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Editorial: The Joy of Words

Sudarshana Jha*

ABSTRACT
Spoken or written words have tremendous power. They influence peoples and civilizations in most significant manner. Words can enable people to come closer or do tricks forcing them to lock horns. Words help us look around the world and form meanings while the meanings help the words to have their strength. This article is based on the reflections of the author about the art of the spoken and written words in shaping human lives across civilizations and ages. Words in any form have given human beings an edge over other species on the earth. The article revolves around the eclectic relationship between the author and the words and brings out the nuances of writing as an art form as well as a unique means of expressions.

Keywords: spoken or written words, purpose of writing, writing as an art form, words as means of expression

‘Words are mirrors of the society, displaying the emotions of those who dare to pen their thoughts’

Writing is one of the most archaic and beautiful forms of art. Humans have been engraving their mark on the canvas of history since the beginning of time. From cave paintings to the most complicated of research papers, the drive to write has always been embedded in our species. One may wonder the reason for writing, is it the euphoria of knowing that one can create worlds out of thin air, or perhaps it is the desire to immortalise oneself on paper? This mysterious desire to pen one’s thoughts, this desire to communicate words the pages on which history is written. An individual has a cosmos inside their minds, a universe filled with hopes, fears and experiences. Writing gives these microcosms a physical form. Some write for solace, to gain comfort from their own words, some write for fame, to gain recognition in worlds beyond, some write for others, to throw light on issues which the world is blind towards. Whatever may be the purpose, but it is undeniable that writing propels one’s thoughts into the realm of the living.

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The words fly out of the minds of writers onto the paper, making an ecosystem of wondrous thoughts. Writing is the most powerful of weapons; one can silence the voice of the masses, the mind cannot be quelled. The mind desires to be expressed; writing is an instrument through which people from divergent walks of life come together; writing is an art which enables the brain to express itself. The writing evokes emotion, and writing empowers the common man. This noble art is available to all those who seek it. The scripts tell us a story - a story from the past, a reminiscence of the present and plea of those who were pushed beneath the foot of power-hungry.

Words on paper, stone or even leaf display a tale of glorious past of kings and queens, they show a warfront filled with voiceless individuals who were slain for the greatness of those kings and queens. Writings about the beautiful lives of aristocracy empower the common man to read between the lines of history about the plight of the poor. These ancient texts have the power to convey the emotion which was in the mind of one who was writing. One can close one’s eyes and open one’s minds to the vision of authors and writers of the past. Words are not merely physical manifestations of thought on paper. Words are powerful ‘mantras’ which evoke emotions, feelings and minds of those reading. This unassumingly powerful weapon is seldom utilised by the masses.

It is undeniable that this sword can be wielded by any person who dares to. This sword can be used to protect or to pounder. This weapon can be a saviour or a destroyer. A writer can create worlds or be the cause of the destruction of one. Authors give themselves too little credit. Writing is simply not limited to books and paper; words of a powerful creator can etch themselves on the minds of the masses. Writing is an instrument which can dampen rage of people or amplify the fire in the hearts of people.

For many, writing is a form of therapy. During times of peril, many find solace in the blankness of paper. Writing helps a person create a safe place of their own. Writing gives many an outlet for all their bottled emotions. The mind and its thoughts are a stream of feelings which cascade onto paper. Writing rejuvenates a battered mind and clears the ‘emotional gunk’ out of the brain, ensuring a free flow of emotion and thought. Writing can be a path towards self-discovery for people.

Writing is perhaps the only way for many souls to continue living in this world of the living, even after passing away. A stranger’s tale can be close to the heart of many. Writing connects us as a species. Writing binds our loosely defined world. It does not have any boundaries, words recognise no lines on the map, nor are they hindered by language barriers. Words are potent manifestations of thought which exist in and around us. The realm of written words is a strange one. A single word can hold as much power as an ancient, lengthy text. A small phrase can energise the masses, lead revolutions and free nations. ‘Ahimsa’ is a single word; however, its significance is worlds beyond our imagination.
Writing tells the author a story, a story about their self, a tale of what they see, a map of the society and their soul. Some write for others; some feel pleasure in evoking emotion in others. Some feel great satisfaction in creating an otherworldly experience for those who read their works. My mind is etched with words of great people who lived before me; my mind is a vessel for knowledge that writers wish to fill.

I write for no one. I let my words write for me. I let my subconscious hold onto the reigns of my mind. My words are nor mine, but are merely an instrument for my mind; my words give form to my incoherent thoughts. I am a selfish person, for my words are just for me. I write for everyone, for I know that I am connected to every being on this planet, I am a part of their subconscious as they are of mine, and I understand that the need to separate myself from others no longer exists. I open my mind’s eye to look beyond what is reality and write about what I see in the universe. I write about worlds which live in my mind; I write to quell my fears, I write for my world, both physical and emotional. My words are never mine; my words belong to the universe; I am merely borrowing them. I try to speak the language of the wind. I write for authors, singers, peddlers, criminals. I write for all those who care enough to read my words. I write for those who are invisible. I write to show the beauty of the mind.

For me, writing is an escape from my mind. I write to rid myself of thoughts which plague my conscience. Albeit I am not that great at it and have a long way to go; writing is my art. My words are my songs. Although sometimes I am terrible at it, writing is a passion of mine. I love the feeling of words flying out of my brain onto the paper when my words paint the blank paper into a thousand colours. I paint my world with words filled with emotion and thought. I write for the world of living and dead.

An unfortunate incident which displays the power of words is the one which occurred during the Second World War. ‘Mokusatsu’, said the man. Little did he know at that time that his words were going to modify the course world by its catastrophic outcome. It was July of 1945. The second world war was going on full swing. Leaders from the US, the United Kingdom, Russia and China had given an ultimatum to Japan that would end the Second World War. They said that should Japan negatively respond; the result would be ‘prompt and utter destruction’. According to the US National Security Administration (NSA), reporters asked Japan’s prime minister at the time, Kantaro Suzuki, how he intended to respond, which he replied in Japanese, mokusatsu’. The word mokusatsu is composed of two different characters. Moku symbolises ‘silent’ and satsu is ‘kill’. The prime minister had used that word many times previously and intended it to mean “no comment” However; foreign media interpreted it as ‘treat with silent contempt’ or ‘take into account’ (to ignore), as the categorical rejection by the Prime Minister. The Americans were annoyed by the
apparently arrogant tone in the Japanese prime minister’s translated response. International news agencies reported to the world that in the eyes of the Japanese government, the ultimatum was ‘not worthy of comment.’ The atomic bomb was launched on Hiroshima 10 days later. We all know the delirious aftermath.

The beautiful phrase ‘Inqilab Zindabad’ or ‘long live the revolution’, was coined by Urdu poet and freedom fighter Hasrat Mohani in 1921, and it transformed itself into the principal slogan of millions who marched under Mahatma Gandhi’s leadership to demand the end to colonial rule. Books and newspapers such as ‘Kesari’ enabled authors and freedom fighters to spread their word and ideology pan India. It was the words and writings of authors which enabled out the nation to orchestrate the freedom struggle.

