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LATEST NEWS

In the last two months, many countries in the world have decided to slowly re-open their economies. Some decided to do so because the situation has largely been brought into control, but others did that because they could no longer afford to shut their economies. Developing countries generally find themselves in the latter scenario. Having a relatively weak fiscal capacity and considerable work force in the informal sector, developing countries find harder time to balance public health emergency and economic hardship. Given the tough choices between dying of illness or dying of hunger, governments in many developing nations have opted to get the economic activities up and running again while putting into place measures to stem the spread of the virus. Whether the strategy will work remains to be seen.

Considering the economic exigency, CSEAS Jakarta and the NTS-Asia Consortium Secretariat are proud to organise a timely webinar on this topic. Preparations are underway. In addition to our own Consortium members, we will bring in other researchers and a regional representative to speak at the event. The webinar will go live both on Zoom and Youtube to allow for a larger audience to participate in the discussions. We are excited for this joint initiative, and we look forward to having more collaborations with the Consortium members in the future.

MESSAGE FROM THE SECRETARIAT

Ever since the coronavirus pandemic began to restrict our daily activities early this year, we at the Secretariat have been striving to engage you, the NTS-Asia Consortium members, through email correspondence and online meetings on a regular basis. We are heartened to see your enthusiastic responses and are happy to learn that you are keeping well. We are glad to know that some of you have organised several webinars in the past months.

Needless to say, the current pandemic has reaffirmed the importance of our work in the non-traditional security field. In early June, we called for an informal Zoom meeting to brainstorm what we can do together to advance our work during this uncertain time. We have come up with some plans for the upcoming months. The first one is a webinar that will take place in early August 2020. We will discuss about the economic impacts of the pandemic

UPCOMING EVENTS

NTS-Asia Consortium Webinar

Hosted by Centre for Southeast Asian Studies (CSEAS) Indonesia
**COVID-19 and Economic Crisis:
Mitigating Impact and Sustaining
Development in Asia**

5 August 2020 14:00 -16:00 (Jakarta Time)
Click [here](#) to register



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NEWSLETTER TEAM

Mely Caballero-Anthony and Margareth Sembiring

Designed by Joey Liang



especially on vulnerable communities in Indonesia, Vietnam, Japan, South Korea, and India. We truly appreciate the initiative taken by one of our members, the Center for Southeast Asian Studies (CSEAS) in Jakarta, to organise and host the webinar. We are also happy that some of our network members are speaking at this webinar.

We look forward to fruitful discussions during the online session. And we certainly hope you will continue to stay healthy and productive even in this challenging time.

Warmest regards,
Mely Caballero-Anthony
Secretary-General

Researcher Profile

Margareth Sembiring

Margareth Sembiring is Associate Research Fellow at the Centre for Non-Traditional Security Studies, S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies, Nanyang Technological University, Singapore. She works on climate change and environmental issues. She is currently doing a PhD that assesses the political economy of low-carbon energy transitions in the Philippines and Indonesia using historical institutionalism. Margareth holds an MA in International Peace and Security

from the King's College London where she was a Chevening scholar. Prior to that, she completed her masters' degree in Defence Management from the Indonesian Defence University in Jakarta. Her first degree is in Mechanical Engineering that she obtained from the National University of Singapore. She is your friendly NTS-Asia Consortium manager who is in touch with you with regular updates from the Secretariat.



REFLECTIONS

Climate Change and Environment: Beyond Decarbonising and Greening

By Margareth Sembiring

Centre for Non-Traditional Security Studies (NTS Centre)



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COVID-19 global lockdowns potentially bring down this year's carbon emissions up to **7 percent**. This number is close to the ideal **7.6 percent** drop that the world needs to commit every year between now and 2030 to reach the 1.5°C Paris target as suggested in a United Nations report. Two observations emerged. First, the sheer scale of modifications to economic activities that is needed to save the planet, that the current decarbonising and greening approaches are struggling to achieve. Second, the need for a wilful decision to

make deep changes, and the imperative for well-calibrated policies to prevent massive unemployment and increased poverty that result from unplanned disruptions to economic activities.

