

Rise of Populists parties in EP Elections: Is Europe destined to change?

EBF Report: The rise of populism and euro-skepticism or some critics allege it is pseudo populism, continue to debate over immigration control, escalating trade wars and the Brexit drama loomed large for quite some time on the side lines of the recently held European Parliament elections.

Significantly, there were speculations and apprehensions all across Europe and in the pro-European camps that these groups, even if they do not emerge victorious, will gain a sufficient number of seats in the Parliament, enough to thwart the work of the pro-Europeans. Thanks, must go to the voters, mainly the



youths, who turned up in big numbers to cast their votes and foiled the upsurge and designs of the populists and nationalist groups.

Also, the 23-26 May 2019 European Parliament elections witnessed the rise of the populists and nationalist political parties in some member states, including France, Italy, U.K. and Spain, but their success was not what many had feared and predicted. The high turn-out of the voters (61%), which is a record in the last 20 years, showed that

the pro-European groups were far more motivated and desperate not to allow others to change the character of Europe. Although the populists and nationalist parties will not succeed to dominate in the European Parliament at least for the next five years- they gained 25% of the 751 seats, a remarkable rise from 20%, garnered five years ago. They have been able to consolidate their position in the EP and enough to make the day-to-day task of the pro-European groups difficult. They will now demand more power and concessions, especially on issues such as immigration, budget and border control.

Meanwhile, the populists and Euro skeptic parties of Le Pen in France, Salvini in Italy, Vlaamse Belang in Belgium and Nigel Farage in U.K. have made success, another euro skeptic anti-immigration and extreme nationalist Geert Wilder of Party for Freedom has utterly failed in the Netherlands bagging no seat in the parliament. In 2014, his party bagged 4 seats in the EP. In fact, the fear of a far-right takeover of EP has mobilized and polarised Europe's pro-European forces, resulting in a huge surge in turnout which ultimately led to the success of Greens and Liberal parties throughout Europe.

Yet, there is no reason to be complacent at the fact that the euro skeptic and the populist groups have failed to gain majority in the elections. Europe has been changing at regular intervals. The pro-Europe bloc has to remain united to find out ways to keep the character of an united-Europe unchanged. Talking to EBF, Ms.

Maria Laura Franciosi, founder President of the European Press Club in Brussels, expressed her dismay over the progress of the populist parties saying, although none of them has managed to get a majority, it will allow them to rule the Parliament. She has also expressed her disappointment at the triumph of the Brexit Party in UK and its leader, who according to her, has been financially supported by the US through a well-known bank. (She aired her comments on the EP elections in a separate news in this newsletter of EBF).

Now, with more voice in the Parliament, the populists and nationalist groups would try to push harder on issues like controlling immigration and the budget. They are also likely to try to stitch the plans of the pro-Europeans, pressing for more power to go to the nations rather than to a bureaucracy whom they consider elitist. However, what is welcoming for the pro-Europeans is that still the anti-EU forces remain divided, and may have trouble wielding significant power. What was significant in the 2019 EP elections was the decline of the mainstream political parties and an increased fragmentation. For the first time in 40 years, the centre-right and the centre-left groups would not have a majority. Both the groups lost their grounds with centrist Liberals, Greens and the Populists all gaining. Now the centre-right and centre-left will have to work in coalition with the Liberals, supported by Macron's party, to form a sustainable majority. On the other hand, the Greens will have a strong voice to carry forward their agenda. In the meantime, leaders of the two largest mainstream parties in the European Parliament ruled out working with the far-right and appealed for cooperation among pro-European parties. "From now on, those who want to have a strong European Union have to join forces", said Manfred Weber, leader of the centre-right European People's Party adding, his group would not cooperate "with any party that doesn't believe in the future of the European Union." In reality, it needs to be closely watched as to what shape the European Union takes in the next five years.

Demand for international recognition of 1971 Genocide in Bangladesh

The Hague: European Bangladesh Forum (EBF) organized a day-long program on "international recognition of 1971 Genocide in Bangladesh" on 23 March 2019 in the Hague, the Netherlands to step up efforts to have Pakistan's actions in Bangladesh in 1971 recognized as Genocide. Activists gathered outside the



International Court of Justice with banners and placards and chanted slogans demanding justice of 1971 Genocide and punishment for the perpetrators for their misdeeds in 1971 in Bangladesh. They also staged a protest demonstration in front of the newly set up Language monument (Shaheed Minar) in the Hague calling for international action.

As a part of the day-long program an international conference on 'international recognition of the 1971

Genocide in Bangladesh' was organized where a number of experts with international reputation, working on this area from the UK, America, Germany, The Netherlands, Belgium, Finland and Bangladesh participated. A documentary film titled, Blockade which examined the response of the peace movement to Pakistan's

violence in the early 1970s was also screened in the day long program. The director of the film from the United States came to participate in the program.