‘A Madman’s Diary’ by Lu Hsun (also written as Lu Xun) is a wondrous example of how our words impact the world. It was one of the few short stories in China doing the rounds almost a hundred years ago in 1919. The powerful narrative affected the whole population of China. It triggered a gush of morality and people stopped the age-old custom of having human flesh. Thus, the course of Chinese history changed forever under the influence of words which no force could have accomplished.
India-South Korea: From Economic Ties to Strategic Partnerships

Syed Mohammad Raghib*

ABSTRACT
This paper examines how the decades-old Korean crisis still emits its toxic smoke of war in the region and blocks the developmental processes. The paper also looks at relationships between New Delhi and Seoul – two very significant countries of Asia. India is committed to promoting peace and prosperity with Seoul in the field of trade, defence and security. The friendship and commitment of these two developing countries to further expand their bilateral trade is the outcome of the relationships of last few decades. Both the countries have increased their trade volume from $20.55 billion in 2011 to $21.5 billion in 2018. The continuing war-like situation in the Korean region is a matter of concern for the whole world. The paper critically examines the Indian stand on the whole nuclear issues, peace in the region and the Indian economic interest in the long run vis-à-vis Korea.

Keywords: crisis, development, nuclear agreement, regional power, sanctions, India, Korea

INTRODUCTION
India and South Korea have deep friendly relations for a long time. These two Asian countries are not geographically very close to each other, but in terms of relations, they are very adjacent. South Korea is a very tiny country and a developed country, which has a strong economy and vast technological advancement and strength especially in terms of electronics item, automobile sectors. It is known for a stable economy and highest level of press freedom among the Asian counties. Due to its economy, it is the member of G-20 as well.

The Korean Peninsula was historically the outcome of a big kingdom in the late 7th century “Three Kingdoms of Korea”, and it was ruled by the Goryeo Dynasty (918-1392) and the Joseon Dynasty (1392- 1897). In the process of power expansion, Empire of Japan annexed the Korean Empire in 1910 and treated as a colony until 1945. During the end of World War II, Japan defeated by the Allied Powers, and signed an Instrument of Surrender in 1945, afterwards the Korean annexation

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end. Korea was divided and administered control between the two superpowers. In a very short period, Korea becoming the Republic of Korea in 1948, but the political situation was still volatile in the region. The Korean War started in 1950 when North Korea began its invasion on South, and the long three years’ war ended in 1953 after the armistice signed on 27 July 1953, 2. The destruction during the war suffered both countries and halted their industrial production, which affects the economy drastically. Since the war ended, the flame of enmity and difference still burns due to old conflict, both countries facing war like situation often.

South Korea ended its authoritarian rule in 1987 and given space to implement the most advanced democracy with a greater level of freedom for the press, which is not visible anywhere in Asia. The Korean borders are highly sensitive, and the United Nations and world leaders are always trying to calm down the war rhetoric which often comes from the ruler side. South Korea is doing economically good due to its vibrant plan of economic growth. In 2018 its GDP was 1619.42 billion US dollars, and it has 2.61 percent value of world economy that is a good sign of continuing economic progress in the competitive world even in the region, which is having China and Japan as some big economic players.

Even China is a neck to neck competitor of the US, and Japan is not less than anyone in the region, so the Korean GDP figure is substantial growth indicator of its economy. In the list of per capita income, South Korea lower than Ethiopia, Haiti and even Yemen and about 40 percent below than India’s in early 1950. Gradually the country improved its industrial output, agricultural production, exports of electronics items and improved a lot in all sectors. Korea was one of the emerging economies since 1965; South Korea’s industry growing at more than twice the North’s rate, GNP in the South has expanded at about one and a half time that of the North – about 12 percent annually compared with 7 percent to 8 percent. The approximate real Gross National Product (GNP) per capita for five countries for the year 1971 is given in Table 1.

### Table 1: Approximate real Gross National Product (GNP) per capita for the year 1971

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sl. No.</th>
<th>Countries</th>
<th>1970 US $</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>India</td>
<td>Less than 100 US $</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>China</td>
<td>Roughly 150 US $</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>North Korea</td>
<td>Roughly 300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>South Korea</td>
<td>About 250</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Taiwan</td>
<td>More than 400 US $</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Source: CIA Report, Intelligence Memorandum, May 1972, p. 7)

**THE RIVALRY BETWEEN NORTH AND SOUTH KOREA TO NARROW DOWN PEACE**

The rivalry and cloud of wars have always been around the Korean Peninsula. We often heard that North Korea is going to test missile and tension further increased there. Even the United States and North Korea continue to mount amid missile test and war taunts and rhetoric against each other’s to further escalate the war. The rivalry between North and South Korea started from day one when Japan defeated and signed the peace agreement with the US and its ally. In the peace agreement between Japan and the Allied power, both Korea become free from the Japanese colonial rule. However, the situation turns into worse, North Korea becomes the ally of USSR, and South Korea joined the American camp. Both governments took a new shape and joined the opposite camp.
The New York Times described the formation of both state…….

In 1948, the American backed, anti-communist southern administration, based in Seoul, declared itself the Republic of Korea, it was led by Syngman Rhee, who lived in exile in the United States for many years and was installed as the South Korean leader by the office of Strategic Services, a predecessor to the Central Intelligence Agency. Soon after, the Soviet-backed, communist northern administration, based in Pyongyang, declared itself the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea. Its leader was Kim Il-sung, who fought alongside communist forces during the Chinese civil war and was the grandfather of North Korea’s current dictator, Kim Jong-un (New York Times, 01 January 2018).

The Cold War, which was already going on between two powers, chose the Korean land for their rivalry that turned into Korean War during1950-53. The war was so devastating in which thousands of people killed more than double injured and displaced. There was no precise number which provides a proper figure, but as per the estimation around three to four million people were killed, among them mostly dead may have been civilians. The social harmony between the peoples badly damaged and enmity become the prime force to rule the Peninsula. Finally, both Korea signed the Armistice Agreement at Panmunjom on 27 July 1953, which halt the war temporary but hostilities continue going on. Due to the highest level of conflict between these two neighbours 20,000 American forces continue presence there, and one time hundreds of American weapons were based there for any further eventuality. The numbers of troops and nuclear weapons vary as per the political situation in the Korean Peninsula.

The three years long Korean War damaged infrastructure in both countries and even country structure but helped the world power to penetrate in the region in the absence of power vacuum. Japan also did the same crime during the occupation of Korea (1910-1945); they killed people to suppress their demand for freedom, and so on. During these three years, the state formulation completed. After the two years of Korean peace, the war broke up because the pressure comes from the different power block and for the domination of power in the region. South Korea started the path of peace and development instead of looking towards the military preparedness for the war. However, North Korea was rigid to build its military strength and neglected the people development.

The Korean Armistice Agreement which was made under UN command on July 1953 was purely in the interest of stopping the fight and substantial loss on both sides and it ended the hostilities due to the Korean War. Both sides agreed and created a four-kilometre wide buffer zone also called a ‘Demilitarized zone’ for the sake of peace. The Geneva conference held in 1954 and ended without a declaration for a unified Korea due to lack of political will from both sides. A unified command achieved after South Korea adopted a policy toward achieving a unified Korea under democratic reform, but North Korea seeks to a new debate of communizing in the entire Peninsula. Afterwards, there was an ongoing conflict between North and South Korea has been going on, the World has its keep its eye on North Korea’s next move.

