Political Economy of COVID-19 and Climate Change Response

Differently Indifferent Policy Narratives and Actions

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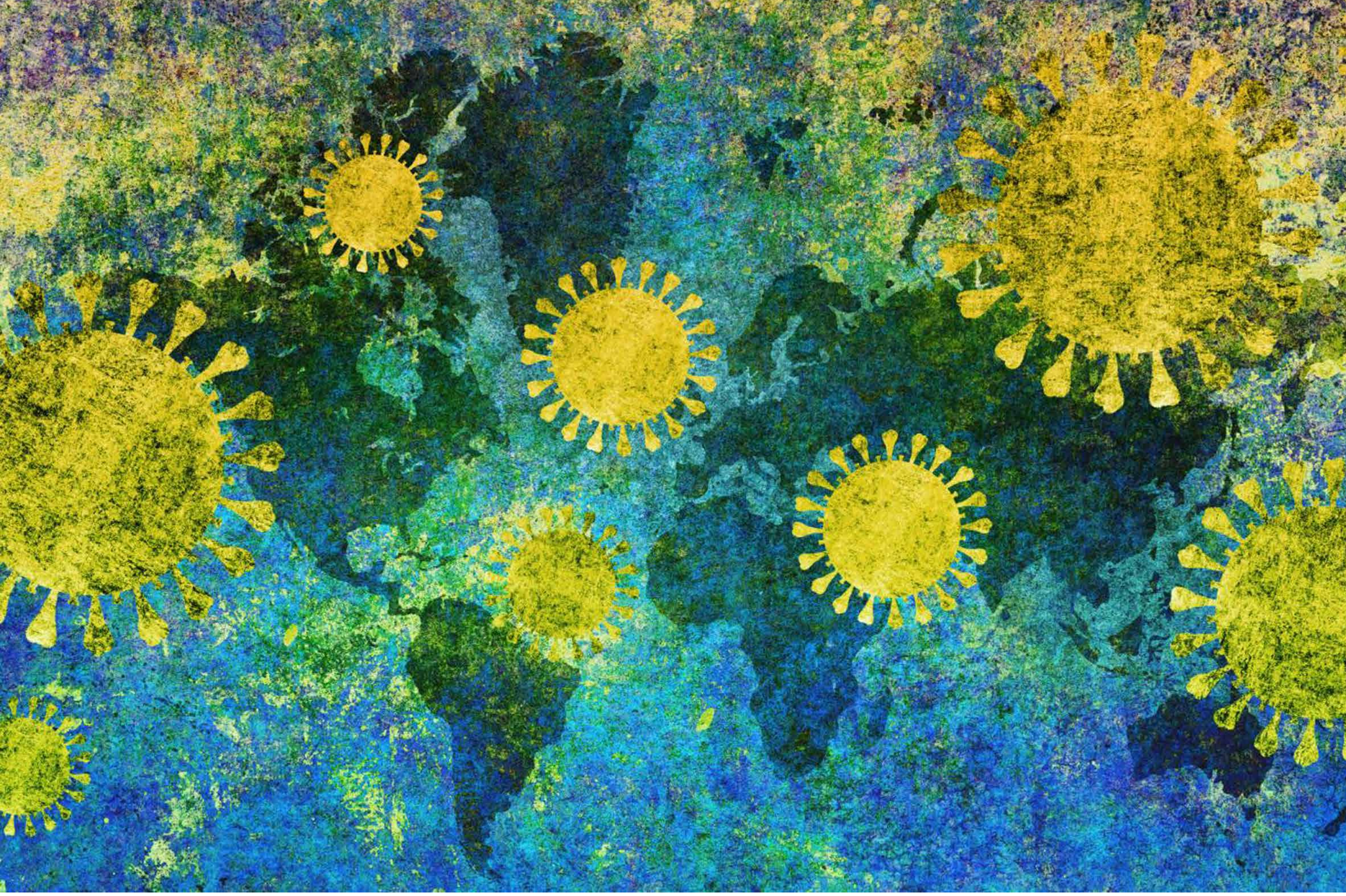

