80 thousand languages. The Prophet (SM) met Mikael (AS). Then the Prophet (SM) sat on another vehicle made of light which took him through 70 thousand screens of light, and each screen was the distance of 500 years. He also found the angel Israfael (AS) standing with a trumpet in his mouth.

Again, the Prophet (SM) was provided with a new vehicle of light, “Raf raf” by which he reached Allah and had conversation with Him. During the conversation, Allah fixed prayers for 50 times for the Muslims. While the Prophet (SM) was returning with that order of Allah, he came across Mosa (AS) and told him about the fixation of prayers for 50 times. On hearing the Prophet (SM), Mosa (AS) requested the Prophet (SM) to go back to Allah with a prayer for the Muslims to reduce the number of times for prayer. Accordingly the Prophet (SM) went to Allah, prayed to Allah to reduce the number of time for prayers. On hearing, Allah reduced 5 times. Again, he met Mosa (AS), and on request of Mosa (AS), the Prophet (SM) went 9 times to Allah and every time Allah reduced 5 times of salat. Thus, 45 times salat (prayer) was condoned and finally 5 times of salat was fixed for the Muslims. When the Prophet (SM), for the last time, went to Allah for reducing the number of times for salat, then the Prophet (SM) was instructed to visit heaven and hell.

Visit to heaven and hell and watching of miracles therein

According to the behest and instruction of Allah, the Prophet (SM), during his journey of Meraj, visited heaven and hell. On the entrance to heaven, he found the janitor of heaven, angel Redwan who was very handsome to look at. Then he entered heaven accompanied by Gabriel (AS), and found that the walls of heaven were made of pure gold and that heaven had eight doors, each of which was as

wide as the distance of the way for 40 years. He found some costly stones of different colours inside. He also viewed some buildings under which some canals were flowing. He noticed a ruby-made-edifice wherein there were 70 thousand buildings, and 70 thousand beautiful attendants, all of whom were less than seven years of age. He also marked a high rise palace and some flowing streams there. He also saw some trees of pure gold near the palace.

After the visit to the heaven, Gabriel (AS) asked the Prophet (SM) to have a glance at the scene of hell. So, saying a screen from his eyesight was removed and another screen appeared before him. On that screen he, to his utter horror, found that there were fire, burning charcoals, big scorpions, large snakes, iron wheels, iron saws, hammers etc. for punishments. After the visit to the heaven and hell, the Prophet (SM) came back to the sixth sky and from there by vehicle down to the Baitul Muqaddas and from there to Makkah close to the Kaba.

Significance of Meraj

The main significance of Meraj is the establishment of unique precedents of co-ordination between the present life and the life hereafter and observation of miracles of Allah with the own eyes. This Meraj shows the deep love and respect of Allah for the Prophet (SM) who attained the proximity of Allah, even though the angels were not allowed to go near Allah. Moreover, the Prophet (SM) led the congregational salat as imam in the mosque Al-Aqsa. This proved the significance, importance and superiority of Prophet (SM). Furthermore, the Prophet (SM) in Meraj brought the sanction of prayers for 5 times a day, in stead of salat for 50 times. Meraj proved the superiority and eminence of the Almighty and His creations.

The journey of Meraj in view of science

If we analyze the journey of Meraj from the view-point of science, we find its truth. But still there are some opponents who put forward three negative statements in their favour by saying:

- a. That the Prophet's (SM) journey of Meraj in firmament and the return from there to earth within that short time on that night was not possible.
- b. That the gravitational force of earth pulls everything to its centre. So, nothing can exceed and go beyond the gravitational force of the earth. So, journey of Meraj was not possible, and
- c. That it is not possible for a human being to travel so fast in space without special dress and protection.

However, on the other hand, those who believe the journey of Meraj, rule out and eliminate the possibility of the above three negative statements by arguments in favour of the truth of Meraj.

Firstly, they argue that according to the Theory of Relativity of Albert Einstein, 'time' depends on and is measured by the speed of light. We know that light travels at a speed of 1, 86,000 miles per second. And if any space-craft can travel with the same speed as that of light, that is, 1, 86,000 miles per second, then the journey time will be zero second, that is, the journey will take no time. They further argued that the spacecrafts or the transports that the Prophet (SM) used for his journey were made of light, having the same speed as that of light. So, the time for the

journey was zero second. The theory further states that there is no standard time on earth, all times are local times. Hence, whatever long was the journey; the length of time for journey was zero. Therefore, in view of science the journey of Meraj is true and was possible. So, the first negative statement is ruled out.

Secondly, the negative statement of the opponents is not true at all. It is because the opponents' statement can easily be contradicted by a counterstatement. We know that if a spacecraft can travel at a speed of 25000 miles per hour, it can go beyond the pull of the gravitational force of the earth. But the celestial transport that carried the Prophet (SM) was much faster than the speed of 25000 miles per hour. So, the journey of Meraj was scientifically possible and true.

Thirdly, the last negative statement of the opponents is not applicable at all to the Prophet (SM). It is because Gabriel (AS) before the journey opened the chest, washed the heart, put it inside, and thus made the Prophet (SM) fit for the journey. Therefore, all the three negative statements are contradicted and proved to be untrue. Therefore, the ultimate truth is that the journey of Meraj is true from the scientific point of view.

Celebration of Meraj in Bangladesh

Meraj in Bangladesh is celebrated in religious fervor. The devout Muslims offer salat (prayer) and in different mosques, discussion is held on the importance and significance of the Meraj. Sermons are also delivered as to what to be done for the betterment of the Muslim Ummah. The honourable President and the honourable Prime Minister send message to the nation on this occasion. Bangladesh Betar and television put up special programmes on the Meraj. National and local newspapers publish articles on the occasion. Important offices, streets are illuminated on that night. Muslims in different mosques pray to Allah for the salvation of the departed souls. They pray for their well-being and express firm faith in Allah and the Prophet (SM). They repent of their past sins and pray to Allah to forgive them from the sins. The day is a optional holiday.

Conclusion

The journey of Meraj, from the religious and scientific point of view, is true. It is a great and real miracle done by the Prophet (SM) at the behest of Allah. This miracle has strengthened the faith in Allah and his Prophet (SM). From this miracle, we can understand the power and greatness of Allah. He is the best knower and hearer, and we have to believe in Allah and the Qu'ran. Those who believe are blessed by Him and those who do not believe are cursed. Disbelievers always deviate from the path of virtue; they raise doubt about the journey of Meraj and thereby commit sin. The authentic witnesses of the journey of Meraj are:

1. Allah and His holy Qur'an 2 The Prophet (SM) and his Hadiths. 3. Gabriel (AS) and other angels 4. Hazrat Abu Bakar (R) and 5. Batrik (a Christian priest). Meraj has shown us the consequence of sins and the severe punishment in the hereafter. The Muslims should more and more worship Allah and should express more and more gratitude to Him for His glory, majesty and superiority.

Dr. Md. Matiur Rahman Khan, Former Joint Secretary to the Government of Bangladesh



Autism Treatment through Occupational Therapy

Rabeya Ferdous

Saima Wazed with other team members in 'Multi-year Training on Competency Enhancement of Diagnosis and Treatment of Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) for Child in Bangladesh on October 16-19, 2016 in South Korea



There are many children around us who are suffering from Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD). At present Bangladesh government take different steps to rehabilitate Autistic child. It is now regarded as an issue of special concentration. Bangladesh is now trying to develop a rights-based paradigm for individuals with autism or other neurodevelopmental disorder.

A recent 2013 pilot study in Bangladesh, utilizing community health workers, has found prevalence of all kinds of neurodevelopmental disability is 7.1%.Whereas, for ASD, the study indicates a prevalence of 0.15% (3% in Dhaka city and 0.07% in rural area).

Autism is a general term used to describe a group of complex developmental brain disorders known as Pervasive Developmental Disorders (PDD). It is a complex developmental disability that typically appears during the first two years of life and is the result of a neurological disorder that affects the functioning of the brain, impacting development in the areas of social interaction and communication skills.

Currently, there is no single known cause for ASD, however recent research has investigated some factors, such as-Infectious, metabolic, genetic and environmental factors.