Decarbonising and Greening: The Challenges

Decarbonising and greening are among the most dominant strategies to address climate and environmental issues. They essentially entail product substitution. Solar and wind to replace coal plants,

electric to replace conventional vehicles, more efficient lighting and building to replace older models, biodegradable to replace plastic, among others. Despite the availability of environmentally friendly alternatives, decarbonising and greening efforts are progressing slowly and results have been modest at best.

The most striking evidence is the 2.0 percent rise in carbon emissions in 2018, which was the **fastest in seven years**, despite renewable sources' increasing share in

global energy consumption. The growing emissions were the result of expanding energy consumption that **nearly doubled** the 10-year average. In other words, at the global level, renewable sources act more like an additional source of energy instead of a fossil fuel replacement, to feed the increasingly energy-hungry world.

The phenomenon is hardly surprising. Isolating carbon emissions from the overall economic growth reality constrains governments and businesses from making meaningful low-carbon transitions. Considering the growth imperative, governments need to strategically consider which sectors to tax and subsidise, ensure just transition, and decide on infrastructure investments, among others, while facing various actors having competing interests in the domestic setting. The costs of solar and wind powers have **gone down** significantly in the last decade, and green businesses are justifying their value by emphasising job creation and **positive contribution** to the economy while saving the planet at the same time. But until governments are confident that low-carbon alternatives do not jeopardise, or indeed can be more beneficial for growth-related interests, decarbonising and greening will generally remain slow.

Along the same focus on growth, businesses are likely to embrace more sustainable alternatives if doing so gives them more benefits, or at least does not hurt their profitability. Businesses thus wait for **reliable** policies that will minimise investment risks, **metrics** that can measure environmental, social, and governance objectives in financial terms **clearly**, and **investment returns** and executive **salary** that are linked to environmental and societal benefits, before they can be certain about greening their operations. It is of little surprise, therefore, that in 2018 less than **7,000 companies** of the millions worldwide declared their emissions, and only **one in eight** managed to decrease their annual emissions every year. Greening businesses is thus a long way to go.

From Growth to Earth

The narrowing time window necessitates urgent and bolder measures beyond decarbonising and greening. The high-carbon element is just a part of the larger demand-driven economy comprising mainly of natural resource extraction, production, consumption, and waste generation. As a reduction in economic activities brings down with it the emission levels as evidenced in the current COVID-19 situation, the focus needs to enlarge from high-carbon to production-consumption activities.

Moreover, the link between increasing consumption and environmental stresses is well **recognised**. Every year since **1970s**, the

world's consumption has been exacting toll on Earth's resources more than what it can regenerate. Our consumption today needs an equivalent of **1.6 Earths** with advanced economies, and by extension the richer segments of society, disproportionately consuming more. In **2016**, consumptions in North America and Western Europe needed 4.95 and 2.98 Earths respectively, whereas Asia and Africa needed 1.46 and 0.83 Earths respectively. Natural resource depletion driven by high consumption is consistent with 2.3 million km² of forest being **deforested** globally between 2000 and 2012 with only about 35 percent being reforested.

Security of the Poor

High consumption causing damages to nature poses direct human security challenges especially for the poor. About **80 percent** of world's poor live in rural area where natural resources make up of **50 to 90 percent** of their livelihoods. Natural resources are indeed the natural **capital** of the poor. Degrading agricultural land has thus affected over **1.3 billion** people, mostly in the developing countries. The COVID-19 pandemic has confirmed that the poor are among the least able to cope during crises. While strengthening **social protection** measures and other anti-poverty policies is undoubtedly desirable, the vicious cycle can only be broken by tackling the problem at its source.

Nature takes time to heal. Forest in average undergoes about **2 percent** recovery per year. Contrary to popular belief, human efforts do not help ecosystem restoration significantly since ecosystem recovery is best left to **nature itself**.

Reducing consumption demand is therefore critical not only to bring down emissions, but also to give nature the time and space it needs to recover from extraction damages, and to give back to the poor their dignity and the resilience they need in times of trial through sustained livelihoods.