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Acronyms and Abbreviations

ADB	Asian Development Bank
AF	Adaptation Fund
AfDB	African Development Bank
AIIB	Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank
BBS	Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics
BGMEA	Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association
BIGD	BRAC Institute of Governance and Development
BP	British Petroleum
BRI	Belt and Road Initiative
CCP	Chinese Communist Party
CDM	Clean Development Mechanism
COP	Conference of the Parties
CSOs	Civil society organizations
EBRD	European Bank for Reconstruction and Development
EIB	European Investment Bank
EU	European Union
EVD	Ebola Virus Disease
EMT	International Emission Trading
FCL	Flexible Credit Line
GCF	Green Climate Fund
GoB	Government of Bangladesh
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GHGs	Green House Gases
ICU	Intensive Care Units
IDBG	Islamic Development Bank Group
IFI	International Financial Institution
IIASA	International Institute for Applied Systems Analysis
IsDR	Islamic Development Bank
IMD	International Institute for Management Development
IMF	International Monetary Fund
IPCC	Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change
JI	Joint Implementation
LDCF	Least Developed Country's Fund
L&Ds	Loss and Damages
MDBs	Multilateral Development Banks
MERS	Middle East Respiratory Syndrome
MIEs	Multilateral Implementing Entities
NAB	New Arrangements to Borrow
NCEI	National Centers for Environmental Information
NDA	National Designated Authority
NDB	New Development Bank
NDCs	Nationally Determined Contributions
NIEs	National Implementing Entities
ODA	Official Development Assistance
OECD	Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development
OMS	Open Market Sale
PPE	Personal Protective Equipment
PPRC	Power and Participation Research Centre
RMG	Ready-made Garments
SARS	Serious Acute Respiratory Syndrome
SCCF	Special Climate Change Find
UNFCCC	United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change
UK	United Kingdom
UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme
UNU-WIDER	United Nations University World Institute for Development Economics Research
USA	United States of America
USD	United States Dollar
WB	World Bank
WEF	World Economic Forum
WFP	World Food Programme
WHO	World Health Organization

Political Economy of COVID-19 and Climate Change Response:

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Executive Summary

COVID-19, the recent time unprecedented global pandemic, has already become one of the greatest challenges for many countries irrespective of their economic strength and geo-political influences. The pandemic has not been simply a health issue and a concern of ensuring health care facilities, rather it involves systematic enforcement of multi-dimensional socio-economic imperatives required to prevent spreading of the highly contagious pathogen (SARS-CoV-2 virus). Pragmatically, battling COVID-19 involves two distinct and complementary dimensions; first, a preventive dimension e.g. social/physical distancing, lock-down, curfew etc., while accepting the immediate and far-reaching implications on the people's livelihoods, wellbeing and loss in national economic growth, and second, the health care dimension such as diagnosis, isolation, contact tracing, dedicated health facilities etc., while ensuring efficient, transparent, accountable, accessible and equitable health services for all.

As evidenced, the socio-economic and health care dimensions are positively correlated; the better and stronger applications of the socio-economic imperatives mean the lesser number of infected and deaths and vice-versa. However, implementing socio-economic imperatives for long has become a complex political dilemma as they could cause a tremendous effect on the economic activities, leading to joblessness, inflation, GDP loss etc., which in the long run could potentially instigate the debate on the failure of a political government to address the pandemic and the associated socio-economic consequences.

Hence, globally, the political leadership is found to be perplexed by the dilemma between the stringent implementation of the socio-economic imperatives as a necessary complement to the health care dimension or relax them to evade the impending economic downturn. Ironically, a majority of countries chose the latter one. This means a 'business-as-usual scenario' in economic activities while making the pandemic widespread, unpredictable and unmanageable. The political economy context of those countries has prioritized recovering the socio-economic consequences rather than responding to the aggravating health crises of the pandemic. The likely dilemma and political economy orientation have also been observed while responding to climate change. The political leadership of the developed countries by and large have long been denied to correct their historical ir(responsibility) through required mitigation actions as per the demand of science and the people who have long been suffering from the unjustifiable burden of climate crisis. Such a political economy context has failed implementation of the Kyoto Protocol, also has now been leading implementation of the Paris Agreement towards a similar fate.