Symptom

The child/adult must have symptoms in following three areas:

1. Impaired social interaction

May include:

- ❑ Limited use and understanding of non-verbal communication such as eye gaze, facial expression and gesture
- ❑ Difficulties forming and sustaining friendships
- ❑ Lack of seeking to share enjoyment, interest and activities with other people
- ❑ Difficulties with social and emotional responsiveness



Autistic child have difficulty to communicate with others

2. Impaired communication

May include:

- ❑ Delayed language development
- ❑ Difficulties initiating and sustaining conversations
- ❑ Stereotyped and repetitive use of language such as repeating phrases from television
- ❑ Limited imaginative or make-believe play

2. Restricted and repetitive interests, activities and behaviors may include

- ❑ Unusually intense or focused interests
- ❑ Stereotyped and repetitive body movements such as hand flapping and spinning
- ❑ Repetitive use of objects such as repeatedly flicking a doll's eyes or lining up toys
- ❑ Adherence to non-functional routines such as insisting on travelling the same route home each day



Autistic child

In addition to these main areas of difficulties, individuals with ASD may also have:

- ❑ Unusual sensory interests such as sniffing objects or staring intently at moving objects
- ❑ Sensory sensitivities including avoidance of everyday sounds

and textures such as hair dryers, vacuum cleaners and sand

- ❑ Intellectual impairment or learning difficulties

According to World Federation of Occupational Therapy, "Occupational therapy is as a profession concerned with promoting health and well being through occupation. The primary goal of occupational therapy is to enable people to participate in the activities of everyday life. Occupational therapists achieve this outcome by enabling people to do things that will enhance their ability to participate or by modifying the environment to better support participation."



Brushing practice by an autistic baby

The aim of occupational therapist is to increase the persons as much as possible. Occupational Therapist provide following treatment for autism:

- ❑ Self help skills training (Dressing, feeding, brushing, toileting etc)
- ❑ Increase attention skills
- ❑ Increase communication
- ❑ Facilitate play activities that instruct as well as aid a child in interacting and communicating with others.
- ❑ Sensory integration therapy
- ❑ Behavioral Modification
- ❑ Develop adaptive techniques and strategies to get around apparent disabilities (for example, teaching keyboarding when handwriting is simply impossible; selecting a weighted vest to enhance focus; etc.)

There is presently no known cure for ASD. However, early intervention, specialized education and structured support can help develop an individual's skills. Every individual with ASD will make progress, although each individual's progress will be different. Progress depends on a number of factors including the unique make up of the individual and the type and intensity of intervention. With the support of family, friends and service providers, individuals with ASD can achieve a good quality of life.



Provide visual stimulation in Occupational Therapy session

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Floating Garden: A Unique Example of Bangladesh

Dr. M. G. Neogi

Climate change is already negatively impacting agricultural production locally and globally. Climate risks to agricultural production are expected to increase in coming decades, particularly in low-income countries like Bangladesh where adaptive capacity is weaker. A reasonable portion of Bangladesh is situated in low lying areas, remains submerged for 6-9 months in a calendar year during and after monsoon which is increasing day by day due to climate change. As a result, cultivable lands in coastal areas are often constrained by 7-8 months water stagnation. Even, when farm households manage to cultivate crops in their limited farm lands in low lying areas during monsoon, there is always risk for the crops to be submerged by floodwater. Even after flood, farmlands remain under water for a while due to poor drainage facilities and thus, farmers are unable to cultivate any crops on the submerged crop land.

It's now proved that climate change is increasing the intensifying of extreme weather events such as floods, droughts, heat waves, etc. and thus reducing agricultural production and food security while increasing health and nutrition risks. Almost every country in the world is experiencing the drastic effects of climate change. Average global temperature has increased by 0.85°C from 1880 to 2012 and global average sea level rose by 19 centimeters while global emissions of carbon dioxide have increased by at least 50 percent since 1990. Carbon dioxide most commonly produced by human activities and it is responsible for 64 percent of man-made global warming. Crop productions as well as trees help to regulate the climate by absorbing carbon dioxide from the atmosphere. But when trees are cut-down that beneficial effect is lost and the carbon stored in the trees is released into the atmosphere.

Bangladesh is vulnerable to climate change while the country rated as the third most vulnerable country in the world.

Hence, the livelihoods of poor farm families in low lying areas are passing days, even months with very little work and therefore income. The household food security of these groups remains fragile while the dream of sustainable food security remains elusive. These families may have to survive an extended period without proper meals and sometimes with no food at all. Malnutrition and poverty remain widespread due to limited resources. The additional challenges of changed climate add to the difficulties in coastal areas posed by repeated flooding, high tides and other natural calamities. To feed this burgeoning population in flood affected low lying areas, Bangladesh needs a miracle to ensure food security in the country. Special attention is therefore needed to strengthen and make sustainable household food security as a key approach to improve living standards of flood affected water-logged areas.

However, to overcome this adverse situation, local communities in southern Bangladesh are using their submerged lands for crop production by adopting 'Floating Garden' as alternative technology and growing different type of seedlings, vegetables, spices, etc. in floating beds floating agricultural practices. This innovated technology is an age-old practice of crops and vegetables cultivation in the southern floodplains of Bangladesh which has been recognized and declared as Globally Important Agricultural Heritage System (GIAHS) of Bangladesh by FAO of United Nation. The Floating Garden has become widely talked about climate change adaptation option. It's a local innovation where farm households both men and women jointly making 'floating bed' on water body as floating agricultural practices by using locally available resources like water hyacinth and bamboo. They are also using some other locally available materials like rice stub, algae, coconut-coir and other aquatic weeds.

The floating garden agricultural production system is yearly generating vegetables and spices for local communities. Farm households of southern Bangladesh have



Floating garden in low lying areas of southern Bangladesh

been practicing the method during monsoon, when most of the land is under water, where the only alternative option is to cultivate crops and vegetables through 'floating agriculture'. This technology also helps early production of seedlings of winter vegetables which enables farmers to get good price. Under floating bed technology, crops and vegetables requires shorter time to mature which is also an advantage to get higher price in the market. In addition, just after harvesting of crops and vegetables from floating bed, farmers may able to use this old floating bed as organic fertilizer for their next cultivation in winter season. After harvesting crops and vegetables from floating bed, they break this old rotten floating bed and mix it with the soil to enrich the soil quality which is useful for their next crops to get maximum return.

Being the most common aquatic plants of Bangladesh, water hyacinth is considered as notorious locally abundant invasive weed due to its high reproduction. Unless it is well controlled, flourished water hyacinth causes shades of sunshine into water body. Water hyacinth prevents photosynthesis of other aquatic plants which leads to declining in dissolved oxygen in the water. This dangerous invasive species are converted as most useful resources for floating bed technology. Under floating bed technology, water hyacinth is the major construction products to make floating beds as water hyacinth is utilizing mostly as 80 percent of floating bed to prepare floating bed for crops and vegetables cultivation in monsoon. Water hyacinth absorbs eutrophication nutrition from water body which means nitrogen, potassium and phosphorous are abundant in the floating bed, through which, crops and vegetables that's are grown on the floating beds absorb eutrophication nutrition sufficiently.

The size of each floating garden is flexible which depends on the area of inundated water body and its shape. It can be around four to seven feet width, twenty five to one hundred and fifty feet long and two to three feet height. In the initial stage of preparation, the collected water hyacinths are tied together and overlaid with bamboo to form a good shape. In consecutive days, additional water hyacinth is put on to ensure the thickness of the floating bed while beds to be fixed by bamboo poles in a certain area to avoid moving or displaced in windy or stormy weather. Once the basic structure of the bed is prepared, the water hyacinth is allowed to rot.

Then they used other smaller size aquatic plants such as Topapana, Dulalilata, Khudipana, etc. on the structure of water hyacinth bed. On the top of the floating bed, a little portion of soil, rice stub, algae, cow dung, etc. will be added, on which vegetables and other crops can be grown. In 2 to 3 weeks of rotten, the top portion of the bed is enriched with primary nutrients (phosphorus, nitrogen, potassium, magnesium, etc.) which acts as organic manure and make suitable for transplanting of different vegetables seedlings. As crops could absorb nutrients such as nitrogen, potassium and phosphorus from the floating beds and water in below, there is no need for application of chemical fertilizers while vegetables grow comparatively faster on floating beds than normally grown on soil.