Speakers in the conference opined, when there is no justice in the society, the culture of impunity continues. The culture of impunity was in Bangladesh for years and decades. For that reason, the perpetrators should be brought to justice. Pakistan must compensate those distressed families and martyred families, who have been suffering for the last 48 years. They must seek forgiveness from Bangladesh, if they are looking for friendly bilateral relationship with Bangladesh.

Experts suggested to document the genocide, study similar events to find common patterns, assist victims of other genocides & to help to avoid new ones, if possible form joint history commissions to clear textbooks from misconceptions and jingoism especially to address the sorry state of history teaching in Pakistan and the reasons, as to why text books are written in such a deplorable way.

These processes are important because by identifying the causes, one can then try to prevent such things happening again. More collaboration is needed for a deeper connection with the intellectuals from Bangladesh, through the Ambassador in the Hague and with international institutions to bring close to this very dark chapter of the Bangladesh history.

Finally, the delegates at the seminar appealed and urged the international community to extend their support for the official recognition of 1971 Bangladesh Genocide and express sympathy for the victims of the atrocious crime. The delegates stated recognition of past tragedies like the 1971 Bangladesh Genocide would guide the humanity to achieve 'never again' of such heinous crime.



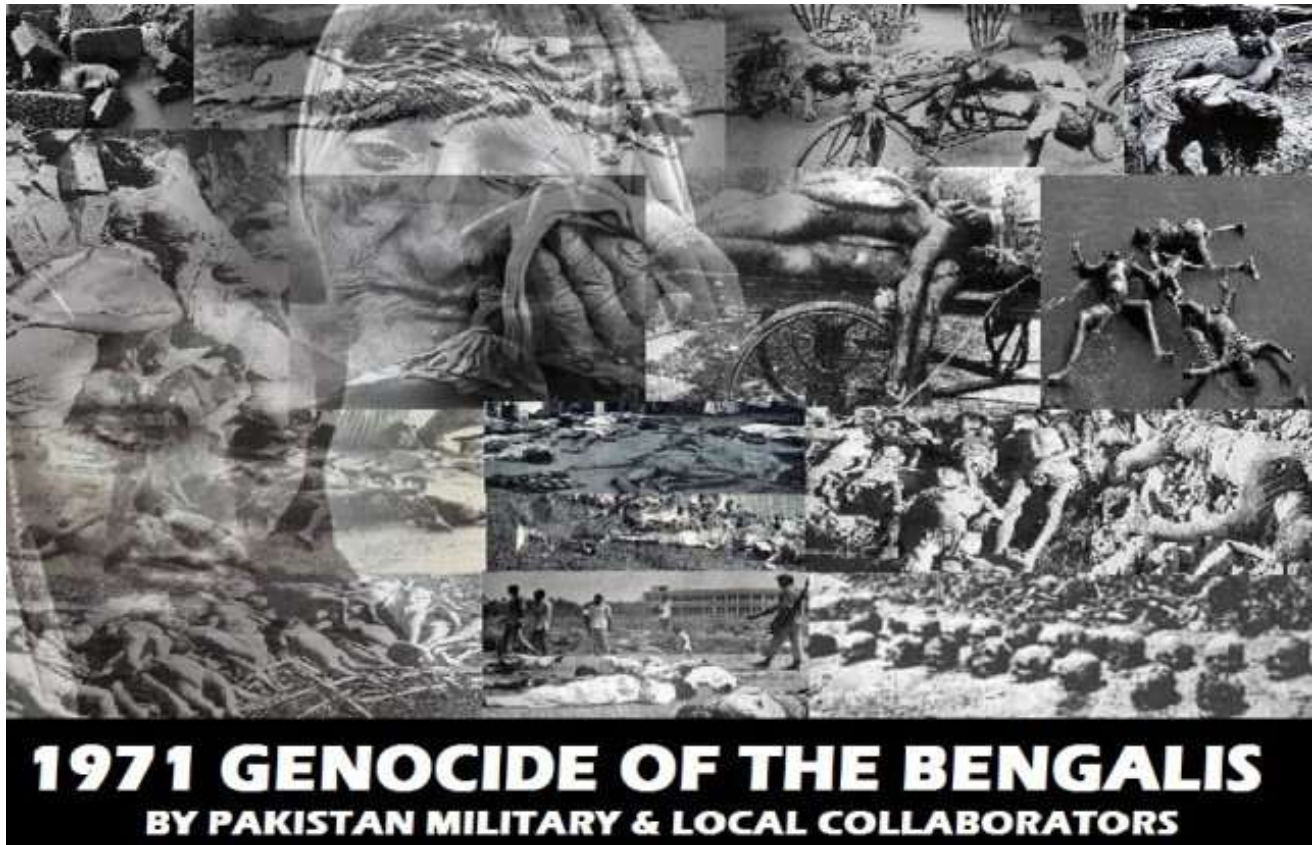
(Photo: Speakers of the Day. From left are Dr. Wolfgang-Peter Zingel, Chris Blackburn, Bikash Chowdhury, Duncan Bartlett, Arif Yusuf, Sheikh Mohammad Belal, Shomi Kasier and Ansar Ahmed Ullah)