However, the cloud of war still visible due to the colossal gap and coordination between countries and for this, North Korea is more responsible, which constantly threatening Seoul through missiles and nuclear arms. Regular missile tests by North Korea spreading fear and threat for South Korea, more than that it disturbing the peace in the region. India’s always believe in the bilateral negation of any issues and don’t want war in the region. India is also ready to mediate for the sake of peace.
and development in the region, which is the only solution visible for future peace in the Korean Peninsula. India’s relations and its economic and defence engagements with South Korea is the main reason for dealing with issues with an amicable way. Since more than 72 years of enmity did nothing but the height of arrogance and military build-up and arms race within the region for the sake of supremacy and tyranny. Unnecessarily arms race will bring the war in the region and India to believe in the peace due to its interest there.

**INDIA-SOUTH KOREA RELATIONS SINCE 1973**

India and South Korea had a long engagement, since May 1948 when the UN held the general elections, India was appointed as a Chairman for the nine-member UN Temporary Commission on Korea (UNTCOK) under Mr KPS Menon. During the Korean War, India deployed an Army medical unit to the 60th Parachute Field Ambulance, so the relations with indirect way started from the Korean War. The diplomatic relations between these two countries started officially since 1973, which is going on smoothly. The relations between the two countries are moving ahead despite the international situation and regional political complications. India is having a close association with other neighbours like Japan, North Korea and China and having distanced with any aggression or use of military power against each other. Recently Prime Minister of India, Mr Narendra Modi visited Korea and stressed on agriculture dominated the economy to an economy led by industry and services. He also said that India, as a country of 1.25 billion people, is going through a great transition, and its changing. His speech was mostly based on the economy, he said that...

India has emerged as a land of opportunities. While we work for realizing the ‘Indian Dream’, we seek like-minded partners. And, among them, we see South Korea is truly natural partner. India-Korea Business relations have come a long way in the past decade, and especially closer in the last few years. India is among top 10 trade partners of Korea and India is the 6th largest export destination for Korean goods. Our trade volume has reached 21.5 billion Dollars for the calendar year 2018. The negotiations to upgrade the Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement have been fast-tracked to achieve the bilateral trade target of 50 billion Dollars by 2030. Not just trade, in investment terms also we are seeing a positive turn. And, Koran investments into India have reached a cumulative figure of almost 6 billion Dollars (India’s PM Speech in Korea)\(^5\).

**AN ECONOMICAL AND TRADE DEVELOPMENT BETWEEN TWO COUNTRIES**

Since the end of the Korean War in 1953, Soul started development process across the country. Initially, the process was slow but post 1963 it’s become visible. In the 1960s, Korea embarked on the promotion of import and export, labour-intensive light manufacturing sectors like bicycles and textiles despite its agricultural subsistence. The quality of industrial teaching professional qualification and industrial skill training programmes also promoted, so the quality of industries improved a lot. They used technology obtaining through foreign licensing and adapted for domestic production especially electronics, and industrial goods.

The second oil crisis in late 1970 harmed the Korean economy. The economic condition for Korean substantially deteriorated in the late 1970s and the early 1980s, including internal and external factors of South Korea, which continue till 1997. As per the data of Bank of Korea Economic Statistics System which said that the GDP was 9-10 in 1970-71 decreased to -3 in 1980 and in 1997 it becomes stable at 5.2 (Bank of Korea, Economic Statistics System)\(^6\).
The next phased was started during 1980 onwards, the government use a structured and targeted industrial policy resulted in a significant shift to the development of heavy industries especially shipbuilding and chemicals factories. The industrial output increased substantially during these periods. Due to huge business development and production, South Korea was the “first Asian and first non-G7 country to host a summit of the G20, the unofficial steering committee of the world economy” (Marcus Noland: 2011).

Currently, the industrial production of South Korea climbed to 0.6 percent until this year in July 2019, which is a good sign. The manufacturing output also grew 0.8 percent, after shrinking 2.7 percent in June this year. Industrial production of South Koreas averaged 8.65 percent from 1976 until 2019. The journey of statistical graph of industrial production, which was ‘all-time high of 38.90 percent in July of 1976 and a record low of -25.30 percent in January of 2009’ (Trading Economics).

In 2017, the trade figure has gone up to 20 billion US dollar, which is a good step towards the development, the subsequent development in the relationship open during the visit of President Moon in 2018 who sign several agreements. Both sides business committees agreed to raise the trade volume to US$50 billion in the next ten years.

In the result of these agreements, the South Korean companies who are running in India, such as Hyundai Motors, LG Electronics and Samsung are undertaking expansion activities. The visit of Moon was special, during that visit Prime Minister Narendra Modi inaugurated Samsung’s refurbished factory in NOIDA which is largest and worldly famous for mobile phone makers. The LG Electronics unit, which is having extreme demand in India which has one manufacturing unit, now wants to open an export hub in India. Apart from this several other Korean firms started their business like Kia Motors, which has signed an MoU to invest about US$1 billion, and other is Lotte Group has also ready to invest US$ 3.5 billion in the next five years. So these investments no doubt indicating that New Delhi and Seoul are having strong bounding in the economy sector and investment figure is also going up every year to full fill the target of US$ 50 billion till 2030.

As per the MoU on Start-up Cooperation, which says “to promote collaboration among Start-ups and to set up of a Korea Start-up Centre (KSC) in India to commercialize ideas, technologies and designs of Start-up companies” (MEA Document, MoU). The figure and data of India’s exports to South Korea increased insignificantly “from $3.72 billion in 2010-11 (the year the Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA) was implemented) to $4.46 billion in 2017-18. It imports from South Korea jumped $10.47 billion in 2010-11 to $16.36 billion in 2017-18” (The Hindu, 10 July 2018).

In the joint statement at the end of the trip, both leaders asked businesses, including SMEs, to get into collaboration. They said “We urge the business community from both our countries to leverage opportunities arising from complementarities between the two economies, to enhance investment, to promote joint ventures, and to work towards the goal of raising bilateral trade to $50 billion by 2030” (The Hindu, 10 July 2018).

INDIA-SOUTH KOREA SECURITY AND DEFENCE TIES
India and South Korea had several agreements which were signed “during the visit by then Defence Minister AK Antony in September 2010, including MoU on Defence Cooperation, Defence Research and Development. India agreed to set up a Defence Wing at its Embassy at Seoul, which opened on 26 October 2012”.
security and defence deal, which is one of the prime sectors where India and Korea took interest and work out for futures transaction. India and South Korea are doing an excellent job in the defence sector, looking at defence potential and liberal law which attract the investment here. Recently Indian Defence Minister, Rajnath Singh visited Korea and figure out the possibility between two countries where the defence challenges can be addressed. During his visit he signed two agreements, one to extend logistical support to each other’s navies, and the second one to deepen defence educational exchanges.

India is currently having such relations with France and the US but also currently such negotiating with Japan. This defence agreement will strengthen India’s strategic relations further, and New Delhi will get some enhancement towards the Indo-Pacific region. India hardly has its presence in the Pacific, and due to current Chinese domination everywhere, India is looking at it to fit in the Pacific to counter the Chinese strength. India is also to increase its naval presence there and to use the South Korean military facilities in the coming future if it needed. In another significant development between two countries, both are ready to develop a roadmap that will strengthen India-Korea defence industry collaboration. The decision was taken by the Indian government not to use the Chinese systems and electronic components like defence electronics items.