The floating bed technology involves both men and women as household approach. Family members of a farm household are involved to prepare floating beds by locally available raw materials like water hyacinth, rice stub, bamboo, coconut coir, algae, etc. This system is generating gender specific continuous employment and improving the gender balance at household level. Both men and



Floating garden of southern belt

women are making a special structure for seedling growing, locally called Tema, to hold the germinating seeds. Tema is prepared with locally available aquatic plants. With the germinating seeds, the Tema is wrapped in coconut coir. After a few days, they are carried for transplantation to floating beds. Seedlings are then planted in beds together with Tema.

Women farm households are also rowing boat and nursing the bed. They also involved harvesting the products and post-harvest processing of vegetables and seeds. During maintenance and management of floating beds, farm households both men and women are mostly using small boats for intercultural operations, harvesting and carrying the products. As most of all operations will be operated by using a boat, thus the floating beds to be prepared narrowly. Between the two floating beds, there should be enough space for moving the boat for inter-cultural operations.

Floating Garden is an environment-friendly cultivation system with or without soil where no chemical fertilizers and pesticides are used. In adverse situation, even during flood in the locality, farmers can grow seedlings, vegetables, spices, etc. on the floating bed which may ensures early market to get good price of seedlings and vegetables. Every year, new floating beds needs to be prepared for cultivation of crops and vegetables in submerged lands during monsoon.

After harvesting of vegetables in floating bed, farmers are using these beds as organic fertilizers for their next cultivation in winter season. Just before winter

season, they break the old floating beds and mix these with the soil as organic fertilizers for their next cultivation in winter season.

Floating garden technology does not require any such infrastructures as well as any further capital investment. The technology is very cost effective, as most of the raw materials are free of cost and readily available in the locality as abundant materials, although the preparation requires huge physical labors. According to a paper of Ministry of Agriculture, the productivity of floating vegetables cultivation is estimated ten times higher than on a similar sized land-based cultivation. Materials for floating beds are affluent. In particular, water hyacinth is usually classified as one of the worst invasive species. Thus, farmers can easily use it as floating bed or composts without any additional costs. In addition, as water prevents vermination, no pesticide is required under this technology. Thus, under floating bed technology, not require any irrigation cost, chemical fertilizers cost, pesticides cost, etc. while only needs labor costs to prepare bed and intercultural operations which is around 50 percent costs compared to traditional cultivation cost in land.

The floating garden technology has played an important role along with the government, NGOs, private sectors and the farm households themselves in pushing back the frontiers of the possible.

Appropriate crops and species needs to be selected in the said system, to repel pests and thereby to increase crop productivity while crop and vegetables production throughout the year will ensure carbohydrate to the community households. Vitamins and minerals will also be ensured as vegetables production is continuing throughout the year under this system and thus sufficient income will be generated from this technology round the year.

The integration and intensification of most suitable technologies into a marginal farm can only be sustainable, if they interacts each other positively towards maximizing output and minimizing external dependency. Through using water hyacinth to make floating garden that normally congests the water canals is restoring healthy environment to the water bodies, thus the innovation is not



Husband and wife preparing organic base by locally available aquatic plants for seedlings



Leafy vegetables growing on floating soil bed

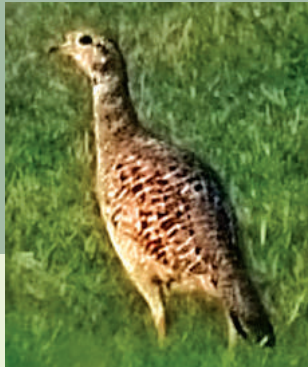
also mostly affected by repeated flooding in monsoon and losing their crops very frequently due to climate change. This technology may also be very useful for them, as their crop land submerged almost in every year under water for around 7-9 months.

The best technology in farming is the one which the farmers and beneficiaries use enthusiastically for their gain. In southern Bangladesh, floating garden technology is ensuring food and nutrition security at local community level and improving livelihoods under a severe environment. Due to climate change, the region is suffering from repeated flooding. However, farm households who are involved with this technology are now very happy with the outcome and they continued the technology in the following year on their own. They received a clear experience about the efficiency of this technology. It is hoped that concerned government agencies would appreciate the potential of this technology while takes this a national program in low lying flood affected water-logged areas including Haorsto ensure food and nutrition security at poor farm households as well as national level.

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harmful for the water ecosystem. One of the important features of floating garden practice is that it shortens crop's life cycle. For that, two or three crop rotation cycles on floating gardens during one monsoon season are common. Further research may useful to refine the technology to make it more profitable and affordable to the poor farm households while Bangladesh Agricultural Research Institute conducting research in Barishal region to improve the existing technology while Department of Agricultural Extension is also implementing the project on floating garden to extend the technology in low lying areas.

Now-a-days, the farm people of Haor areas are



Majestic Return of The Grey Francolin

Professor Dr. A N M Aminoor Rahman

by a Stripped Keelback snake was seen. The non-venomous snake dropped the frog and ran away due to our presence. We roamed about two kilometers and watched a few birds including Plain Prinia, Greater Painted Snipe, White-tailed Stonechat, Paddy-filed Pipit, Eurasian Collared Dove and a Black-breasted Weaver nest except the bird we were looking for. The extreme weather of the char made us thirsty and tired. Hence we returned to the boat immediately where my nephew Tanvir Yeasir was waiting for us.

After returning to the boat, Suzon and I slept until 4:15 pm. After waking up, we rushed to the char immediately to take a second chance. This time Suzon and I went to the left side while Nurul went to the right. Considering its secretive nature we were moving quietly and silently. While we were moving around, Black-breasted Weaver, Striated Babbler, Indian Thick Knee, Cattle Egret and Red Avadavat caught our eyes. At around 5:00 pm when I was clicking pictures of a flock of Red Avadavat in the grassland Nurul called me. We rushed to the right side immediately to catch up with Nurul and got some hope as we came to know that a pair of the bird ran into the bush. We carefully searched the whole area for at least 30 minutes but came back with no trace. At 5:30 pm Nurul and Suzon gave up and suggested to leave the place before it gets dark. They also told me that the

It was a very hot and humid day of 30 June 2018. We started from Bot-tola Kheya Ghat near Rajshahi Police Line at around 1:00 pm for the Charland of Padma River in search of a very secretive and rare bird. After a 30 minute boat ride we reached the Sonaikandi bank of Char Majardiyar just opposite to the Berpara part of Rajshahi City. When the boat touched the bank I jumped from the boat with oarsman Nurul and Saiful Islam Suzon, a bird lover from Rajshahi. We headed for the dry grassland in search of the bird. We silently move here and there, but couldn't find any trace of it. While walking around, we were surprised by the striking appearance of a few Red-wattled Lapwings flying desperately on the sky with a loud and scolding 'hot-ti-ti--hot-ti-ti----' call. Suddenly a croak was heard and we rushed to a nearby grassy area, where a cricket frog caught



A Grey Francolin escaping in the bushes of Sonaikandi, Char Majardiyar of Rajshahi

bird might not come today, so we may come again tomorrow. I softly requested them to stay for another 30 minutes.

All three of us returned to the small hut of the cowboys near the bank from where we started our search. Just after 10 minutes of waiting a sharp but soft ‘kila--kila--kila----’ call was heard and after one minute the duet call ‘kateela--kateela--kateela----’ floated to our ears. I became very

excited. A few seconds later a few chicken-like bird suddenly appeared in the open field in front of us from their grassy hides. We moved forward slowly by taking some hides and clicked a few shots. Somehow the birds got alarmed and disappeared in their grassy hides within a moment. I missed their close up shot, but felt lucky to witness the majestic return of the so-called lost bird. At around 6:00 pm, they reappeared for a minute and I was able to capture six birds in a single frame. I was fortunate enough to see the birds in a single visit. And finally, they appeared again ten minutes later. As I was preparing to capture a good shot, the flock vanished all on a sudden due to the arrival of the cowboys with their herds of cattle.



Six Grey Francolins feeding on the ground of Sonaikandi

This extremely cautious and secretive bird is the Grey Francolin which was formerly known as Grey Partridge. Its bangla name is Khoir or Titir. The bird belonged to the family Phasianidae and its scientific name is *Francolinus pondicerianus* (Gmelin, 1789) which means a little hen of Pondicherry (*francolino* = a little hen and *pondicerianus* = of Pondicherry, a place situated south-west of Chennai, Tamil Nadu, India).