Towards a New Paradigm

The current economic hardship caused by abrupt COVID-19 interventions necessitates governments to think of ways to save jobs and businesses particularly small and medium enterprises, re-employ those who have lost their livelihoods, and alleviate poverty. While this is certainly desirable, the pandemic experience has provided some points for **reflection** which suggest that recovery measures need to consider other factors beyond the economy to avert future climate-induced disasters.

The economic miracles **post-World War II** and post-Great Depression undoubtedly present a hopeful picture for a post-COVID-19 world. There is a need to be mindful, however, that those eras operated neither on 1.6 Earth **overshoot**, nor had they

transgressed interconnected planetary boundaries within which the Earth can function safely the way we do today.

A post-COVID-19 **green** economic recovery that involves a sweeping investment switch to low-carbon alternatives across multiple sectors including energy and electricity, land-based transport, industry, and buildings, may be compatible with the Paris target by year 2030. Considering a **lack** of ambitious climate actions that has manifested itself in global energy growth **outperforming** decarbonisation so far, it remains to be seen whether the current global pandemic can provide the impetus towards meaningful green recovery.

In light of these limitations, a bold determination to switch to a just and equitable earth-centred economic paradigm is needed, and a consensus among people, governments and businesses is required to effect a significant transformation in high consumption lifestyle. In comparison to today's consumption-driven economic model, this may entail low, no, or **declining** growth. The alternative model may not necessarily lead to increased unemployment, poverty and **inequality**, however, as **studies** have shown that with well-calibrated policies, progress **without** growth is possible.

Given the fast-closing time window for emission reduction, attempts at decreasing resource demand relative to the previous levels through greener products, increased efficiency, circular economy, net-zero, and sustainable resource management may help, but may not be sufficient. Additionally, considering the ecological deficit reality and the accompanying plight of the poor, a fundamental rethink for a well-designed economic model aimed at an absolute reduction in consumption to reach an ecological balance is imperative. Post-COVID-19 recovery will play a critical role in saving Mother Earth, the poor, and humanity from climate disasters.

Researcher Profile

Jose Ma. Luis Montesclaros

Jose Ma. Luis Montesclaros, MPP is Associate Research Fellow with the Centre of Non-Traditional Security Studies, S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies, Nanyang Technological University, Singapore. He conducts policy analysis with dynamic models of food security, economics, agriculture and climate change in ASEAN, and has provided inputs to Singapore's Inter-Ministry Committee on Food Security (IMCFS). Earlier, he was consultant to the World Bank's Chief Economist Office for East Asia and the Pacific (headquartered

in Washington D.C.), co-authoring the ASEAN-Commissioned report, "Bridging the Development Gap: ASEAN Equitable Development Monitor Report 2014". He holds a Master's Degree in Public Policy from the Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy (LKYSPP), National University of Singapore (ASEAN Scholar), and a BS Economics Degree from the University of the Philippines, Diliman; he was one of the LKYSPP's two "Leaders of Tomorrow" representatives at the 44th St Gallen Wings of Leadership Awards (Switzerland).



REFLECTIONS

Growing Apart? Southeast Asia's Growing Food Insecurity amid Increasing Per-capita Income since 2014

By Jose Ma. Luis Montesclaros
Centre for Non-Traditional Security Studies
(NTS Centre)



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A recent [NTS Centre Insight](#) piece described how today's COVID-19 pandemic stands to intensify pre-existing deficiencies in food access. This brief article complements that by zooming in on root causes of such deficiencies. A glaring anomaly in Southeast Asia which this article highlights, is that over the past 4 years, GDP per capita increased alongside an increase in food insecurity, based on UN Food and Agriculture Organization (UN FAO) [data](#). Southeast Asia's average GDP per capita grew from USD 10,352 (PPP in constant 2011 international \$) to USD 11,656 or 12.5 percent from 2015 to 2018; yet, the prevalence of food insecurity (whether moderate or severe) has increased from 17.3 percent in 2015 to 20.4 percent in 2018. This goes against the logic of trickle-down of economic growth, and instead, points towards trends of greater divergence over

time between these two.

Income, prices, and natural disruptions

One obvious culprit is growing income inequality. The UN Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific's [2018 report](#) showed trends of growing income inequality in Southeast Asia over the past decade, with Southeast Asia's Gini Index (0 = perfect equality; 1 = perfect inequality) increasing from 32.6 (covering the 1990-94 period) to 39.1 (covering the 2010-2014 period). Thus, it would appear that the poorest members of society who live in the fringes, have continued to find their income levels insufficient to meet their food consumption needs.