EBF Vice President Bikash Chowdhury Barua opened the conference with his opening remarks and provided background of the thematic issue of the seminar. Jakob de Jong, Director of The Hague Peace, The Netherlands chaired the seminar, while Chris Blackburn, Political Analyst and Journalist, from the UK, Shomi Kaiser, daughter of martyred intellectual and writer Shahidullah Kaiser, Dr. Wolfgang-Peter Zingel, South Asia Institute (SAI), University of Heidelberg, Germany presented key note papers. Arif Yousuf, Film Director of BLOCAKDE from America and Duncan Bartlett, British journalist, Bangladesh Ambassador in the Netherlands Sheikh Mohammad Belal attended the seminar as honored guests and addressed while EBF President Ansar Ahmed Ullah moderated the panel discussion. Jahangir Chowdhury, AL Secretary of Belgium also spoke. Video messages of Dr. Meghna Guha Thakurta and Dr Nuzhat Chowdhury from Dhaka were screened on the day. Both are the members of the martyred intellectual families.

Among others Diplomat from the South African Embassy in the Netherlands Andre Stammel, Member of the Executive Board of PEN Finland Dr Mojibur Doftori, IT expat Mahmud Hassan, EBF Secretary Bikash Roy, Coordinator of Global Solidarity for Peace Committee M M Morshed, community leaders Murad Khan, Daud Khan Sohel, Khokon Sharif, Dutch-Bangladeshi textile entrepreneur Jasim Uddin Litton, social worker Monowar Mohammad took part in the open discussion.

They said that more than three million people were killed when the Pakistani Army used force to suppress an independence campaign. They also said there was widespread sexual violence against women, including rape and gang rape. “Bangladesh cannot move forward until it faces its past,” said Shomi Kaiser, whose father was killed by the Pakistani army when she was a child. “The fight for justice is a long battle,” she said. Kaiser said, it was appropriate to focus the campaign in the Hague because it is regarded as “the city of justice” due to its history of court cases trying crimes against humanity.

Dr Wolfgang-Peter Zingel, from the University of Heidelberg in Germany, told the European Bangladesh Forum: “The genocide in Bangladesh was not an accident of history.” Drawing comparisons with the Holocaust of Jews by the Nazis, Dr Zingel warned, “If you want to prevent such atrocities happening again,



you must look in detail at their causes and record them.”

British political analyst Chris Blackburn said, international cooperation was the best way to respond to human rights violations and noted that many of the issues from 1971 are still relevant to South Asia. “Some people say, ‘let sleeping dogs lie’,” said Blackburn. “But these are not sleeping dogs – these are dogs which are still biting.”

The film’s director Arif Yousuf said, he wanted to highlight the support by the United States government for the Pakistani army at that time, which he said was part of President Nixon’s strategy to contain Communism in Asia.

The Bangladesh Ambassador to the Netherlands, Sheikh Mohammad Belal, said, “No other country should face the injustice and trauma that Bangladesh has endured.” Bangladesh’s Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, whose father Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman was killed by soldiers loyal to Pakistan, has declared March 25th a national day to commemorate genocide. The date falls on the anniversary of the start of Operation Searchlight in 1971, which marked the start of military actions in what was then known as East Pakistan.

Bangladesh and Pakistan diplomatic tension intensifies: Bangladesh puts visas for Pakistani citizens on hold

Diplomatic tension between Bangladesh and Pakistan has intensified further as the Bangladesh High Commission in Islamabad has stopped issuing visas to Pakistani citizens since last week. Bangladesh has decided to stop issuing visas to Pakistani citizens, further worsening ties between Islamabad and Dhaka. The action will have major ramifications for intra-South Asian politics, according to daily Dhaka Tribune report. *(Photo: Bangladesh High Commission in Islamabad).*

Since last year, Bangladesh government led by Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina withheld approval for Pakistan's high commissioner to Dhaka following Pakistan High Commission's activities allegedly to destabilise the Hasina government. Pakistan High Commission officials last year were also found interfering with the poll process by supporting Opposition candidates besides promoting anti-India activities. "Issuance of any visa to Pakistani nationals remains suspended as the visa counter in Bangladesh High Commission in Islamabad has been closed since 13 May," Iqbal Hossain, counsellor (press) at the Bangladesh High Commission in Islamabad.