In the MoU, fourth clause, which was signed on 22 February 2019, between Korean National Police Agency and Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) provisions regarding combating transnational crime and developing police cooperation to boost-up the internal security were added. The minister talked about more investment in India; he further said that “India offers tremendous business opportunity to Korean defence industries in India with liberalized licensing regime, attractive FDI provisions, strong and skilled industrial work-force, single-window clearances and establishment of Defence Investor Cell to facilitate investors and various other industry-friendly initiatives.”

INDIA EFFORTS TO STIMULATE PEACE IN THE KOREAN PENINSULA
Peace and negation is the only antidote of hegemony and aggression. In the Korean Peninsula, peace is under severe attack by some countries which want their domination in the entire region, which is not acceptable for a sovereign nation. India has a firm belief that war and aggression is not the solution to any problem. Instead, peace and negation would get a chance to sort out the regional differences. India is concerned to the region due to its high-level military confrontation and nature of provoking statements, and a frequent missile test by North Korea might escalate the war in the region. The destruction of war is not sweet, it’s sour and most of the country tested it, even North and South Korea, so Indian position is to handle the issue diplomatically rather than the opting war which is not for any nation. A small miscalculation may trigger the war, which is still looking avoidable, and the international and regional player is playing a vital role.
CONCLUSION

India-South Korea relations have been old and very concrete in the last forty-five years of diplomatic relations. Both countries are going ahead in trade & commerce, defence, tourism and academic exchange. India-South Korea signed many MoUs in the last 45 years of their diplomatic relations and every year they are adding new agreement in the list. They worked hard to boost up the trade from 1 billion, but the new proposed trade figure may touch to $50 billion till 2030 will be a big achievement. India is one of the emerging economies, military power in the world, which need partner across the continents, especially in the Indo-Pacific region. India does not believe in rivalry with any countries, like China, Japan and other regional players, but having good and trusted bilateral relations with the reliable friend is an excellent achievement in diplomacy.

In the absence of the powerful United Nations and the regional actor, the issue of war is still very much around in the region. India always sided with peace and development between the two neighbours, and New Delhi is unlikely to support any aggression and arms race in the region. However, India is always ready to play a role in the peace and prosperity in the region and negate any destruction in the region. India and South Korea have opted for mutual development and strengthening defence sectors for the peace and regional security requirement, which is necessary in the current unhinged world.

ENDNOTES
5Prime Minister’s speech at ‘India-ROK Business Symposium’ during his visit to Republic of Korea, February 21, 2019, Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India, URL: https://www.mea.gov.in/SpeechesStatements.htm?dtl/31073/prime+ministers+speech+at+indiarok+business+symposium+during+his+visit+to+republic+of+korea
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13 Ibid.
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ABSTRACT
International politics is all about struggle for power. In this scramble for power, one thing is important, that is, national interest. In the achievement of national interest, nothing is permanent except the objective of nation-state. In international politics, everything is in flux; no one can be regarded as permanent enemy or as eternal friend. Given this nature of international system, India must endeavour to have good relations with OIC (Organization of Islamic Cooperation). Since its inception in 1969, OIC has become a platform for Pakistan to propagate against India and to fuel anti-India sentiments among the major Islamic countries of the world. India must associate with OIC and must ensure end of anti-India propaganda against it. Given this assumption, this paper seeks to examine the nature of India-OIC relations. A recent development of March 2019, where India was invited as a Guest of Honour in the 46th conference of foreign ministers of OIC, seems to have laid a correct path for India for pursuing a new beginning with OIC.

Keywords: OIC, India, Pakistan, West Asia

INTRODUCTION
Nothing is permanent in international politics. No one can be permanently branded as enemy nor as friend. One thing is permanent i.e. the objective of serving of national interest, for which all countries are endeavouring. At present circumstances, India must endeavour to have good relations with OIC (Organization of Islamic Cooperation). Since its foundation in 1969, OIC has been working as a platform from where Pakistan unilaterally passes resolutions against the interests of India. For Pakistan, OIC has become a medium for propagating mis-information against India. India must take appropriate steps for ensuring dis-continuance of such strategy of Pakistan at OIC by developing good relations with OIC, particularly with the influential members of OIC such as UAE and Saudi Arabia. A recent development of March 2019, where India was invited as a Guest of Honour in the 46th conference of foreign ministers of OIC, seems to have laid a correct path for India for pursuing a new beginning with OIC.

India’s relations with OIC dates back to the year 1969, when the foundation of OIC was laid down in...
Rabat, Morocco. Criteria for the inclusion of members into the OIC at that time were:

i. Countries having muslim majority population

ii. Countries having a muslim head of the state

India wanted to participate in this Islamic conference in order to represent her composite culture containing religious values of religions like Hinduism, Islam, Sikhism, Buddhism, Jainism etc. Foreign policies are designed to serve national interests of a country and at the same time foreign policy also reflects internal dynamics of a country. India is a secular country but at the same it can not ignore the fact of large section of muslims residing in India. This tradition of composite culture had encouraged India during the pre – independence era also to raise her voice against the abolition of Khilafat after the end of first world war\(^1\).

Initially India was not invited to attend the conference of OIC at Rabat, however later on an invitation was extended to India to participate in the conference. It may please be noted that till now India is not a formal member of OIC but India was officially present in the inaugural session of OIC in September 1969 in Rabat, Morocco. Indian delegation under the acting leadership of Ambassador Gurbachan Singh participated in the plenary session of OIC on September 23, 1969. When official Indian delegation headed by Fakhruddin Ali Ahmed, then Union Minister for Industrial Development, Government of India, arrived in Rabat on September 24, 1969, ground situation in meeting venue altered dramatically under the nuisance role of President of Pakistan Yahya Khan. Unfortunately at the same time communal riots were broke out in Ahmedabad, Gujarat. President of Pakistan made it an issue and asked rest members of OIC to ensure that Indian delegation would not be permitted to participate in the conference. Morocco, the host country under the pressure of ensuring success of first meeting of OIC, bowed down under the tactics of Pakistan and requested Indian delegation not to participate in the conference of OIC. All these developments led to the serious embarrassment of India at Rabat. It may be noted that President of Pakistan Yahya Khan used the issue of Ahmedabad communal riots as a pretext to ensure embarrassment of India but in reality it was a strategy of President of Pakistan to silence its opponents in Pakistan on the issue of India’s participation in Rabat conference that would project India as a country having a composite culture negating the two nation theory of Pakistan. Since then India has remained outside the membership of OIC despite the fact that around 190 million muslims live in India. It may be noted that India is the country having third largest muslim population in the world. OIC, a forum who represents itself as a voice of muslim world, how can ignore representation of such 190 million muslims living in India\(^2\).

In March 2019, a historical development took place in the relations of India with OIC, when India was invited for the first time as a Guest of Honour in the meeting of 46\(^{th}\) Conference of Foreign Ministers of OIC. This invitation was forwarded by the host country i.e. UAE (United Arab Emirate). UAE cited two reasons behind this invitation to India namely:

i. Rising global status of India and

ii. Having a composite culture with significant Islamic component.