A Grey Francolin at Sonaikandi of Rajshahi

According to a trusted source, Colonel RC

Tytler of the Bengal Infantry and an amateur naturalist collected a specimen of the bird from Dhaka in 1852 (166 years ago). The report by Colonel Tytler entitled 'Miscellaneous notes of the fauna of the Dacca' was published in 'The Annals and Magazine of Natural History' in 1866. That was the last time the presence of Grey Francolin in this region was reliably reported and to the knowledge no one has claimed to have seen the bird here since. I came to know from a source that perhaps one specimen was collected from Charland of Jamuna River of Shirajgonj district possibly in 2010 which was identified and preserved as some species of Quail in the Jamuna Resort Wildlife Museum. However, without any detailed study and proper investigation IUCN, BD red listed the bird as Regionally Extinct in their book entitled 'Red List of Bangladesh Volume 3: Birds' published in 2015. But the very shy and secretive birds proved their existence in the country by appearing suddenly on 15th May 2018 from their hideout from bushes and grassland of Sonaikandi, Char Majardiar, Rajshahi after a very long more than one and half century time. Even more surprisingly they were recovered from bushes of Belgachi, Chuadanga on 27th May and finally they were seen in the bushes near Gorai River, Haripur, Kustia on 16 July 2018. I also visited Belgachi of Chuadanga and Haripur of Kushtia and found both of these habitats are quite suitable for their survival.

The Grey Francolin is native to South and Near East Asia including India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Nepal, Turkmenistan, Oman and Iran. In Bangladesh, it

occurred in the grasslands of Dhaka Division. It is also introduced in a number of countries including Bahrain, Qatar, United Arab Emirates, Mauritius, Seychelles and United States of America. The species is a vagrant in Afghanistan. Unlike Bangladesh, they are not globally threatened, but widespread and often locally abundant. There are three recognized subspecies:

- ❑ *Francolinus pondicerianus interpositus* (Hartert, 1917), known as North Indian Grey Francolin which is found in northwest India and Pakistan.
- ❑ *Francolinus pondicerianus mecranensis* (Zarudny and Harms, 1913), known as Baluchistan Grey Francolin which inhabits in arid southeastern Iran and southern Pakistan.
- ❑ *Francolinus pondicerianus pondicerianus* (Gmelin, 1789), the nominate subspecies found in southern India, Sri Lanka and Bangladesh.

The Grey Francolin is a medium-sized francolin with round body, short legs and stubbed tail. The male is slightly larger and heavier than female. The length and weight of male is 29-34 centimetre (cm) and 260-340 gram (g), respectively. On the other hand length and weight of female stands for 26-30 cm and 200-310 g, respectively. The overall plumage colour is greyish-brown. Both sexes are similar in colour with barred plumage. Throat, cheeks and forehead are orange with a dark border patch around the neck. Face is dull orange with a prominent black eye-stripe. The breast and abdomen are greyish-buff with dark barring. Mantle and wings are chestnut with light shaft-streaks and barring. Irises are hazel-brown. Bill is silver with darker lower mandible and dull red legs and feet. The male can have up to two spurs on the legs while females usually lack them. The dark border patch



A Grey Francolin resting in the bushes of Belgachi, Chuadanga

Courtesy: Md. Bakhtiar Hamid

around the neck is absent in the immature Grey Francolins. The only similar species is the Painted Francolin (*Francolinus pictus*), which has a rufous vent.

The Grey Francolin is a ground-dwelling bird inhabits in dry and open grasslands, sand dunes and thorny-scrub areas interspersed with cultivation, and avoids heavy forest and humid tracts. It is commonly found on the outskirts of villages. The bird is usually seen in pairs and family parties of 4-8 individuals. It forages by digging and scratching the ground with bill and claws. The species is a fast runner and prefer to run when approached or disturbed. It run very swiftly and gracefully; seem to glide rather than run. The bird is a weak fliers and fly short distances, escaping into undergrowth. It flies swiftly



Courtesy: Dr. Mainul Ahsan Shamim

An alert Grey Francolin at Sonaikandi, Char Majardiyar of Rajshahi

with rapid wing-beats and flies only when surprised in the bushes or when persistently chased. Bird drops into grass again after flying a couple of hundred meters. It roost at night up in thorny trees and bushes, and will often take shelter into these when harried in day-time. The bird feeds on seeds, grains, cereals, shoots of grass as well as insects, particularly termites and beetles. It may occasionally take larger prey such as snakes. Its usual call is a repetition of 3 notes 'kateela-kateela-kateela----'. Its alarm call is 'Kateer-kateer----' or 'khirr-khirr----'. The loud calls of the bird is commonly heard early in the mornings and late evening. Pairs of birds will sometimes engage in a duet. The female call is a 'tee-tee-tee----' repeated and sometimes a 'kila-kila-kila----' and the challenge call 'kateela-kateela-kateela----' is a duet.

The bird breeds in April to September and the nest is a hidden scrape in a thorn bush. The nest may sometimes be made above ground level in a niche in a wall or rock. The nest is lined with grass and leaves. The female lays 6-9 pale buff eggs specked with dark brown spots but larger clutches have been noted. The female

alone incubate and eggs hatch in 18-19 days. Life-span is nearly 4 years.

The status of Grey Francolin in Bangladesh, unfortunately, is just bleak as its survival depends largely on what we do with these three places from where they were recovered. Government and local people should conserve these habitats and protect these lands from any type of conversion. Otherwise we will lost these priced birds forever from this country.

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Courtesy: Dr. Mainul Ahsan Shamim

A pair of majestic Grey Francolin at Sonaikandi, Char Majardiyar of Rajshahi



UNESCO Heritage, the Sundarbans: World's largest mangrove forest



UNESCO Heritage: Sixty-Dome Mosque, Bagerhat (built in 15th century)



Cox's Bazar: The longest unbroken sandy sea beach of the world



St. Martin: The lone coral island of Bangladesh



Kaptai Lake, Rangamati: The largest artificial lake of Bangladesh



Hanging Bridge, Rangamati: One of the most attractive tourist spots of Bangladesh



Nilgiri, Bandarban: Fascinating hill top lies at a height of 671 metres



Bogalake, Bandarban: The lake lies at the highest altitude (1228 metres)



Ratargul, Sylhet: The only swamp forest of Bangladesh



Madhabkundo, Moulvibazar: The biggest waterfall of Bangladesh



Hakaluki Haor, Moulvibazar: The largest Extensive water body of Bangladesh



Kuakata Seabeach, Patuakhali: Both sunrise and sunset can be enjoyed from one place



World Bank President Jim Yong Kim (Left) and UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres (middle) called on Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina at her office

1 July 2018

UN to put more pressure on Myanmar to resolve Rohingya crisis

United Nations (UN) Secretary General Antonio Guterres said his organisation is pressuring Myanmar to resolve the Rohingya crisis.

The UN chief and World Bank (WB) Group President Jim Yong Kim met Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina at her offices in the city on July 1, as a part of their trip to Bangladesh.

Guterres said there should be more pressure on Myanmar to make them understand what they should do on this issue, according to Prime Minister's Press Secretary Ihsanul Karim.

The UN and WB officials also gave their assurances that the organisations would continue their support for Bangladesh on the issue.

Kim and Guterres are scheduled to visit the Rohingya refugee camps in Cox's Bazar.

At least 700,000 Rohingyas crossed the border from Myanmar to Bangladesh

since the Myanmar military began a crackdown in the state of Rakhine last August. Combined with approximately 400,000 Rohingyas previously living in Bangladesh, the total refugee population has increased to 1.1 million.

The UN has emphasised the need for a voluntary, safe and respectful return process that follows international law.

World Bank President Jim Yong Kim reiterated that Bangladesh was the organisation's second largest client, saying that it showed the agency's faith in the current government.

"The World Bank president mentioned that he would discuss offering Bangladesh World Bank loans at a concession rate despite the recent graduation to lower middle-income status," said Karim.

Both Guterres and Kim also praised Bangladesh's recent economic development.

Source: The Financial Express

2 July 2018

UN chief for world pressure on Myanmar

The UN secretary general has made a fervent appeal to the world community to pressure Myanmar to create the "right conditions" for repatriation of the Rohingya.



U.N. Secretary General Antonio Guterres and World Bank President Jim Yong Kim met Rohingya refugees at the Ukhia camp on July 2

He reasserted the call for safe and dignified return of the refugees to their place of origin in Rakhine state.

Antonio Guterres stressed the need for bringing to book those who committed atrocities against the Rohingya who are the world's 'most discriminated community'.