For the past seven months, the official said, there has been no visa officer at the high commission as the Pakistan government has been dithering on issuing a visa to the Bangladeshi diplomat. Hossain said Dhaka has informed the decision to the South Asia wing of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Pakistan. Iqbal Hossain's visa expired in March 30, but it has not been extended yet. Despite repeated reminders, there has been no response from the Pakistani authorities so far, a Bangladeshi official informed. The counsellor's wife and family have not been able to visit Pakistan, as Islamabad has not issued visas to them in the last six months. In March last year, Pakistan Foreign Ministry proposed Saqlain Syedah as its new high commissioner to Bangladesh, but Bangladesh refused to accept Syedah's "agreement" as Pakistan high Commissioner. Six months back, Bangladesh verbally notified Pakistan that it cannot accept Syedah's nomination, and asked for an alternative, but Pakistan hasn't come up with any alternative nomination yet.

Protest on Pakistan's objectionable comment

Earlier in February Bangladesh strongly protested "objectionable comments" about Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, father of the nation of Bangladesh on an official website of Pakistan. Bangladesh Foreign ministry summoned Shah Faisal Kakar, acting high commissioner of Pakistan in Dhaka and handed over a strongly worded protest note in this regard to the Pakistani envoy, ministry sources said. Replying to a question Pakistan Acting High Commissioner at that time said, he would send the protest of Bangladesh government to Islamabad. But while leaving the Foreign Ministry building the Pakistani Acting High Commissioner avoided the issue of summoning him to the Ministry. Instead, he told the newsmen that he had come to the Foreign Ministry to discuss with the Director General on different issues.

Photo Exhibition

EBF also organized a photo exhibition on the 1971 Genocide by the Pakistan Army and their local collaborators on the day in the hall, depicting the horrific scenes of the killings of Bengalis in Bangladesh.

Demonstration and Protest in front of the International Court of Justice

After the conference, EBF organized a protest rally in front of the International Court of Justice demanding international recognition of the 1971 Genocide in Bangladesh by Pakistan army. They waved banners and placards demanding trial of the perpetrators responsible for the Genocide in Bangladesh in 1971 in the International Criminal Court in the Hague.

Protest in front of the Language Monument in the Hague

A similar demonstration was held in front of the Language monument (Shaheed Minar) at the Zuider Park in the Hague demanding international recognition of the 1971 Genocide in Bangladesh and trial of the perpetrators for the killings.

European Journalist, Maria Laura talks to EBF: Expresses dismay at the rise of populist parties in Europe

EBF Report: Ms. Maria Laura Franciosi, a senior journalist and founder Chair of the Press Club Brussels Europe while talking to EBF last week expressed her dismay over the progress of the populist parties saying, although none of them has managed to get a majority it will allow them to rule the Parliament. She has also expressed her dismay at the triumph of the Brexit Party in UK and its leader who according to her has been financially supported by a private entrepreneur named Arron Banks. She is frustrated at the fact that the



parties which deny the very essence of Europe have taken the lead in Britain, France and Italy, joining extreme right parties in Hungary, Poland, Romania and Bulgaria. The triumph of the extreme right separatist party in Flanders in Belgium and the recent events in Austria complete this bleak scenery, said this elderly journalist, who is originally an Italian.

Explaining the term 'populist' the President of European Press Club Maria said, "even if they are called 'populist', these parties do not care about the people. They care only for the triumph of their supremacy dreams which will give them power to dominate the country, or the whole of Europe. If this is a trend, the idea of Europe will disappear in a few years with all the

achievements obtained so far'. She however, expressed her satisfaction over the brilliant success of the Green parties across Europe and said, 'the excellent success of the green parties and movements is a clear sign of the worry of the people about environmental issues. Unfortunately, they too have not enough votes to have a majority to pass laws affecting environmental issues. Then they have to go for compromises with other "kindred parties" to allow them to push for laws to be passed. Not easy". Maria said, "the only ray of hope is the fact the in the Netherlands there is a kind of revival of the left and the same in Spain where the socialist party had already positioned itself".