However, more subtle challenges are faced on the side of farmers and other producers. Natural weather disruptions

such as droughts or floods, as well as biotic disruptions such as pestilence and crop and animal diseases, can have undesirable impacts on food prices. Similarly, changing temperatures and less regular rainfall affect the yields or productivity of farming. Both shocks and long-term changes mean that every kilogram of food produced is more costly for farmers, with greater farming effort needed alongside the cost of wasted inputs (such as seeds, fertilisers and pesticides) whenever harvests fail. Economic factors may influence food supplies too. Farmers face the risk that food prices fluctuate and fall to a point where farmers are unable to cover their production costs. Alternatively, the costs of inputs may fluctuate too; for instance, the cost of fertilisers is not immune to the effects of fluctuations in global energy prices.

As farmers bear the greater financial losses whenever prices and costs fluctuate, or whenever there are natural or biotic disruptions, farmers may find that by using fewer inputs and simply planting “low-tech”, they can minimise their losses amid these uncertainties. This applies to majority of farmers in Asia, who are smallholder farmers, owning 2 hectares of land or less, with limited savings face such disruptions or to invest in production inputs to boost their productivity. In fact, a 2016 [study](#) by Dalberg Global Development Advisors finds that across developing countries in Latin America, Sub-Saharan Africa, South Asia and Southeast Asia, the financing needs of farmers in the short- and long-term average USD 1,500 and USD 1,500-2000, respectively. The total gap between the financing that farmers require and what they are able to access, is estimated at USD 150 billion.

Historical precedents of financing challenges

There are historical precedents that can help better understand today's situation. A UN FAO document prepared for the [1996 World Food Conference](#) acknowledged that more investment in agricultural production is needed to counteract declining gains in productivity from existing technologies as well as emerging climate challenges. Without sufficient additional investment, it projected that

undernourishment would continue to be a problem, falling from 20 percent in 1990 to 11.9 percent undernourishment by year 2010, but not reaching 0 percent. This estimate has been surprisingly accurate, with undernourishment historically being at 12.3 percent in 2009 and at 11.8 percent in 2020.

One of the structural explanations for why agriculture has not received as much attention from the private sector, is its low value-addition compared to other sectors (manufacturing and services). Globally, the gross value-added per worker in industry (manufacturing) is close to 8 times that of agriculture in 2010, while that in services was close to 10 times as in agriculture, based on World Bank data as cited by the author in an earlier [piece](#). This hints at significantly lower income and wages in agriculture compared to other sectors. It also hints at lower returns to private sector investment unless there are significant improvements in the value-propositions of these investments or in policy environments.

A further precedent is consumer behaviour, or how spending changes as the average income level in an economy increases. According to Engel's Law, the share of a person's income allocated for food tends to decline over time, displaced by spending on durable consumer goods and

gadgets. This reduces the value-addition by agriculture, which in turn downgrades their profitability as investment opportunities. This in turn explains falling wages and lagging private sector investment.

More attention needed

More attention needs to be given to the agricultural sector and the issue of food security, if the ‘zero-hunger’ Sustainable Development Goal is to be achieved. Sadly, the kind of accountability taken by governments in promoting the food and agricultural sector peaked during the Green Revolution in the 1960s-80s but has since lagged behind the support given other economic sectors.

For instance, in seeking energy security, governments have been involved to the extent of even [nationalising](#) the energy sector. Many states have effectively taken accountability to ensure sufficient energy availability at affordable prices, or otherwise suffer political and economic consequences. This is in part because of the significant value-addition of energy goods as primary commodities, with dire systemic impacts on the economy should there be disruptions (e.g. inflation, balance of payments deficits and foreign exchange fluctuations). Even if the food sector relies more on farmers than government companies and cannot be managed the exact same way, a similar

RECENT PUBLICATIONS

Bangladesh Institute of Peace & Security Studies (BIPSS)