India accepted this invitation of UAE. Smt. Sushma Swaraj, the then India’s External Affairs Minister, attended the meeting on March 01, 2019 at Abu Dhabi, UAE. Pakistan maintaining its tradition at the platform of OIC opposed India’s presence and boycotted the conference of foreign ministers of OIC. In her speech, Smt. Sushma Swaraj highlighted the challenges being emanating from terrorism
including the issue of sheltering and funding of terrorists by state actors without naming Pakistan. She also made it clear that terrorism and religion cannot be linked together and in the name of terrorism, religion has been distorted.

According to scholars, this invitation to India as a guest of honour in the conference of foreign ministers of OIC distinctly contributes to the success of foreign policy of India and recognises one fact i.e. status of India has changed from a post-colonial state to an aspiring global power. The world is changing as well as India. At present India have strong bilateral relations with key members of OIC such as UAE, Saudi Arabia, Indonesia, Bangladesh, Egypt etc. These bilateral relations seem to compel OIC to adopt a balanced approach in respect of its relations with India and Pakistan.

Pakistan continues to have important relations with key members of OIC. It may be noted that Pakistan is the only Islamic country in the world having its own nuclear weapons. Due to this reason, Pakistan has a special position in the strategic calculation of OIC. Despite that, OIC has taken steps to improve its relations with India. To strategists, even OIC is eager to reduce the tension between India and Pakistan. Such eagerness was shown by the crown prince of Saudi Arabia during the shooting down of MIG 21 fighter aircraft of India by Pakistan Air Force in February 2019.

In the last 50 years, India has significantly improved its relations with the countries of West Asia, a region hosting maximum members of OIC. A number of factors are responsible for this positive development and they are as follows:

- Success of foreign policy of India in strengthening its bilateral relations with the countries of West Asia.
- Indian Diaspora in West Asia.
- UN peace keeping operations in the conflicting areas of West Asia involving the active role of Indian Troops under the UN flag.
- Development of science and technology and the rise of India as IT superpower.
- People to people contact.
- Students of Islamic countries reading in various universities of India.

Abu Dhabi Declaration, which was the main document released after the conclusion of conference of foreign ministers of OIC, made no mention about the Kashmir issue. This can be certainly regarded as a diplomatic victory of India at the platform of OIC, which has been consistently passing resolutions on Kashmir criticizing India. According to reports, UAE and Saudi Arabia had important roles in this regard as they wanted to ensure that the guest i.e. India is not embarrassed. However, other resolutions of this conference raised the issue of Kashmir, Babri Masjid, India-Pakistan peace process, the recent airspace violation and situation of minorities in India etc.

**REMITTANCE FLOW TO INDIA AND SIGNIFICANCE OF OIC**

According to Michal Rutkowski, Senior Director of the Social Protection and Jobs at the World Bank, “Remittances have a direct impact on alleviating poverty for many households and the World Bank is positioned to work with countries to facilitate remittance flows.” In contemporary times, remittances become an important factor capable to accelerate economic progress of a country in a significant way. Since the last five years, India remains a top recipient of foreign remittances. According to India’s inward remittances survey 2016-17 done by the Reserve Bank of India, 54% of
the total remittances received by India originated from 05 countries of West Asia namely UAE, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Kuwait and Oman. All these five countries are the members of OIC.

CRUDE OIL IMPORTS TO INDIA AND SIGNIFICANCE OF OIC
India’s crude oil requirements are primarily met by imports. India is the third largest importer of crude oil in the world. India imports around 80% of its requirement of crude oil from foreign countries. Out of this 80% imported crude oil, share of West Asian countries is about two-thirds. In the energy security of India, West Asian countries play a pivotal role. Countries like Iraq, Saudi Arabia, Iran, UAE and Kuwait act as main sources of crude oil for India. All these countries are influential members of OIC. According to International Energy Agency (IEA), West Asia will continue to be a big source of crude oil imports for India.

INDIAN DIASPORA AND IMPORTANCE OF OIC
India’s diaspora numbering about eight million (80 lakh), acts as an asset for New Delhi in West Asia. Scholars equate this huge diaspora as an instrument of soft power capable of serving national interest of India in the region of West Asia. This region is the main source of remittances for India; around 50% of remittances originate from this area alone.

CONCLUSION
India must make efforts to strengthen its relations with OIC to serve its national interests. For becoming a member of OIC, consensus of each member of OIC is required and this seems to be an impossible task for Indian diplomacy given India’s relations with Pakistan. Despite this fact, India should continue its efforts that aim at cementing its relations more strategically with the leading countries of OIC like UAE, Saudi Arabia etc. Gradually West Asian countries are also realizing menace of terrorism and they are eager to strengthen their counter-terrorism operations with India. Recently Crown Prince of Saudi Arabia during his visit to India made a proposal in this regard. Terrorism has no religion and no country; it is a danger to entire humanity. Issue of sheltering and funding of terrorism must be highlighted at the international forum to unravel the real character of Pakistan. India must work to isolate Pakistan on the issue of terrorism particularly at the platform of
OIC. OIC has been a platform for Pakistan for making false allegations against India; therefore India must take steps diplomatically to debar Pakistan from using this platform against the interests of India. Besides this, OIC 2025 Programme of Action, which calls for OIC’s role in peace and development in the Muslim world and beyond, will also compel OIC to forge better relations with India, which has around 190 million Muslims. In this 21st century, it is imperative for India and OIC to work together to serve the interests of humanity.

ENDNOTES

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COVID-19’s Lethality for the Elderly and Alternative Case in Bangladesh: A Comparative Demographic Analysis

Md. Saifullah Akon* & Md. Nadim Aktar**

ABSTRACT

COVID-19 pandemic has unfolded many of the underlying reality of the world. The demographic aspect of this concurrent crisis is one of them where the elderly are being affected on a large scale in most affected countries in Europe, America, and Asia. When the fact of the elderly people’s vulnerability to COVID-19 is well established by the data and statistics of affected rates around the world, Bangladesh has been experiencing the opposite trend by identifying many young people with COVID-19. This unique context of Bangladesh tempts our interest to give deep insights into this case by analysing demographic theories and models. Therefore, this paper aims to illustrate the rationalism behind this alternative case by developing a hypothesis using comparative demographic analysis between Bangladesh and other affected countries answering the questions: to what extent are the demographic differences responsible for the high level of young affected rates by COVID-19 in Bangladesh? The paper follows the qualitative research method while analyzing demographic and median age data and COVID-19’s lethality rate for elderly of different countries to understand the alternative scenario of the increasing lethality rate for the young in Bangladesh.

Keywords: COVID-19, lethality, elderly, young people, demography, Bangladesh

INTRODUCTION

Putting scientific authority, a researcher in a puzzle, Coronavirus disease -2019 (COVID-19) is at exponentially rising rate across the globe. The vaccine of this virus is yet to found and many researchers predict this outbreak will continue for another one or two more years- until 60% to 70% of the population has been infected (Fox 2020). Globally 199 countries are reported to have the pandemic and the situation getting worse each day where the World Health Organization (WHO) rates the global risk assessment as very high. The Pandemic has unfolded many of the reality of our time where socio-economic, cultural, political, and demographic impacts of this crisis are discussed most.