It is the moment for the world community to be united to ask

Myanmar for right conditions so the Rohingya can return to Myanmar, he said on July 2.

That should be "in a safe and dignified manner and with all their rights as normal citizens of the country," he said this at a press briefing in Dhaka. *Source: The Financial Express*

2 July 2018

100pc rise in state-owned industrial units' wages

Cabinet okays National Wage Scale, 2015

The Cabinet has approved the National Wage Scale-2015 and allowances for the

workers of public sector industries with minimum wage of Taka 8,300 as recommended by the National Wages and Productivity Commission 2015.

The approval was given in the weekly meeting of the cabinet held at Prime Minister's Office on July 2 with Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina in the chair.

The wage scale will have 16 grades and basic of the lowest grade would be Taka 8,300 which is now Taka 4,150. The basic of the highest grade of the wages would be Taka 11,200 from Taka 5,600, Shafiu Alam said.

The workers will get house rent at 50 per cent of basic wage, medical allowance of Taka 1,500, conveyance allowance of Taka 200, washing allowance Taka 100, tiffin allowance Taka 200, Bengali New Year allowance 20 per cent of basic wage, festival allowance equivalent to two months' basic pay along with facilities of encashment of earned leave with others facilities. *Source: The Financial Express*

3 July 2018

ECNEC approves construction of passport office bldgs in 16 dists

The Executive Committee of the National Economic Council (ECNEC) approved on July 3 eight projects, including one to construct 16 regional passport office buildings.

The passport office buildings will be built in order to improve passport services in 16 districts.

The approval came at the first ECNEC meeting of the new fiscal year, 2018-19, held at the NEC conference room in the city.

ECNEC Chairperson and Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina presided over the meeting.

"The ECNEC approved eight projects with an estimated cost of over Tk 64.93 billion," Planning Minister AHM Mustafa Kamal said while briefing reporters after the meeting. *Source: The Financial Express*

7 July 2018

PM inaugurates residential buildings for public servants

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina inaugurated newly constructed multi-storey



Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina offered munajat after inauguration of newly constructed multi-storey buildings for public servants at Motijheel government colony on July 7

buildings, with 988 flats, at Motijheel and Azimpur government colonies for public servants on July 7.

Speaking at separate programmes on the occasion of the inaugurations, the PM described various development projects of the government for public servants and asked them to serve people.

The Prime Minister said development across the country is clearly visible because of the continuation of the government for two consecutive times.

“Our development is not limited to urban areas. Our aim is to ensure socioeconomic development all the way down to the grassroots; we are working towards that direction,” she said. *Source: The Daily Star*



Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina distributes National Film Award 2016 at Bangabandhu International Convention Centre in Dhaka on July 8

8 July 2018

PM distributes National Film Award

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina on July 8 distributed the National Film Award-2016 among artistes and film professionals in recognition of their outstanding contributions to the country's film industry.

She handed over the award, the highest state recognition, to 31 artistes, performers and organisations in 25 categories at a gala ceremony at Bangabandhu International Conference Centre.

Information minister Hasanul Haq Inu presided over the function while chairman of the parliamentary standing committee on the ministry AKM Rahmatullah, state minister Tarana Halim and information secretary Abdul Malek were present.

Film actress Farida Akter Babita and film actor Akbar Hossein Pathan (Faruk) were given lifetime achievement award while award for best film went to 'Oggatonama' (The Unnamed) produced by Faridur Reza Sagor and best film

director award to filmmaker Amitabh Reza Chowdhury (Aynabaji film).

Speaking on the occasion, the Prime Minister stressed the need for making world-class films to keep the country's ongoing development pace in all the sectors. 'Today Bangladesh is marching forward in all the sectors. I want our film industry to develop further,' she said. *Source: The New Age*

11 July 2018

Prime Minister inaugurates Hajj programme

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina on July 11 urged all to remain alert so that militant acts cannot be carried out in the name of Islam as it promotes peace and the rights of people.

'We've to take steps so that Islam always remains on top,' she said while inaugurating the Hajj programme-2018 at Hajj Camp in the city's Ashkona area.

The PM said Islam believes in peace as it repeatedly says about the rights of human

beings and welfare of people. 'But often we see some people in the name of this religion engaged in terrorist acts and creates militancy and this puts our religion into question before the whole world,' she said.

She said these cause problems to Muslims when they travel to various countries of the world. 'But, holy Islam is the most peaceful religion...Islam says the people of all religions will perform their own religious rituals independently, our Prophet repeatedly said that.'

She mentioned that some people created anarchy and problems just to undermine our religion. 'Nobody has the right to malign our religion.'

The Prime Minister said the government wants that no one to spread confusion about Islam and build a system so that people can understand the real meaning of Islam. 'For that, we've taken a project to construct 560 mosques in different areas of the country under the supervision of the Islamic Foundation.' *Source: The New Age*

15 July 2018

Bangladesh-India deal signed

Indian Home Minister Rajnath Singh on July 15 wrapped up his three-day official visit which both sides say further strengthened the ties between the two countries.

He wished a long-lasting friendship between Bangladesh and India and appreciated Bangladesh's hospitality during his stay here.

"After spending three days in Bangladesh, I'm heading back to New Delhi. I'm



Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina talking to the people at Hajj camp after inaugurating the Hajj programme- 2018 at Ashkona in Dhaka on July 11



Bangladesh and India signed a deal titled Revised Travel Arrangement 2018

deeply touched by the warmth and hospitality of the people of Bangladesh. Bharat-Bangladesh Moitree Chirojeebi Hok," said Rajnath in a tweet as he left Dhaka for New Delhi.

Before the departure, he held the sixth home minister-level talks with his Bangladesh counterpart Asaduzzaman Khan and discussed issues related to security, border management, cooperation in countering illegal activities and travel arrangements.

Bangladesh and India signed a deal under which freedom fighters and elderly Bangladesh nationals will get a five-year multiple visa.

The deal titled Revised Travel Arrangements 2018 was signed between the two countries in presence of Bangladesh Home Minister Asaduzzaman Khan and his counterpart Rajnath Singh in Dhaka.

Rajnath met Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and discussed various issues of mutual interest. Source: *The Financial Express*

16 July 2018

IOM to help Dhaka repatriate Rohingyas

Visiting Director General of the International Organisation for Migration (IOM) William Lacy Swing reaffirmed on July 16 to Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina that his organisation would extend all sorts of support to Bangladesh for the repatriation of Rohingya refugees.

"We've vast experience about repatriation ...we'll give you all sorts of support...this is an extraordinary challenge for Bangladesh. Whatever we can do, we'll do that," he said.

The IOM DG said this when he met Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina at her office.

PM's Press Secretary Ihsanul Karim briefed reporters after the meeting.

He said the IOM DG visited Cox's Bazar to witness the plight of Rohingyas on the ground.

He thanked the Bangladesh government for its cooperation and support to the displaced Rohingya people. *Source: The Financial Express*

17 July 2018

Safety net allowances not meant for running one's whole family

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina said on July 17 allowances being provided under the social safety net programmes are not meant for running the whole family or making one reluctant about work.

"These allowances are just to ensure that no one suffers from starvation, but nobody should stay away from work," she said.

The Prime Minister was speaking at the inaugural function of electronically distribution of allowances to 115,088 beneficiaries under social safety net programmes of the Social Welfare Ministry through a videoconference at her official residence Ganobhaban.

Social Welfare Secretary Md Zillar Rahman made a power-point presentation on the beneficiaries under the social safety net.

Later, the Prime Minister talked to the beneficiaries in Gopalganj, Narsingdi, Kishoreganj and Chapainawabganj through the videoconference.

The PM said the government has been implementing various programmes to protect the poor and ensure their basic needs the people including food, clothes, housing and education.

Officials at the Ministry of Social Welfare said the allowance distribution activities through G2P system would be expanded to 10 more districts during the current fiscal year. The officials said the number of beneficiaries to get allowances through electronic fund transfer system would be increased to 6.6 million in phases. *Source: The Financial Express*

18 July 2018

New jute-made goods usher in great potential for BD: PM

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina said on July 18 diversified use of jute can be beneficial for the country both environmentally and economically.

The Prime Minister said "New jute-made goods have ushered in great potential for Bangladesh as the pollution issue has come up globally."



International Organisation for Migration (IOM) Director General William Lacy Swing with Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina at the PMO on July 16

She said Bangladesh is a jute-producing country.