People are very upset because they have no sense of history, they want everything "now" without realizing that if you want something you have to strive to achieve it. Wealth, wellbeing, good governance, harmony, understanding and above all compassion do not come down from heaven: one has to fight to have them, and European achievements have been a good way to try to get there. Achievements which were the result of a lot of efforts after the destruction of wars, Nazi and fascist domination etc. People seem to have a very short memory, so they risk repeating the same mistakes, Maria further said adding, "I hope my pessimism is proved wrong. At the moment I am very disappointed because I have lived through the war and remember some of its horrors. Shall we go down that path yet again"? Maria added, Good news is that many more people went to vote which means that on the whole the interest for Europe has increased all over the continent including Britain and the second point is that people in the UK have given a clear message that whatever the decisions will be about the Brexit they will have to be clear and not bungled as they appeared to be with the incessant toing and froing of British and EU politicians to patch up a very bad agreement. One thing is sure: whatever the Brexit final agreement will be, it will certainly make many people unhappy even among those who voted for it in 2016 especially those who were convinced by completely botched information which painted a wrong idea of what European Union does. For Brexit I now fear it is too late to be able to patch it up. The only hope is that they will keep up the defense of the rights of the people who call Britain their home. Britain is essential for the future of Europe! I do hope we in the rest of Europe can accompany this transition to make it as painless as possible especially for the young people. As a journalist I also invite all my colleagues to be as honest as possible in reporting on these controversial issues: honesty and compassion should be the driving force of our work.

Are Rohingya camps becoming breeding grounds for violence and terrorism?

That the Rohingya camps in Ukhia, Tekhnaf in Coxsbazar district have become the breeding centres for all sorts of crimes including killings, kidnap, arson, rape, illegal drug business is nothing new. Only in last four months a total of 32 Rohingyas were killed in the camps, according to a report of Bangladesh leading newspaper Prothom Alo published yesterday (27 May 2019).



Refugee camps in many parts of the world are becoming recruitment grounds for terrorists, said a recent report of Reuter on Rohigya refugee camps. Quoting a government official, the head of Bangladesh's cabinet committee on law and order Mozammel Huq the report said, if this happens, it would affect Bangladesh and nearby countries.

According to the local citizens representatives , some vested quarters are engaged in making the environment in the camps unstable to delay the return of the Rohingyas to Myanmar and

shifting of them to other places within Bangladesh . At present there are 1118913 registered Rohingyas in 34 camps in Ukhia-Tekhnaf area. According to the report, at least 14 Rohingya terrorist groups in Coxsbazar Rohingya camps are now active and engaged in internal fights, clashes to get control of the illegal activities such as smuggling of Yaba tablets, human trafficking and over control of local markets.

According to a report of Reuter, violence has increased at the camps. The Rohingya refugees describe increasing fear in the camps, where armed men have raided shelters at night, kidnapped critics and warned women against violating conservative Islamic traditions. They even threatened not to go for work which according to them, is against Islam. The report further says, four women had received threats for going out to work for aid groups in the camps. Many women with jobs in the camps are experiencing paid employment for the first time in their lives.

The Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army (ARSA) is active in the camps, refugees say. So are several other armed groups. ARSA is also known as Harakah al-Yaqin - the movement of faith. Quoting a young refugee woman the report says, 'in the daytime, the al-Yaqin guys become normal people like other refugees. But at night it's like they have a kind of magical power. there are also fears. Officials worry that a turn to violence could make solving the refugee crisis through talks impossible.

It is reported that the Bangladeshi security forces guard the outside of the camps to stop refugees from leaving. But violent men run the crowded camps inside, especially at night, refugees told Reuters. In some parts of the camps, those men claim ties to ARSA, said more than six refugees. United Nations officials and other workers watching the group's activities say it is unclear how many of those men are under orders from the group's leadership. But some of them reportedly have asked wealthier refugees and shopkeepers to pay taxes. They say the money will be used to fight back in Myanmar, refugees said.



One refugee who volunteers as an aid worker in the camps told Reuters he witnessed a kidnapping in January by men he believed belong to ARSA. Men with wooden sticks moved quickly into one area of the camp and took away a man who had refused to attend one of ARSA's meetings, he said. "They just carried him off like a goat to the slaughter."

Myanmar government media said ARSA launched three attacks across the border in Myanmar early this year. In February, ARSA promised to continue its armed campaign. ARSA propaganda shows the group as ethnic freedom fighters and does not suggest a position on religious tradition. But some refugees and a report by an international non-governmental organization say ARSA members and Islamic leaders push for extremely conservative religious behavior.

British schools teaching radical Islam and extremism: ISIS funder in UK

There are always two sides of a coin. In one hand, the UK is supporting black money and ISIS, funder family. On the other hand, a secret government report makes people aware over 48 British Islamic schools are teaching negativity to future imams. The report has mentioned that the young imams are being trained in a network of Islamic schools across the UK. The report further says that the young imams are being trained in a network of Islamic schools across the UK that have been accused of promoting intolerance and misogyny.

Some priests from Darul Uloom madrasa disperse across Britain are marked as an extremist who moved to the UK from Islamic countries, an article in the Daily mail explained this matter descriptively. The main reason to send the kids from Muslims families to madrassas varies from the gender of kids. For girls, the reason is to keep them in a distance from the boys and for the boys, the reason is to teach Koran and the Sharia which is above secular law.