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The impact of this outbreak is severe to older aged people with heart, lung, and immunological conditions. Therefore, the COVID-19 pandemic creates a huge panic among elderly people who are affecting and dying on a rapid scale. Early data from China —where the transmission started— provided that older adults were the most sensitive to the worst effects of the disease. The elderly aged over 60 are the most vulnerable group of people illustrated by the statistics that more than 95% people aged over 60 died of COVID-19 in Europe (Keaten 2020), 75.3% of the COVID-19 deaths in India those who are 60 years old or above a (Coronavirus: 75% Cases of Deaths in Patients Aged 60 Yrs and above, 83% Have Co-Morbidities 2020) and as per official data, 80% deaths of China were among people in their 60’s and older. When this is the common scenario in most of the countries, Bangladesh recorded 10% affected people are in the age group of 60 or above and 60% are age group of 21-50 (IEDCR 2020). This opposite trend of affecting rate in Bangladesh is one of the primary concerns of this empirical study, where a comparative demographic analysis was put in place for better understanding the demographic dimensions of this crisis. Moreover, by illustrating Bangladesh’s opposite trend from the outer world, this study also focuses on some demographic theories to understand the dynamics of this unique case.

**METHODOLOGY**

The study follows the qualitative method of research approaches. Qualitative research —where the secondary literature is collected from both academic and non-academic sources like books, journals, web pages, etc.— helps to understand the basic idea of COVID-19 pandemic and its current situation throughout the world. Besides, it helps to get the present demographic scenario and the death rate of the people both in Bangladesh and the rest of the world where COVID-19 poses a high life threat. To compare the death rate between Bangladesh and other countries due to the COVID-19, the paper collects the related data from three regions of the world: Europe, East Asia, and North America which are now considered as the epicentre of the current pandemic. Within these three regions, we have selected two countries (Spain, and Italy) from the European region, three countries (China, Japan, and South Korea) from East Asian region and one country (United States) from North American region due to the highly affected rate of the COVID-19 pandemic of these countries. This data has been analysed along with the current demographic scenario and death rate of COVID-19 of both Bangladesh and other above-mentioned countries.

**Data Collection and Analysis**

Data has been collected from various sources including Indexmundi, Statista, and Worldometer. Here, the aging population and median age of different countries have been taken out as the base year 2018. On the other hand, the time till April 2020 has been selected for the collection of data on COVID-19 affected and deaths. After collecting data on those infected and death in COVID-19, it has been discussed with the current demography of different countries. Above all, we have tried to show why a higher number of young people are being affected by COVID-19 in Bangladesh.

**Conceptualizing the COVID-19 pandemic**

The world has been going through a tough time with the transfusion of a new virus named COVID-19. COVID-19 widely known as Coronavirus is infectious pneumonia of unknown cause first detected in Wuhan— the capital of Hubei province in China. The Virus first detected on 31 December 2019 with the speculation of spreading from a local seafood market of Wuhan. Coronaviruses (CoV) are a large family of viruses that causes cold, fever, tiredness, and dry cough to more severe diseases where Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS CoV) and Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS-CoV)
are two members of this family. World Health Organization declared the outbreak as a Public Health Emergency of International Concern on 30 January 2020 amid huge multifaceted cases found across the world. As of 2 May 2020 more than 3.34 Million cases of COVID-19 have been reported in 187 countries and territories which killed more than 238,000 lives (Coronavirus COVID-19 (2019-NCoV) 2020). In the history of the Pandemic 2009-2010 influenza pandemic was the first in the 21st century which caused by A (H1N1) virus. In this pandemic between 1000, 000-4000, 000 died globally in the first year of its outbreak. Before this outbreak in 2009, the Spanish Flu caused by the same virus had inflicted severe consequences by killing 20-50 million people in 1918-1920. On March 7, 2020, the first COVID-19 case has been found in Bangladesh. Since then 8,790 people identified as positive cases, 177 recovered and 175 death cases recorder in Bangladesh as of May 02, 2020.

COVID-19 is not just a health crisis; its implications in social life, economy, and politics are severe. Normal life has been disrupted by the fear of a supply shortage of food and grocery led by panic buying. The cancellation of all religious, cultural, sporting, political events created a huge social distance among people around the world. Moreover, the world economy is suffering the most in this sudden pandemic. It has been projected that the ongoing pandemic would cause the largest Global recession since the great depression in 1929 where World Economic Outlook- April projects that global growth in 2020 to fall to 3 percent (Gopinath 2020). Besides this, the proximity of food shortage and a higher rate of unemployment could create a new dynamic of the current crisis.

Demographic Fact and Mortality Rate of Elderly People in Different Regions

The current COVID-19 pandemic has a far-reaching impact on the elderly people across the world, particularly in the Western and East Asian countries where aged people are huge in number. Due to the standard of living and other healthy environmental circumstances of Westerns, the life expectancy of people is higher than the rest of the world. But unfortunately, the current contagious disease—which has no medical treatment till now—poses a serious life threat to these senior citizens and the mortality rate for the elderly is in peak compare to the young people in these regions. The laxness of the aged people, particularly those who are highly suffering from cardiovascular disease, diabetes, and hypertension are the most affected by the COVID-19. However, the current situation of the impact of COVID-19 over the elderly people and the real scenario of the demography of the Western and other East Asian countries are as follows:

Europe

Europe, including the USA, is now the epicentre of the current COVID-19 pandemic as the virus is spreading rapidly across the region. Countries like Italy, and Spain—worst-hit countries in the current pandemic—are at high risk because of both the rising number of affected people and deaths—though the recovery rate is also high in these countries. As of April 24, 2020, the number of coronavirus cases in the major three affected countries of Europe is 219,764 in Spain; 192,994 in Italy (Stewart 2020) where the death rate is 22,524; and 25,969 respectively (Worldometer 2020). Besides, among the number of affected cases and deaths as well, the senior citizens are at the top in Europe. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), among the total COVID-19 fatalities in Europe, 95% are older than 60 (Lardieri 2020)—where according to Liton (2020) it is 95.1 percent and 95.4 percent are for Italy and Spain respectively. Statista Research Department (2020a) shows that, as of April 24, 2020, around 90 percent of all deaths of COVID-19 in Italy are people aged 60 or older where 59.4 percent is in Spain (Forte 2020).
On the other hand, the demographic scenario in these three coronavirus affected countries shows that a large portion of the total population is more than 60s. The aging population is already a serious concern for the developed European countries and it is now blighted due to a large number of elderly citizens. In Italy –the second-oldest population in the world –has nearly 23 percent of the population over 65 (Perper 2020) wherein Spain, it is about 17 percent. However, such a large number of elderly people has heightened the risk of being affected by the contagious disease, particularly coronavirus that is currently killing people through Europe. The preexisting health weakness and the less immune are caused to death to a large number of elderly people in these countries.

**East Asia**

East Asia, or particularly China is considered as the birthplace of the current COVID-19 pandemic. In China, the first coronavirus affected patient was suspected in the Wuhan city of Hubei province and later spread to other provinces in China. Due to this coronavirus, around 82,836 Chinese people were affected and 4,633 people died (China Coronavirus: 82,901 Cases and 4,633 Deaths 2020), where most are from the Hubei province. Among the total affected and death rates, the majority of the patient were elderly people who already had to experience weakness in their bodies. According to the Chinese Centre for Disease Control and Prevention, the elderly people are mostly victimized by the COVID-19 in China where among the total deaths of the COVID-19 more than 80 percent are from the 60s or older (“Age Is Not the Only Risk for Severe Coronavirus Disease” 2020).