"We can export, we can save money; jute is an environment-friendly item."

The PM laid emphasis on increasing the use of jute-made products giving up plastic-made ones as plastic now has become a great threat to the environment globally.

The Prime Minister was speaking at the function of World Environment Day, Tree Fair and Campaign for Tree Plantation at Bangabandhu International Conference Centre (BICC).

Stressing the importance of increasing the use of jute-made products, The PM said the government has taken numerous programmes to bring back the golden days of jute and its products.

She mentioned that scientists have already invented a jute-made biodegradable poly bag called 'Sonali Bag'.

The Prime Minister also urged all to go for reusing plastic products or refuse it totally as protection of the environment is very much important. *Source: The Financial Express*



Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina inaugurates World Environment Day at Agargaon, Dhaka on July 18



Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina distributing Public Administration Award 2018 at Osmani Memorial Auditorium on July 23

23 July 2018

PM asks officials to work for people, shun red tape culture

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina asked on July 23 the public servants to shun the 'red tape culture' and pick the work that will be beneficial for the country and its people.

"There'll be complexities in every work...once there was a red tape culture; now we're using white tape (in public office files), but it doesn't

imply that the work will be getting quicker for using the white tape as the red tape (culture) still exists," she said.

The Prime Minister said this while inaugurating National Public Service Day 2018 and distributing Public Administration Award 2018 at Osmani Memorial Auditorium in the city.

The Prime Minister directed the public servants to think first about what the results and benefits their works will bring in for the country and its people. "You have to think those first...you've to work in that manner and think about the welfare of the grassroots people."

She mentioned further, "There was a time when the public servants always thought that it's a government job, we'll get our salaries, no matter we work or not. Such thinking is not acceptable at all." *Source: The Financial Express*

24 July 2018

Work for safe production, export of fish: President

President Md. Abdul Hamid asked on July 24 the authorities concerned, particularly the fisheries and livestock ministry, to take pragmatic steps for ensuring safe production of fish and continue its export.

"Remain alert against adulteration in fish production . . . as harmful chemicals are being used in the production of fish feed," he said.

The President made the urge while speaking at a function at Bangabhaban in the city marking the 'National Fisheries Week-2018.' *Source: The Financial Express*

25 July 2018

Spending money on education is a great investment, says PM

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina on July 25 said spending money on education sector is a great investment for the future, not an expense.

"I never see spending money on education as an expense, I think it's an investment," the Prime Minister said.

She said this while distributing The Prime Minister Gold Medal Award at a ceremony arranged by the University Grants Commission (UGC) at the Shapla Hall of the Prime Minister's Office.



President Md. Abdul Hamid released fish fries at a function at Bangabhaban marking the 'National Fisheries Week-2018' on July 25



Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina speaking at a function of Gold Medal Award ceremony arranged by the University Grants Commission (UGC) at the Prime Minister's Office on July 25

The Prime Minister handed over the gold medals among 163 talented students of different public and private universities of the country for achieving the highest marks/CGPA in their respective faculties.

She said spending money on education means building the future generation which will be helpful in materialising the dream of Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman to make the country a 'Golden Bengal'.

The Prime Minister said the students will help continue the country's march forward initiated by the government. "Make sure the country never steps back."

Presided over by UGC Chairman Prof Abdul Mannan, the function was addressed, among others, by Education Minister Nurul Islam Nahid, Secretary of Secondary and Higher Education Division of the Ministry of Education Md Sohorab Hossain and Member of UGC Prof Dr Dil Afroza Begum. *Source: The Financial Express*

28 July 2018

Govt working to improve transport system in Dhaka

Unveiling her plans to develop the city's commuting system, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina on July 28 said her government has a plan to construct an elevated ring-road around Dhaka.

"The ring-road will be an elevated one to make movement of the commuters easy," she said while inaugurating the North U-loop of Hatirjeel Project at Rampura-Badda Pragati Sarani in Dhaka.



Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina inaugurates a U-loop in Badda area of Dhaka on July 28

After the inauguration, the Prime Minister took a ride on the U-loop and visited the developed site of Hatirjeel. *Source: The Daily Star*

29 July 2018

ECNEC okays nine projects involving Tk 75.39b

The Executive Committee of the National Economic Council (ECNEC) approved on July 29 nine projects with the total estimated cost of Tk 75.39 billion, including a Tk 25.11 billion project to expand the scope for science education in some 200 government colleges across the country.

The approval came from an ECNEC meeting held at the NEC conference room in the city with ECNEC chairperson and Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina in the chair.

Briefing reporters after the meeting, Planning Minister AHM Mustafa Kamal said, "A total of nine projects were approved involving an overall cost of Tk 75.39 billion."

Of the total estimated cost, he said, Tk 67.51 billion will come from the national exchequer, while Tk 5.28 billion as project assistance and Tk 2.85 billion from the own funds of the organisations concerned.

Eight of the projects are new while another is revised one. *Source: The Financial Express*

7 August 2018

ECNEC approves smart electricity prepaid meter project for Dhaka

The Executive Committee of the National Economic Council (ECNEC) has approved a total of 11 projects, including the smart electricity prepaid meter installation project for Dhaka city.

The approval came at a meeting of the ECNEC held in the city on August 7, with Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina in the chair. The 11 projects involve Tk 64.48 billion.

Under the prepaid meter project, The Dhaka Electric Supply Company Ltd. (DESCO) will install 0.2 million electricity meters for its subscribers in the city at a cost of Tk 1.86 billion.

After the installation of prepaid meters, consumers would have to pay bills in advance.

Emerging from the ECNEC meeting, Planning Minister AHM Mustafa Kamal said the meeting approved 11 projects involving Tk 64.48 billion.

Out of the total amount, Tk 64.16 billion will come from the government's internal resources while the remaining amount will be provided by the implementing agencies from their own resources, he said.

The minister said the ECNEC approved the Padma river dredging and embankment protection project involving Tk 14.83 billion.

It would be one of the important development projects as it will not only protect Majhichar in Dohar Upazila but also reclaim some land, he added.

The ECNEC also approved construction of primary infrastructure of Hi-Tech Park in Sylhet (Tk 2.90 billion); embankment protection and dredging of the Padma river in Charbhadrasan Upazila of Faridpur (Tk 2.92 billion); Beerganj-Khansma-Daroyari, Khansama-Ranibandar and Chiribandar-Amtalibazar

highway widening project (Tk 1.43 billion) and construction of PC Girder bridge on Kulaura-Prithimpasha-Hazipur-Sharifpur road and 7.5km connecting road (Tk 990 million).

Ministers, Planning Commission members and officials of different ministries were present at the ECNEC meeting. *Source: The Financial Express*

8 August 2018

Bangamata helped Bangabandhu become great leader: PM

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina said on August, 8 Bangamata Sheikh Fazilatunnesa helped Bangabandhu become the great leader.

"In any crisis moment, my mother had the unparalleled capacity to give the right decisions," she said.

The Prime Minister said this while addressing a function marking the 88th birth anniversary of Bangamata Sheikh Fazilatunnesa at Bangabandhu International Conference Centre (BICC) in the city.



Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina addressing a function marking the 88th birth anniversary of Bangamata Sheikh Fazilatunnesa at Bangabandhu International Conference Centre on August 8

She said the time-befitting decisions of Bangamata Sheikh Fazilatunnesa had helped the country achieve its desired goal-the independence.

Sheikh Hasina, the eldest child of Bangabandhu and Bangamata, briefly described some incidents, including the historic March 07 Speech and the release of Bangabandhu and others in historic Agartala conspiracy case when Bangamata took some bold and right decisions at the right time.

Bangamata Sheikh Fazilatunnesa had also made huge sacrifices for Bangladesh's independence, she said.

She said Bangamata was the source of all encouragement, power and courage for Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman to work for the development and welfare of people. *Source: The Financial Express*

9 August 2018

Govt working to strengthen democracy, says PM

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina said on August 9, her government is working for strengthening democracy in the country and accelerating its development.

She made the remarks when visiting Commonwealth Secretary General Patricia Scotland met her at her office.

PM's Press Secretary Ihsanul Karim briefed reporters after the meeting.

The country's GDP growth is now 7.78 per cent, while the inflation rate 5.5 per cent, she said adding that her government is working for women empowerment at the grassroots level and now a large number of women is participating in socio-economic development and govt. working to strengthen demorecy.