Children are brainwashed in Saudi/Wahhabi ideology which is known as true orthodox Islam. The details of Koran are used as the hard-line Islamic movement Deobandism and their training schools produced the Taliban in Pakistan and Afghanistan. The ban on music is similar to the Islamic state and those who break the rules get punished for that. These kids are not trained to function in the large society as they really follow the state syllabus. There was an investigation by Ofsted four years ago after leaflets stating that music and dancing were the acts of the devil. The school was with 175 people and Channel 4 investigated in 2011 that these people are taught to hate Jews, Christians and Hindus and other infidels.

The case of an ISIS funder

A huge number of individuals from South East Asia is moving to the United Kingdom with millions of laundered money for the last few years. A case of Bangladeshi national recently shocked the National Crime Agency as he has laundered a huge amount of money from Bangladesh and investing it in properties in the UK as well as United Arab Emirates, Malaysia and some other nations. According to media reports, Md. Shahid Uddin Khan (Army No: BA002428, Course: 8-BMA, Commission Date: 10-06-1983), who along with his wife Farjana Anjum and daughters had smuggled out millions of dollars from Bangladesh and invested in various business ventures in the United Arab Emirates and the United Kingdom. Shahid Uddin Khan, his wife Farjana Anjum and daughters Shehtaz M Khan, Pinaz M Khan and Parisa Pinaz Khan have obtained immigrant status in Britain under Visa Tier 1, Vide VAF Number 511702. As per the existing immigration rules of the United Kingdom, anyone willing to obtain immigration under the investor's category is required to invest at least two million pounds in any business venture.

On January 17, 2019, the Counter-Terrorism and Transnational Crime (CTTC) of Bangladesh Police raided the house in Dhaka owned by Md. Shahid Uddin Khan. The house was allegedly used as a warehouse for arms, explosives and propaganda materials of ISIS. During the raid, a large volume of weapons, detonator, counterfeit Bangladesh currency notes and jihadist materials of ISIS were recovered by the CTTC unit. According to media reports, four months before the Sri Lanka attacks, ISIS funder Md. Shahid Uddin Khan had sent US\$ 92 thousand to his Colombo-based jihadist contact via Dubai. He also has been financing jihadist groups with the ulterior agenda of unseating the democratically elected government in Bangladesh. This is a shocking matter that British authorities are not taking any steps in investigating the case of Md. Shahid Uddin Khan and his family and send them back to Bangladesh. *(Edited by Sabrina Rahman Shanto, EBF. Original: Damsana Ranadhiran)*

Issues influencing the relations between the two friendly neighbouring countries: Bangladesh-India

(by Sabrina Rahman Shanto. Sabrina is Master's in Human Geography with specialisation in Globalisation, Migration and Development at Radboud University, Nijmegen, Netherlands and Intern at BASUG. She writes the following for EBF)

The relationship between the two neighbouring countries- Bangladesh and India- are traditionally socio-cultural and economic. Both the countries have a shared history, a common heritage, cultural ties, love for art, culture and literature. Bangladesh and India also share a common border of 4096 km and have bilateral ties from 1971 which help both of the countries in each and every kind of investment like power and energy, partnership development, transport, culture, river water sharing etc. (Delhi Renew Teesta Water Pledge, 2019). Besides these ties, both countries also share bonding further than a strategic partnership which includes value, history, language and democracy (Delhi Renew Teesta Water Pledge, 2019). In this article, I will mainly focus on the improvement of prevailing relations between the two neighbouring countries - Bangladesh- India. I choose this focus because there are already some tasks which are completed

successfully for this bonding but there are still some tasks which are pending because of some contradiction. My goal of this article is to show how a difficult task is going forward without hampering the relations between countries as well as improving the relationship between them. For this paper, I will mention four Memoranda of Understanding (MoU), the displaced people from Myanmar and the Teesta water sharing agreement to make my arguments more authentic. Due to some limitations, not all aspects can be covered. However, the significance of these outcomes will help to understand the improvement of prevailing relation between two countries