However, after China, the pandemic has firstly spread in this East Asian region and contaminated both Japan and South Korea. In both Japan and South Korea, elderly people have witnessed big challenges where most of the affected people were senior citizens. In South Korea, as of April 30, 2020, among the total affected people, more than 23.62 percent (So 2020a) age is either 60 or older where the fatality rate is 37.4 percent (So 2020b) to the same age. Again, in Japan, among the total 288 deaths, 263 are from the 60s or older (Statista Research Department 2020b) as of April 29, 2020. On the other hand, all these three countries –China, Japan, and South Korea –in East Asia are facing the demographic problem where the mortality rate is very low and the life expectancy is 77.5 years, 85.0 years, and 83.5 years respectively. Even, this aging population is sometimes considered a major threat to the future of the countries, particularly barriers to their economic development. Alongside, Japan has the world’s most-oldest population having around 28 percent of 65 years and older (Statistics Bureau of Japan 2019) wherein China it is 12.6 percent (Textor 2020) as of 2019 and in South Korea, it is 14.42 percent (Plecher 2020) as of 2018. Such a high percentage of the elderly people of these countries are now facing tremendous life threat to the novel coronavirus.

**USA**

USA—the most hazardous epicentre of the current pandemic –has witnessed the largest setback due to the spreading of COVID-19. It has now lead the world in conformed COVID-19 cases while shares one-third of the total affected cases and deaths as well. Due to the relaxed controlling hurdles at the initial stage and irresponsible attitude of the high officials of the government, the coronavirus had spread rapidly across the country and causes the rising infected rates. However, as of April 29, 2020, the total global affected cases of the COVID-19 are 3,161,534 where the USA has 1,036,388 and in the case of death it is 59,284 among the total 219,287 deaths globally (Worldometer 2020b). Besides, the increasing death rate of elderly people in America is also rising due to COVID-19. As of
April 14, 2020, among the total deaths, around 72.3 percent are from 65s or older (Worldometer n.d.)

In the demographic sector, the total population of the United States is 331,002,651 of 2020 (Worldometer 2020c). Among the total population, around 16.3 percent are 65s or older in the USA which was only 12.4 percent in 2000 and expected to become 20.4 percent by 2040 (Urban Institute n.d.). Due to the high life expectancy rate—now 79.1 years—the aging population has been increasing in the USA and causing some social problems including healthcare costs. At the same time, the low immune of these elderly people, particularly those have already other diseases, are easily get affected by the recent COVID-19 pandemic.

**COVID-19 and Demographic Reality in Bangladesh**

Bangladesh—a densely overpopulated country said to be the most vulnerable to the COVID-19 from the beginning of the outbreak. The underlying factor of huge Bangladeshi people working abroad was also an important reason to assume Bangladesh as a vulnerable zone for a huge outbreak of COVID-19. The demographic transition, as well as the density of the population with its socio-economic factor, poses a serious threat of major community transmission in Bangladesh. After identified the first case in Bangladesh it has been observed that most young aged populations are affected by COVID-19 which presents a completely different scenario from the toughly affected countries of Europe, America, and Asia where elderly people are mostly affected by the coronavirus. This different Scenario can be better understood by the assessment of the demographic reality and the affected rate of the people in Bangladesh.

**Affected Rate of People**

In Bangladesh, the first case had been detected on 7 March 2020 by the Institute of Epidemiology, Disease Control and Research (IEDCR). In the first month of detection, the infection rate was slow with 51 cases but over time multifaceted cases had been increased from April 2020. As of 26 April 2020, 7103 people have been identified with COVID-19 positive and 150 recovered, 163 death cases declared by the IEDCR. Data exposed by IEDCR showed that young and working-class people have been infected most. Professor Meerjady Sabrīnā Flora, director of IEDCR said to the United News Bangladesh (UNB) that infected people age over 60 is relatively low. Giving an age-wise analysis she said of the total of 2,456 virus-infected cases in the country as of 19 April, over 60% of are in the age group of 21-50 while around 10% are age group of 60 (Jahangir 2020). She stated further that “it observed that people of 21-30 age group are affected much more and often 31-40 and 41-50 age group are falling victims more”. Moreover, data provided by IECRD on 22 April 2020 exposed that 64 percent of the infected case were aged between 21 and 50 years. Additional director general at the Directorate General of Health Services, Professor Nasrin Sultana has also stated that “among the infected patients until April 22, the highest number of infection rate was recorded in the age group 21-30 with 24 percent, followed by age group 31-40 with 22 percent, 41-50 with 18 percent, 51-60 with 15 percent, 60 above with 10 percent, 11-20 with 8 percent and under 11 with three percent” (Liton 2020).

**Demographic reality**

Bangladesh is the eighth-most populous country in the world with 160 million people which represents 2.11% of the global share. The population density in Bangladesh is 1,253 people per square kilometre calculated on a total land area of 130,170 square kilometres (Worldometer 2020d).
Bangladesh experienced a high rate of population growth in the 1960s and 1970s but over time the fertile rate has decreased. For three decades it dropped from 7 to 2.4 in 2005-2010 (United Nations (UN) 2017). Among this total population, youth constitutes the major part –third of the Bangladeshi population. At present Bangladesh is enjoying a demographic dividend with more than 65% of Bangladeshi population is of working-class aged between 15 and 64 and another 34% aged 15 and younger and just 5% aged 65 and older. The demographic dividend has started in 2007 and now we are in the midst of the dividend period (Haider 2019). Moreover, Bangladesh is now home to 105.6 million working-age people among 160 million which will increase by 130 million by 2030. It also speaks about the number of old (60+) in the country which will increase to 22% by 2050. Among this total youth 51% is male and 49% is female. These young aged people are seating in the driving seat of the economy of Bangladesh by holding the major part of the labour market inside and outside the country. According to Ubaidur Rob, Population Council Country Director-in Bangladesh two million young people enter in labour market every year. Each year more than 400,000 Bangladeshi leaves Bangladesh for overseas employment which most of them are young. This young population is accelerating the economic growth of Bangladesh which would continue if these huge working-aged people are well managed.

COMPARATIVE DEMOGRAPHIC ANALYSIS

The world has witnessed a very critical time in the early 21st century due to the spread of the current COVID-19 pandemic where almost all countries are affected by the coronavirus. From developed to least developed countries; from east to west; from north to south; there be no place in the world where coronavirus didn’t affect any single people. Coronavirus has changed its character and affects countries with different forms. Besides the different forms, a common picture is seen across the world is the rate of lethality to the elderly people, particularly in the Western countries where the COVID-19 is the epicentre right now. But in the case of Bangladesh, an alternative scenario has been seen regarding the lethality rate of the pandemic which has been described above. A different aspect can describe the high lethality rate to the young people in Bangladesh. However, this paper mainly describes the demographic fact of Bangladesh and other Western countries to find out the real causes of the growing rate of affected young people in Bangladesh and aged people in the westerns through the lens of demographic transition theory.