Source: The Financial Express



Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina with Commonwealth Secretary-General Patricia Scotland at PMO on August 9

15 August 2018

National Mourning Day observed

Homage was paid to the country's founding president Sheikh Mujibur Rahman recalling his struggle for the independence of Bangladesh as the National



Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, along with family members and relatives, prays after placing a wreath at the grave of the country's founding president Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman at Tungipara in Gopalganj on August 15, marking the 43rd anniversary of his death

Mourning Day was observed across the country on August 15 marking the 43rd anniversary of his assassination.

The government, political parties, and different socio-political and cultural organisations observed the day with due respect.

As the day broke, people wearing black badges started streaming into the Bangabandhu Memorial Museum at Dhanmondi 32 and his grave at his ancestral home at Tungipara in Gopalganj in silent to pay tributes to the independence hero.

President Md. Abdul Hamid, was the first to place wreaths at the portrait of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman at the Bangabandhu Memorial Museum at the dawn followed by Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina.

After placing the wreaths, they stood in solemn silence for a minute when bugles played the last post. A smartly turned out contingent drawn from the three services presented salute on the occasion. *Source: The News Age*

29 August 2018

PM inaugurates community vision centres in 20 upazilas

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina on August 29 said the government will take effective steps to increase the number of specialist physicians to provide better medical services in the country.

“We'll take steps to produce more specialist physicians in all the fields of medical services, including ophthalmology and ENT,” she said.

The Prime Minister said this while inaugurating Community Vision Centres in 20 upazilas of eight districts centring Bangamata Sheikh Fazilatunnesa Mujib Eye Hospital and Training Institute in Gopalganj through a videoconference from her official residence Ganobhaban, aiming to provide better ophthalmological (eye care) services for local people.

The PM said the government has established one medical university in Dhaka while three more will be set up in Chittagong, Rajshahi and Sylhet as its aim is to establish one medical university in each divisional headquarters.

Besides, the Prime Minister said, her government is setting up medical colleges across the country to provide healthcare services at people's doorsteps. *Source: The Daily Star*



Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina inaugurates Community Vision Centres in 20 upazilas of eight districts through a video conference from her official residence Ganobhaban on August 29

30 August 2018

PM wants visible results from BIMSTEC

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina joined her Indian counterpart Narendra Modi and other Asian leaders to call for deeper cooperation to produce visible results in development as they met at a summit in Kathmandu on August 30.

Members of the Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC) can expand cooperation through sustainable development, stability and security and people to people contact, the PM said in her speech.

The fourth BIMSTEC summit envisages a "peaceful, prosperous and sustainable Bay of Bengal region".

BIMSTEC is potentially a dynamic region in the world with a 1.5 billion people accounting for almost 22 per cent of the global population, and the combined GDP in the region is \$2.8 trillion.



Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina has joined her Indian counterpart Narendra Modi and other Asian leaders at a summit in Kathmandu on August 30

The PM said poverty, climate change and terrorism still remain common problems in the region. As a lead country in climate change, Bangladesh has initiated adaptation and mitigation programmes by creating a Climate Change Trust Fund of \$400 million.

However, despite the members' collective commitment, the BIMSTEC has achieved a few modest successes during the last 21 years. *Source: The Financial Express*

31 August 2018

Leaders agree on regional power grid

The fourth BIMSTEC Summit concluded in Kathmandu on August 31 with the member states inking a deal for cross-country energy grid interconnection and reaffirming strong commitment to working out a comprehensive approach to combat terrorism.

In the two-day summit, BIMSTEC leaders agreed to turn the Bay of Bengal region peaceful and prosperous by building common strengths through collective efforts.

They also agreed to make the organisation a dynamic, effective and result-oriented body for intensifying regional cooperation, alleviating poverty and promoting connectivity, energy and free trade.

The summit ended with the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on establishing a BIMSTEC Grid Interconnection to enhance energy cooperation among the seven member states -- Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Myanmar, Nepal, Sri Lanka and Thailand.

The summit agreed to expedite the conclusion of BIMSTEC Convention on Mutual Legal Assistance in Criminal Matters and called upon the member states for its early ratification. It also expressed satisfaction that many member states have ratified the BIMSTEC Convention on Cooperation in Combating International Terrorism, Transnational Organized Crime and Illicit Drug Trafficking.

The summit also called for exploring the possibility of establishing a BIMSTEC development fund with voluntary contributions from the member states. The fund would be utilised for research and planning of BIMSTEC and financing of projects, and other activities of the regional organisation, according to the Kathmandu Declaration. *Source: The Daily Star*

3 September 2018

Cabinet clears labour law amendments

The Cabinet approved in principle the draft of Bangladesh Labour Act (Amendment) Bill, 2018 with more facilities for workers and reducing the workers' threshold to 20 per cent from the existing 30 per cent for forming trade unions.

The approval was given at the weekly meeting of the Cabinet on September 3 held at the Secretariat with Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina in the chair.

Under the proposed law, the percentage of workers' participation required for forming trade unions at factories will be reduced to 20 per cent from the existing 30 per cent, said Cabinet Secretary Md Shafiul Alam.

The draft bill has been prepared and updated following the observation of the International Labour Organisation (ILO). "The amended law will be a labour-friendly one," said the Cabinet Secretary.

"Under the proposed law, no child will be allowed to work in factories. If anybody employs child workers then he or she will have to pay a fine of Tk 5,000," he added.

In the draft bill, the punishment of workers for violating laws has been reduced by 50 per cent while new facilities included for them. *Source: The Financial Express*

4 September 2018

ECNEC approves Delta Plan with dev, industrialisation in focus

The Executive Committee of the National Economic Council at a meeting on September 4 approved the Delta Plan 2100 envisaging better management of the country's food and water security and fighting disasters.

Presided over by Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina at planning commission, the ECNEC approved the 'techno-economic' policy paper prepared by the general

economics division of the ministry of planning in association with the Dutch government and the World Bank.

While briefing reporters, planning minister AHM Mustafa Kamal 80 projects would be implemented at a cost of \$37 billion in next ten years under the policy.

Of the projects, nine would be linked with improvement of river management and five with the river dredging, he said, adding that a dozen of schemes would be launched at coastal belt.

Besides, five projects would be taken in the country's hill tracts area and rest 15 projects would be taken in the environmentally less vulnerable areas, added the planning minister.

According to the draft of the Delta Plan, taken in addition to the county's five-year plan and the UN prescribed Sustainable Development Goals, would be financed by the government, Green Climate Fund, development partners, foreign direct investment and the private sector.

Planning commission officials expect that the country would get \$2 billion assistance from Green Climate Fund every year. *Source: The New Age*

5 September 2018

Brighten image of national airlines

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina on September 5 asked the employees of Biman Bangladesh Airlines to work with maximum integrity to brighten the image of the airlines as well as the country.

"I want every single person in Biman to work with utmost sincerity so that it [Biman] does not earn a 'bad name'," she said.



Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina inaugurates newly inducted Boeing 787 Dreamliner at Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport on September 5

The PM made the call while inaugurating the operation of the newly inducted 787 Dreamliner “Akashbeena” to Biman's fleet at the VVIP lounge of the Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport.

She emphasised on the quick delivery of passenger luggage using modern technology.

She also asked the officials concerned to give extra attention to security issues. "You must always give proper attention to the security matters in the airport."

Briefly describing various government efforts to improve the service of the airlines, the Prime Minister said the government had reached a purchase agreement with Canada to acquire another three Dash-8 Bombardier aircrafts, aiming at increasing domestic connectivity. *Source: The Daily Star*

6 September 2018

PM urges all to exercise austerity in electricity

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina urged on September 6 all to exercise austerity in electricity consumption as they may not get it at such a lower rate in the future.

"With the improvement in socioeconomic condition of people, I think, they'll have to pay more what is spent on power production. So, my request is that all will have to exercise austerity in using electricity. I request you all to check the wastage of



Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina delivering speech after inaugurating the 'Power and Energy Week 2018' at Bashundhara International Convention City on September 6

electricity," she said.

She said her government has increased the country's power generation capacity to 20,000 megawatt in the last 10 years from 3,000 megawatt in 2009. Now some 90 per cent of the country's people enjoy the electricity facility, but it was only 47 per cent in 2009, she added.