(Bangladesh-India). Bangladesh and India got engaged for four Memoranda of Understanding (MoU) to strengthen their bilateral cooperation according to the Delhi Renew Teesta Water Pledge in 2019. The first agreement is to provide a mid-career training to 1800 civil servants from Bangladesh. The second agreement is on cooperation in the field of medicinal plants. The third agreement is on reducing corruption. The last one is to simplify the investments in the Indian Economic Zone in Mongla. According to Delhi Renew Teesta Water Pledge (2019), Bangladesh is helping Rohingyas from Myanmar and as a humanitarian gesture, India wanted to support them and give them security which was appreciated by the Bangladesh Foreign Minister AK Abdul Momen. 22nd April, 2017. Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina visited India and signed contracts on nuclear energy, defence and electricity but the contract for the share of Teesta river water was still pending (Hindustan Times, 2018). According to Rashid (2018), Indian External Affairs Minister Sushma Swaraj announced in May 2018 that without the consent of West Bengal it will not be possible to sign the contract of Teesta River. Teesta is a very important river for both Bangladesh and India. In one hand, India has a plan to irrigate 9.32 lakh hectares area and use the water from Teesta and on the other hand, this plan will hamper 21 million Bangladeshi who lived in the basin area of Teesta River while only 1 million 30 thousand Indians will be affected. The ratio is 70 for Bangladesh and 30 for India. Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee had appointed expert committee whose decision was in favour of Bangladesh. It is also discussed that in 2011 the draft agreement was made for the Teesta river and there 37.5% was for Bangladesh and 42.5% was for India. The rest 20% was for river navigability but due to the disagreement of West Bengal chief minister, the agreement was not completed. There was also a proposal for the replacement of Teesta River with Dudkumar River.

However, there was less water than Teesta and also this river originates from Bhutan which means a tripartite agreement (Bangladesh-Bhutan-India) is required. There is a Joint River Commission of Bangladesh and India which is established in 1972 for examining the effect of the dam. According to Delhi Renew Teesta Water Pledge (2019), India is working for quickly signing the long pending Teesta water

sharing agreement. India's External Affairs Minister Sushma Swaraj assured this issue while visiting Bangladesh Foreign Minister AK Abdul Momen. Despite of having these obligations and disagreements, the treaty is on the way to implement.

Till now, this treaty didn't create any conflict between countries. It just took a long time to solve all the difficulties. The agreement is going to be successful because of the respectful relationship between the two countries. Otherwise, there are some gaps where some conflicts could be created. Both countries even agreed that they are working more closely than before in every sector (Delhi Renew Teesta Water Pledge, 2019). This relationship is even extending in the field of technology, energy and security (Delhi Renew Teesta Water Pledge, 2019).

Najmun Nahar: flying Bangladesh's flag across globe for peace

Dubbed as Flag Girl Bangladesh's Najmun Nahar has reached Laos Four Thousand Irelands. Najmun Nahar is the first Bengali female world traveller who has travelled more than hundred countries with the flag of Bangladesh. She has created an unprecedented history through her journey. She is travelling all over the world as the herald of peace holding a flag of Bangladesh. Najmun has created a record of representing Bangladesh's flag in 126 countries around the world.

Najmun started travelling from a young age. Her mission is to travel every country on the planet with Bangladesh's flag to promote peace and humanity. She also works as a peace activist around the world visiting people in remote areas to exchange history, culture and heritage.

It was in 2000, that she started her world tour through participation in an International Adventure Programme at Panchmari, Bhopal in India. She upheld the national flag of Bangladesh before the participants of 80 countries. At the same time, she went to Panchmari, Bhopal in India. This is the first time ever in her life that she travelled to a foreign country! She then in 2017 travelled to New Zealand as 93rd country. She reached the flag of Bangladesh to the highest summit. *By - Ansar Ahmed Ullah*



Counterterrorism: Washington Dhaka to work

Bangladesh and the US recently agreed to strengthen cooperation on counterterrorism and civilian security issues, noting that security cooperation was a key component in bilateral relations between the two countries, according to the recent news of UNB in Dhaka, capital of Bangladesh.

The issues came up for discussion at the 7th Bangladesh-US Security Dialogue held in the city recently. Ferdousi Shahriar, director general of the foreign ministry's Americas wing, and Michael F Miller, deputy assistant secretary of the Bureau of the Political Military Affairs at the US State Department, led their respective sides in the dialogue.

Bangladesh requested the US to send back Rashed Chowdhury, a convicted killer of Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, to Bangladesh to face justice, according to the foreign ministry. The US side reiterated its support to the armed forces and law enforcers of Bangladesh in enhancing capacity through various forms of trainings, sharing of information, sophisticated equipment and joint exercises. Bangladesh again stated its "zero-tolerance" position against any form of terrorism. Information and data sharing were identified as a very vital area of cooperation in nabbing terrorists and preventing crimes.

British Bangladeshi teen who joined IS: *Seeing 'severed head' didn't faze her: NO regret*

One of the three schoolgirls who left east London in 2015 to join the Islamic State group says she has no regrets, but wants to return to the UK. Shamima Begum, 19, (in the photo below) made the remarks in an interview with the Times at a Syrian refugee camp where she lives alone.