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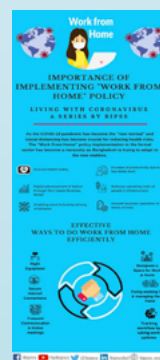
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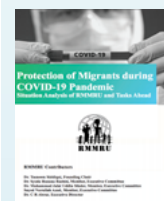
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PAST EVENT SUMMARIES

Bangladesh Institute of Peace & Security Studies (BIPSS)

Living in An Age of Disorder



Bangladesh Institute of Peace and Security Studies (BIPSS) recently organised a Dinner Discussion Club on 'Living in An Age of Disorder'. The dinner talk was given by Dr. Iftekhar Ahmed Chowdhury, Principal Research Fellow, Institute of South Asian Studies (ISAS), National University of Singapore. The dinner discussion club is a monthly event of BIPSS where issues of importance and interest are highlighted. The dinner club was attended by ambassadors, diplomats, academics, journalists and others.

BIPSS – CENERS-K DIALOGUE IN KOLKATA



A Roundtable discussion took place at Kolkata, India, between BIPSS and Centre for Eastern and North Eastern Regional Studies-Kolkata (CENERS-K), a renowned Indian think tank. President, BIPSS, led the Bangladesh delegation at the Roundtable and the Indian delegation was led by Air Chief Marshal Arup Raha, President, CENERS-K. The participants in the discussion included senior officials of CENERS-K, representatives of industries, journalists, historians and strategic thinkers. A range of topics were discussed at the Roundtable including Connectivity, Water Sharing and Environmental Cooperation, Security and Counter Terrorism, Border Management etc. It may be mentioned that CENERS-K is a partner institute of BIPSS.

Geopolitical Developments in South Asia and Its Implications

During a recent visit to India, BIPSS delegation led by President, BIPSS, Major General Muniruzzaman (Retd) visited The

United Service Institution of India (USI). Established in 1870, USI is the oldest national security think tank in the Indo-Pacific region. BIPSS has been a partner of USI for over a decade. During the visit, BIPSS delegation called on the newly appointed Director of USI Major General B K Sharma (Retd) and discussed ways for enhancing the existing collaboration between the two institutes.

The BIPSS delegation also participated at a roundtable titled "Geopolitical Developments in South Asia and Its Implications." The roundtable discussion was attended by diplomats, senior civil servants and members of the USI faculty.



BIPSS Delegation Visits CLAWS, India



During a recent visit to New Delhi, India BIPSS delegation led by President, BIPSS, Major General Muniruzzaman (Retd) visited Centre for Land Warfare Studies (CLAWS) and called on its Director, Lt Gen (Dr) Vijay Kumar Ahluwalia, PVSM, AVSM**, YSM, VSM (Retd). General Muniruzzaman was accompanied by Mr. Shafqat Munir, Research Fellow and Head of Bangladesh Centre for Terrorism Research (BCTR), Bangladesh Institute of Peace and Security Studies (BIPSS).

BIPSS currently has ongoing research collaboration with CLAWS and has recently published a joint commentary (<https://www.claws.in/radicalisation-perspectives/>). During the meeting, both institutes discussed ways and means of enhancing the existing collaboration and other matters of mutual interest. It may be mentioned that CLAWS is a noted strategic think tank and works on the whole gamut

of strategic studies, national security and defence issues.

President, BIPSS was interviewed by Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA), Belgium on Climate and Security



President, BIPSS was interviewed by Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA), Belgium on Climate and Security. This was part of Belgian MFA's main agenda during their presidency of the UN Security Council 2019-2020. President, BIPSS is also the Chairman of the Global Military Advisory Council on Climate Change (GMACCC).

Global Trends 2020



BIPSS recently organised a roundtable titled 'Global Trends 2020' in conjunction with *The Daily Star*. It is part of an ongoing series of events which started in 2019. The roundtable focused on the following themes:

1. Strategic Trends and Global Risk
2. Geopolitical Trends
3. Geo-economic Trends
4. Technological Trends

The attendees included diplomats, academics, journalists, students, retired senior civil servants and Flag Officers and representatives of the strategic community in Dhaka. The participants at the roundtable discussed on the ongoing shifts in the international system and key trends including the fourth industrial revolution, rise of populism and the economic impact of COVID-19 among other issues. The roundtable was moderated by President, BIPSS Major General Muniruzzaman (Retd).