The Prime Minister said this while inaugurating the 'Power and Energy Week 2018' at Bashundhara International Convention City in Dhaka. *Source: The Financial Express*

9 September 2018

PM urges int'l community to force Myanmar to take back Rohingya

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina urged on September 9 the international community

to come up with specific effective steps to force Myanmar to take back their nationals living in Bangladesh.

"Bangladesh and Myanmar have inked bilateral agreements for the safe and permanent repatriation of the forcibly displaced Myanmar nationals. To continue the pressure on Myanmar for implementing the agreements, I urge the international community to take specific effective steps," she said.

The Prime Minister said this while inaugurating the Regional Hub of the Islamic Development Bank (IsDB) in Dhaka at Radisson Hotel. This IsDB Regional Hub will cover 19 countries like Singapore, Australia, Thailand, India. *Source: Financial Express*



Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina addressing after inaugurating the Regional Hub of the Islamic Development Bank (IsDB) in Dhaka at Radisson Hotel on September 9

10 September 2018

India supplies 500 MW addl electricity to Bangladesh

India has started supplying an additional 500MW of electricity to Bangladesh. The power transfer from the West Bengal's Baharampur grid to Kushtia's



Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi inaugurating power transfer from West Bengal's Baharampur grid to Kushtia's Bheramara through a video conference, from Dhaka and New Delhi respectively, on September 10

Bheramara was inaugurated by Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina in Dhaka and Prime Minister Narendra Modi in New Delhi via videoconference on September 10.

The two Prime Ministers officially inaugurated the newly-built 500MW High-Voltage DC Back-to-Back Station 2nd Block on the occasion.

The two Prime Ministers also inaugurated construction work on the Bangladesh portion of the Akhaura-Agartala dual gauge rail line project and the Moulvibazar district Kulaura-Shahbazpur rail connection repair project. The project will build railway bridges, bridge and station buildings, platforms, rail lines and other rail infrastructure.

West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee and Tripura Chief Minister Biplob Kumar Deb also spoke via videoconference from Kolkata and Agartala respectively. *Source: Financial Express*

11 September 2018

US to play role in UNGA on Rohingya issue, says Bernicat

Ambassador in Dhaka Marcia Bernicat said on September 11 the US will play a strong role in the coming United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) for the repatriation of Rohingyas living in Bangladesh.



US Ambassador Marcia Stephens Bloom Bernicat met Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina at her official residence Ganobhaban on September 11

they'll be strong on the Rohingya issue," he said.

The US Ambassador highly appreciated Bangladesh's growth in the energy sector, saying her country is interested to invest in the sector and export LNG to Bangladesh. *Source: The Financial Express*

18 September 2018

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and Indian PM Narendra Modi launch work on cross-border oil pipeline

Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and her Indian counterpart Narendra Modi have jointly unveiled the plaque of a 130km cross-border oil pipeline

The US envoy came up with the comment during a meeting with Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina at her official residence Ganobhaban.

PM's Press Secretary Ihsanul Karim briefed reporters after the meeting.

He said Bernicat informed the Prime Minister that the USA will take the presidency of the United Nations in the coming UNGA. "The Rohingya issue will come up there and she (Bernicat) assured that



Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and her Indian counterpart Narendra Modi have jointly unveiled the plaque of a 130km cross-border oil pipeline project, known as Bangladesh-India Friendship Pipeline through video conference on September 18

project, known as Bangladesh-India Friendship Pipeline.

Besides, they inaugurated the construction of an India-financed railway line that will ease travel between Bangladesh and India.

The oil pipeline will supply 250,000 tonnes of diesel a year to Bangladesh. The diesel will be transported through a cross-border train from Assam's Numaligarh refinery to Dinajpur's Parbatipur depot.

They opened the work on the oil pipeline through videoconferencing on September 18

Sheikh Hasina attended the videoconference from her official residence Ganobhaban while Narendra Modi from his office in New Delhi.

Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi said the two countries implemented a number of projects within a short time which are the symbols of good relations between the two countries. *Source: Financial Express*

19 September 2018

Digital Security Bill passed

The much-debated Digital Security Bill 2018 was passed in parliament on September 19 with a harsh provision allowing police officials to search or arrest anyone without any warrant.

The bill got through by voice vote amid opposition from a number of Jatiya Party lawmakers, ignoring concern of journalists, owners of media houses and rights activists over some of its sections.

Section 43 of the new law says if a police official believes that an offence under the law has been or is being committed at a certain place, or there is a possibility of committing crimes or destroying evidence, the official can search the place or any person there.

In its final report on September 17, the parliamentary standing committee on posts, telecommunications and information technology ministry recommended that police would have to take permission from the director general of the Digital Security Agency, to be formed under the new law, before arresting anyone under the section.

Posts, Telecommunications and Information Technology Minister Mustafa Jabbar, who placed the bill before the House, then accepted his proposal, which was passed by voice vote. *Source: The Daily Star*

19 September 2018

JS passes Road Transport Bill-2018

Jatiya Sangsad on September 19 passed the much-talked about Road Transport Bill, 2018 with provisions of maximum five-year jail for any death or serious injuries caused by reckless or negligent driving and death penalty for intentional murder by driving.

Road transport and bridges minister Obaidul Quader placed the bill before the house seeking its immediate passage.

He asked that the passerby should obey the traffic rules when they move on roads.

He called on the political parties to instruct their party leaders and activists to go by the traffic rules when they would move on road.

The minister expressed satisfaction that in recent days most of the motorbike riders were using helmets.

Brushing aside the amendment proposals, the minister said the bill was finalised after a series of meeting with the stakeholders. *Source: The New Age*



Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina delivering her speech at Nelson Mandela Peace Summit at UN Headquarters in New York on September 24

24 September 2018

Fight climate change, protect human rights

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina has said world leaders must commit to settle all the international disputes and prevent conflicts to ensure global peace which is eluding.

They also must fight emerging global challenges like terrorism through stopping the flow of financing to the terrorists, and the source of supply of arms to the terrorists and their outfits, she said.

The Prime Minister was speaking at the Nelson Mandela Peace Summit organised at

PM receives two global awards

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina has received the IPS 'International Achievement Award' for her humanitarian and responsible policy in hosting the Rohingyas and the '2018 Special Recognition for Outstanding Leadership Award' for her farsighted leadership over the Rohingya issue.

The Inter Press Service (IPS), one of the world's leading news agencies, and the Global Hope Coalition, a network of three not-for-profit foundations based in New York, Zurich and Hong Kong honoured her with the two awards on September 27.

Under-Secretary-General of the UN Office of the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs Mark Lowcock, Canadian Minister for International Development Marie-Claude Bibeau spoke at the function.

Director General of IPS International Farhana Haque Rahman delivered the welcome address. *Source: Financial Express*



Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina received 'Special Distinction Award for Outstanding Leadership' Award at a programme at the Park Avenue of UN Headquarters in New York on September 27



Director General of IOM William Lacy Swing handing over Inter-Press Service Award to Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina at a programme at the UN Headquarters in New York on September 27



Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina speaking at the 73rd session at the UNGA in New York on September 27

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina has demanded immediate and effective implementation of the agreement signed between Myanmar and the UN on the solution of the ongoing Rohingya crisis

The crisis is putting immense socioeconomic pressure on Bangladesh as about 1.1 million Rohingya people have taken shelter in the country, she has said.

"We also wish to see immediate and effective implementation of the agreement concluded between Myanmar and the UN," she said while delivering her speech in the 73rd UN General Assembly on September 27.

The Prime Minister delivered her speech in Bangla as previously.

Mentioning that the Rohingya crisis has its origin in Myanmar, Sheikh Hasina said its solution also needs to be found there.

"We want an early, peaceful solution to the Rohingya crisis," she said.

She said Bangladesh was appalled by what it saw in UN reports about atrocities against the Rohingya who have now taken shelter in Bangladesh, which are tantamount to genocide and crimes against humanity. *Source: Financial Express*

the General Assembly Hall of the UN Headquarters on September 24 marking the 100th birth anniversary of anti-apartheid activist Nelson Mandela.

Sheikh Hasina also called for strengthening cooperation to achieve sustainable development goals, promote tolerance, preserve diversity, and protect the religious and ethnic minorities from discrimination and exploitation. *Source:*

Financial Express

27 September 2018

PM pushes UN to proceed fast on Rohingya deal

Report Compilation: Tahmina Begum, Mazharul Hoque, Md. Mamun Hossain



Kash flowers: A common scenic beauty of rural Bangladesh in early autumn



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