She talked about seeing "beheaded heads" in bins -- but said that it "did not faze her", according to the report. Shamima said she was nine months pregnant and wanted to come home for her baby. She had two other children who had both died. She also described how one of her two school friends that had left the UK with her had died in a bombing. The fate of the third girl is unclear. According to the report, Bethnal Green Academy pupils Shamima and Amira Abase were both 15, while Kadiza Sultana was 16, when they left the UK in February 2015. They flew from Gatwick Airport to Turkey after telling

their parents they were going out for the day. They later crossed the border into Syria. *(Photo: from right: Shamima Begum, Amira Abbas and Khadiza Sultana)*

"I'm not the same silly little schoolgirl who ran away four years ago," Shamima said. After arriving in Raqqa, she stayed at a house with other newly arrived brides-to-be, she told the Times. "I applied to marry an English-speaking fighter between 20 and 25 years old," she said. Ten days later she married a 27-year-old Dutch man who had converted to Islam. She has been with him since then, and the couple escaped from Baghuz -- the group's last territory in eastern Syria -- two weeks ago. Her husband surrendered to a group of Syrian fighters as they left, and she is now one of 39,000 people in a refugee camp in northern Syria.



Asked by Times journalist Anthony Loyd whether her experiences of living in the one-time IS stronghold of Raqqa had lived up to her aspirations, Begum said that seeing her first "severed head" in a bin "didn't faze me at all". "It was from a captured fighter seized on the battlefield, an enemy of Islam. "I thought only of what he would have done to a Muslim woman if he had the chance," she said. (BD News24.Com)

Promote deeper understanding of peaceful teachings of Islam

By- Ansar Ahmed Ullah: London: Hundreds of people came together at Britain's biggest mosque Baitul Futuh in Morden on 15 May to break fast, share food and learn more about Ramadan as part of the 'The Big Iftar' an event organised and hosted by the Ahmadiyya Muslims, a community who live by the motto, 'Love for All, Hatred for none.' The event, presided over by Ibrahim Akhlaq, National Secretary Tablig and conducted by Nadim Vendeman, Asst. Secretary Tablig was aimed to shed light on the concept of Ramadan fasting and to promote "a deeper understanding of the peaceful teachings of Islam", was attended by people from different faiths and ethnic backgrounds.



London Brick Lane Mosque's Iftar

Brick Lane Mosque organised an iftar party on 12 May for its well wishers, supporters and worshippers. Amongst the guests who attended the Iftar was the Bangladesh High Commissioner to the UK Saida Muna Tasneem, Tower Hamlets Mayor John Biggs and Rushanara Ali, MP. Other dignitaries included counsellors,



community and faith leaders. *(Photo: Bangladesh High Commissioner to the UK Saida Muna Tasneem is speaking at the Iftar party at East London mosque.)*

Prior to fast breaking at a brief discussion meeting chaired by the President of Brick lane Mosque and conducted by the Vice President Harmuz Ali, High Commissioner Saida Muna Tasneem said, as the historical Brick Lane Mosque is considered to be the main mosque of Bengali Muslims, we have a duty to

reach out to other faith community. She added the mosque could do inter-faith work since we live in a multi-racial society to promote community cohesion. Mayor John Biggs gave a brief account of the safety measures the Council has taken to safeguard institutions of faith. Rushanara Ali MP mentioned the recent New Zealand & Sri Lanka attacks and reminded all of us to be on guard.

Terror attacks in Sri Lanka and its economic impact

The events in Sri Lanka show that ISIS cancer isn't defeated or even in remission, but rather it is metastasizing since its loss of a caliphate first in Iraq and then finally Syria. What is growing clearer with each day is that the United States and its allies will likely have to contend with extremist, Islamist terrorism for decades to come. Before the devastating terror attack in Sri Lanka last month, orchid farmer Chatura Cabraal was delivering more than 1,000 flowers a week to luxury hotels in the capital, Colombo. "Now they call us for orders of 50 flowers," said Mr Cabraal. "We're still harvesting the flowers, you can't wait for good times, but we're just throwing money away."



After the Easter Sunday bombings, which killed more than 250 people in hotels and churches across the country, tourists have vanished. Mr Cabraal is praying they come back soon. "If the government gets a hold of the situation in a few months, it should get better," he said. "If it takes a year, we might be looking at a scenario of going under." Sri Lanka has been working to get its economy back on track since accepting a \$1.5bn IMF restructuring program in mid-2016, including

revamping its tax system and working to reduce debt. But in 2018 growth fell to 3 per cent, its slowest rate of expansion in more than a decade. The government is predicting a 30 per cent drop in tourism volumes year on year, which would translate into a \$1.5bn hit to the tourism sector's revenues. Tourism accounts for 5 per cent of the country's gross domestic product and is its third-largest source of foreign currency. The terror attack orchestrated by a homegrown militant group came at a bad time for the island nation, which was already struggling to recover from a political crisis last year that deterred foreign investment. While Sri Lankan authorities say they have taken "measures to normalise the situation" and dismantled the extremist network, the precarious security environment coupled with political uncertainty in the run-up to next year's presidential and parliamentary polls threatens to slow down the country's recovery.