Bangladesh: Economic Outlook 2020



Bangladesh Institute of Peace and Security Studies (BIPSS) recently organised a Dinner Discussion Club on 'Bangladesh : Economic Outlook 2020'. The dinner talk was given by Dr. Fahmida Khatun, Executive Director, Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD). The dinner discussion club is a monthly event of BIPSS where issues of importance and interest are highlighted. The dinner club was attended by ambassadors, diplomats, academics, journalists and others. [Summary of BIPSS Dinner Discussion Club](#)

Lecture on 'Terrorism: A Pervasive Threat to National Security'

Mr. Shafqat Munir, Head of Bangladesh Centre for Terrorism Research (BCTR) and Research Fellow at BIPSS recently delivered a lecture to the Course Members of National Defence Course 2020 at the National Defence College (NDC), Bangladesh. His

lecture titled 'Terrorism: A Pervasive Threat to National Security' examined the various aspects of terrorism and violent extremism as a threat to national security, emerging trends and the evolving nature of the threat. It also highlighted the important steps that have already been taken towards countering the threat in Bangladesh and suggested important policy recommendations. The presentation was attended by the Commandant, members of the NDC faculty and course members from Bangladesh armed forces, civil services as well as from foreign countries. Due to the current COVID-19 situation, the lecture was delivered online.

Indo – Pacific Strategy Conference in France



Indo – Pacific Strategy (IPS) is a key area of research for BIPSS. As the strategic competition intensifies in the wider strategic space, it is even more important to analyse all aspects of all major strategic initiatives including IPS. France also plays

an important role in IPS and is taking new steps to implement it. President, BIPSS Major General Muniruzzaman, ndc, psc (Retd) attended the first Indo – Pacific Strategy Conference in Paris earlier this year. The conference hosted by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of France and Institut des Hautes Etudes de Defense Nationale – Institute for Higher Studies in National Defence (IHEDN) France, was attended by policy makers, senior defence officials and heads of think tanks in the Asia Pacific region. It may be mentioned that General Muniruzzaman is an earlier alumni of IHEDN and attended the Session Internationale Asie du Moyen Orient (SIAMO) in 2016.

BIPSS LIVE Sessions

- [Live on impacts of Coronavirus](#)
- [Live on Eastern Union: A Brave New World](#)
- [Live on Global Trends 2020 \(Part-1\)](#)
- [Live on Global Trends 2020 \(Part-2\)](#)
- [Live on Security Challenges of Human Trafficking](#)
- [Live on A Cramped Future: Challenges of Mega-City](#)
- [Live on Cyber Security](#)
- [Live on Emerging challenges of Rohingya crisis after 2 years in Bangladesh](#)

Centre for Non-Traditional Security Studies (NTS Centre), S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies (RSIS), NTU

NTS Centre Webinar on “COVID-19 and its impacts on the Women of Southeast Asia”

15 June 2020



The NTS Centre organised a webinar on “COVID-19 and its impacts on the Women of Southeast Asia” on 15 June, 2020. This webinar brought together a panel of 6 speakers with a broad range of experience in the region to discuss how gender inequality in the domestic as well as wider political and socio-economic, spheres has prolonged and intensified the suffering of women during this pandemic. Topics discussed during the seminar included global health governance, migrants and refugees, the increased burden on women, the WPS agenda in Southeast Asia as well as women and poverty under COVID-19. Click [here](#) to view the webinar.

NTS Centre Panel Webinar on “Humanitarian Futures in the Post-COVID-19 World”

03 June 2020



The HADR Programme organised the Webinar on “Humanitarian Futures in the Post-COVID-19 World” on June 3, 2020. This webinar brought together a panel of speakers with different backgrounds related to humanitarian affairs to examine how the current COVID-19 experience impact the future planning of the humanitarian sector. The speakers discussed how the mindset about future planning needed to change, what humanitarian needs there would be in the field, what changes would be necessary, and how emerging donors like China would be able to contribute to future humanitarian action. Click [here](#) to view the webinar.