Demographic Transition Theory and Analysing Lethality Cases of COVID-19

Demographic transition theory is a popularly known theory to describe the changes in the birth rate and death rate of a particular country. The theory mainly shows the economic development by reducing the death rate in different four stages – Pre-transition, Early transition, Late transition, and Post-transition (UNFPA n.d.). Under the demographic transition theory, every state must go through these four stages; from high birth and death rate of the first stage to low birth and death rates in the fourth stage. The countries which belong to the second stage – known as population explosion (Theory of Demographic Transition (With Diagram) n.d.) – have the opportunity of high mobility of labor. Due to the increasing number of the working-age population, the economic development has speeded up and it helps countries, belonging to this second stage, to move toward rapid urbanization.

According to the demographic transition theory, the above mentioned 6 countries – Italy, Spain, America, China, Japan, and South Korea – are either in the last section of the third stage or in the fourth stage. Due to the growing impact of economic development and huge opportunities for
family planning, countries like China have witnessed a low birth rate in her demographic transition. Even in France, since the mid-18th century, both fertility and mortality rate has started to be declined. Today, these developed countries are facing a low level of both birth and death rate. Besides, the number of elderly people has been increasing due to the lower rates of disease and better food consumption –throw the states into a serious demographic crisis in the 21st century.

On the other hand, Bangladesh is currently in the second stage of the demographic transition theory where the country’s young working population is increasing day by day. Due to various measures taken by the government, the death rate has decreased and the average life expectancy has increased. The two largest sectors of the country’s economy are the garment industry and remittances, where the majority are young. This huge working population is pulling the economy of Bangladesh upwards and it is these young people who are playing a leading role in transforming the country into a middle-income country.

Aging and median age analysis
As it has already mentioned that, the Western developed countries, according to the demographic transition theory, belong to either the last part of stage three or entered into the fourth stage; Bangladesh on the other hand just belongs to the second stage. Demographic crisis, particularly the increasing rate of aging people, low birth rate, and labour crisis of these western countries has been increasing at an alarming rate while Bangladesh now enjoying the demographic dividend due to the large number of young working-age. Figure 1 shows that both the USA and Italy –two most seriously affected countries –has 16 percent and 22 percent people whose age is from 65s or older where the rate of young people (age 15-24) in these two countries are only 13 and 10 percent respectively.

**Figure 1: Age Distribution of Population, 2018**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>0-14</th>
<th>15-24</th>
<th>25-54</th>
<th>55-64</th>
<th>65 and Over</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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<td>27</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>USA</td>
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<td>South Korea</td>
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<td>12</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>15</td>
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Source: Data collected from Indexmundi, Statista, and Worldometer, 2020
This aging scenario is also apposite to the other mentioned countries where Japan is in the most vulnerable position having around 28 percent of the 65 and over aged people. The rate of the working-age population is very low in these western countries. However, due to having a large number of elderly people, these countries are facing tremendous jeopardy during this current COVID-19 pandemic. Among the total lethality rate of the COVID-19, elderly people’s position is at the top in all these alluded western countries. Due to their other previous several biological problems, these elderly corona patients face difficulties to get rid of these diseases and sometimes the death rate of these senior citizens are higher than other younger people.

On the other hand, in Bangladesh, a diverse scenario has been seen where, according to the chart 1, the 65s or older people are just 6 percent and the working-age young population is higher than the other western countries. In the case of life expectancy, the average age of the above mentioned western and East Asian countries is around 80 years wherein Bangladesh is only 72 (Liton 2020). Moreover, a potential economic benefit is gained due to the changes in the age structure –known as the demographic dividend. A good number of the working-age population –around 105.6 million (UNB 2016) –has been increased and the dependent age people have declined in Bangladesh in this second stage of demographic transition. This demographic dividend –which is now experiencing by Bangladesh once-in-a-lifetime –could be an asset for economic growth as well as social development if the present increasing working force can be regulated properly.

However, due to the low rate of the elderly people, the Bangladeshi people have witnessed a very different scenario in case of a lethality rate comparing to the others. As Bangladesh has a large number of young people in the age pyramid, the fatality rate of the COVID-19 is also high to these young generations. Moreover, this vast number of young population –19 percent’s age between 15 to 24 years –is the principal source of the family earning and attached to the different job sectors and become easily contaminated by other coronavirus affected people. Elsewhere, due to the few numbers of senior citizens in Bangladesh, the lethality rate of the elderly people of COVID-19 is lower in Bangladesh.

On the other hand, Figure 2 exhibits the median age of different countries. Here, the increasing median ages mark the aging population of any country. However, the chart shows that the Western and East Asian countries have a rising number of median ages where both European countries have more than 45 years as their median age and in the USA it is around 38.2 years. In East Asia, particularly Japan has experienced the highest number of median age around 47.7 years. Due to the low fertility rate and rising life expectancy, these countries have to witness the increasing number of the aging population and the working-age population is declining. This large part of the total population is getting affected by the COVID-19 due to the declining immunity of the elderly people. As a result, because of the growing older people, these countries have witnessed the increasing lethality rate of the elderly in this current COVID-19 pandemic.
In converse, Bangladesh is in a favourable position where the median age is only 27.1 –means half of the population is younger than 27. As a consequence, this young working-age generation will serve Bangladesh’s economy for the next one or two decades, resulting in a demographic dividend. In the case of the lethality of the current COVID-19 pandemic, young people were less likely to be affected due to the high immune system in the body. But a completely different scenario has been witnessed despite being mostly young people in Bangladesh. Here, younger people are more being affected by the COVID-19 rather than the older. The underlying cause of a more lethality rate for the younger in Bangladesh is to despise the horror of the COVID-19. They act like they are unconquerable to the coronavirus and severely break the government imposed lockdown. Besides, a large number of young working manpower has been engaged in other countries. It is thought that the current pandemic has spread in Bangladesh through these labourers who came back to Bangladesh from the contaminated countries, mostly from Italy –turning the ‘median age’ or ‘demographic dividend’ into a national disaster. Moreover, low nutritional foods do not boost immunity in young people in Bangladesh and they are susceptible to coronavirus. Due to which, despite the low median age, the number of young people infected with COVID-19 is higher in Bangladesh.

CONCLUSION
The whole world is going through a catastrophic time right now –COVID-19 pandemic. Even the world’s largest economic and technologically advanced countries are currently finding no way to prevent this pandemic. Advanced medical science has not been able to solve the disease rather many people are being infected and the number of deaths is increasing. On the other hand, these developed countries of the world have been dealing with the problem of the aging population for a long time. The current COVID-19 has dealt the biggest blow to these senior citizens. Elderly people are the most affected by the current pandemic in these countries and they are also ahead in terms of deaths as well.
On the other hand, Bangladesh has witnessed a different case in this current pandemic. Where the elderly people are most affected and dying in the world by the COVID-19, the picture of Bangladesh is just the opposite. Here, the affected rate of young people is higher than elderly people. The biggest reason for this is the growing number of young people in Bangladesh where it is crossing the demographic dividend having the largest working-age population. The number of elderly people is very low in Bangladesh comparing to the above-mentioned countries. Moreover, Bangladesh is a growing economy with its huge young aged manpower engaged in the workforce both at home and abroad. This manpower mostly stays out of home for working and travel abroad which makes them vulnerable to COVID-19. However, having the largest number of young people –positioning the second stage of the demographic transition theory –Bangladesh is facing the risk of lethality for the young people in this current COVID-19 pandemic.

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