Webinar on “ COVID-19 and Global Governance: Implications on Indo-Pacific”

21 May 2020



Head of Centre, Prof Mely Caballero-Anthony gave webinar on “ COVID-19 and Global Governance: Implications on Indo-Pacific”, organised by Centre for Strategic Studies, Victoria University of Wellington, 21 May 2020.

Situation Report on Migrant Workers under COVID-19

04 April 2020

RMMRU prepared a Situation Report on Condition on Bangladeshi Migrant Workers under COVID-19.

It was released by holding a virtual press conference 'Protection of Bangladeshi Migrants in the Corona Crisis: RMMRU's Recommendations' on 4 April. 18 print and 3 electronic media covered the news as immediate response of this conference. Some of the recommendations particularly those on recruitment industry were subsequently endorsed by Migrant Forum in Asia and National Human Rights Commission of Bangladesh and found space in their own documents.

RMMRU eSymposium Series on COVID-19 and Migration - Build Back Better

1st eSymposium

"The Other Face of Globalisation: Arbitrary Return of Bangladeshi Migrants and Their Unpaid Dues."

RMMRU conducted in-depth interviews of 50 migrant workers over phone who returned since the outbreak of COVID-19. It attempts to understand the context of return during COVID-19 and explore the extent of lost remittances in the form of unpaid wages and benefits before return.

This is the [link](#) to the eSymposium.

2nd eSymposium

'Migrant Workers of South Asia: Experiences of Return, Repatriation and Deportation' on

24 June 2020. The panel included eminent migration experts of South Asia, Dr. Irudaya Rajan of CDS, India, Dr. Jagannath Adhikari and Ganesh Gurung of Nepal Institute of Development Studies, Prof. Nasrah Shah of Lahore School of Economics and L K Ruhunage, migration expert from Sri Lanka. Here is the Facebook [link](#).

3rd eSymposium

The third eSymposium on 'Hunger, Exploitation, Hate Crime and Xenophobia: Rohingya in Land and at Sea' was organised in collaboration with Free Rohingya Coalition on 9 June. An all Rohingya panel discussed the plight of the members of their communities in different countries of the world and at sea. Panelists included Sharifah Shakirah of Rohingya Women Development Network (RWDN) Kuala Lumpur, Hafsar Tameesuddin women and child rights activist in New Zealand, Ali Johar of Rohingya Human Rights Initiative, Nay San Lwin of Free Rohingya Coalition and Sujauddin Karimuddin Rohingya activist based in Australia.

[Link](#) to the Rohingya eSymposium.

BCSM Activities

RMMRU is the Secretariat of the Bangladesh Civil Society for Migrants, a coalition of 18 national organisations working on migration issue in Bangladesh. These are some of the activities that were undertaken under BCSM banner with RMMRU as the lead organisation:

Observance of one-minute silence

Bangladesh Civil Society for Migration (BCSM) a network of migrant rights

organisations, Migrant Forum in Asia (MFA), a regional network of 1000 civil society organisations based in Manila and the Refugee and Migratory Movements Research Unit (RMMRU) jointly observed one minute silence at 9 am on 12 April, to mourn those migrants and nationals who died of COVID-19 both at home and abroad. Seven member organisations of Bangkok based regional human rights body Forum-Asia, nineteen member organisations of BCSM took part in the campaign. More than 10 reputed national daily covered the news.

Open Letter to Prime Minister

In order to place the plight of migrant workers before the Prime of Bangladesh Minister, the members of Civil Society for Migration (BCSM), an association of 19 organisations, have sent a open letter to the Hon'ble Prime Minister on 20 April 2020. RMMRU is the Secretariat of BCSM. The open letter received a wide coverage in the media as 18 newspapers covered this news items over two days. The most widely circulated English daily carried an editorial on the issue.

Letter to the Secretary General of United Nations

A Memorandum of Bangladesh Civil Society for Migrants was submitted on 27th April 2020 to the UN Secretary General highlighting the plight of the Bangladeshi migrants. This also received a massive coverage in print and electronic media. The Minister of Expatriate's Welfare and Overseas Employment sent a thanking note to Dr. C R Abrar, the Chair of BCSM for this effort.

Click [here](#) to view.