Except for a few exceptions, the policy responses to COVID-19 and Climate

Change are indifferent; denying, delaying, insisting false solutions etc., which have been contextualised from the short-term political interest of the national governments. Such a political stance, contrarily, overlooked the justice/humanitarian dimension of the COVID-19 and Climate Change that demand rights-based policy instruments and translating them into actions. Though the causes and context of COVID-19 and Climate Change are different, their consequences coincide. They both disproportionately affect the poor who are at the frontline either for socio-economic deprivation or for climate change risk exposure. The very nature of the political economy that puts people's lives at stake for a short-term political interest leaves a question whether and how far should this be able to rescue the Earth from the ever-greater threats of climate change.

The policy paper critically reviewed the responses to the COVID-19 pandemic, analysed national and global policy responses to the far-reaching impacts of climate change, integrated views and opinion of the relevant policy experts and developed a critical insight on the political economy context that shaped the decisions on responding to both the crises.

> Except for a few exceptions, the policy responses to COVID-19 and Climate Change are indifferent; denying, delaying, insisting false solutions etc., which have been contextualised from the short-term political interest of the national governments. Such a political stance, contrarily, overlooked the justice/humanitarian dimension of the COVID-19 and Climate Change that demand rights-based policy instruments and translating them into actions.

The policy paper developed a set of recommendations for revisiting the global development paradigm and the national political economy context. The recommendations include; First, ensure prioritized support to the countries and communities struggling with the double burden of COVID-19 and climate change; Second, ensure readily accessible grants-based resources along with debt service relief for the climate vulnerable and COVID-19 affected developing countries; Third, ensure quality, responsible and green financing by integrating to climate resilience and sustainable development goals; Fourth, strengthen regional initiatives for addressing the crises in common; Fifth, uphold the spirit of multilateralism with broad-based stakeholders' participation and nurturing democratic practices, and; Sixth, strengthening global as well as national governance.

Learnings on the political economy context and policy responses to COVID-19 and Climate Change are significant, but an unwelcoming way of cautioning the global political leadership to think beyond the narrowly focused national interest and act together for saving and serving the humankind.

COVID-19 Outbreak in Bangladesh: key causes that made the pandemic widespread

Globally, the COVID-19 pandemic already became a massive humanitarian and development concern both in terms of loss of lives and loss in economic growth. As of 31 October 2020, 46.4 million people in 218 countries were identified as COVID-19 positive, among which 1.2 million died (Worldometers, 2020). In Bangladesh, until 26 October 2020, total 400,251 COVID-19 infected were identified, of which 5818 died (WHO, 2020a). In addition to the official statistics, newspapers and social media have reported additional deaths with COVID-19 symptoms. Many of whom were neither diagnosed nor received rightful health services and died amid frustrations on poor health care facilities, intolerant human behaviour and social stigma.

COVID-19 outbreak in Bangladesh was rather worrisome basically for three reasons; first, open and frequent flight and freight operation between Bangladesh and China-the country of origin of COVID-19 pandemic, second, frequent travel of the Bangladeshi emigrants from the European countries- the hotspot of COVID-19 infestation and, third, poor scanning and quarantine facilities for the incoming emigrants and other travellers. Despite the certainty of the country's high exposure to the risk of COVID-19 transmission and the fragility of the health care facilities, the policy and political propaganda around its prevention assured the common mass that the country's political leadership as well as the health care services are well prepared to prevent the virus proliferation and face the pandemic from the forefront. However, this has not been evidenced in practice. Instead of being rationally proactive to limit chain transmission, Bangladesh undertook a conservative and somewhat confused strategy. Delay and denial-like attitude of the respective authorities, disobliging perception and mindset of the common mass, intolerant social stigma etc. cumulatively allowed the virus to escalate. Experts keeping a close eyes on the COVID-19 outbreak in Bangladesh have identified four key causes that allowed the virus to spread faster; they are- first, conservative approach in diagnosis, second, insufficient health care facilities and lack of motivation of the health professionals, third, flexibility in lockdown, and fourth, religious (mis)belief and social stigma.

Conservative approach in COVID-19 diagnosis

Bangladesh followed a conservative approach in COVID-19 diagnosis. This might be a conscious policy decision (The Daily Star, 2020a) allegedly due to not having adequate health care and diagnosis facilities like testing kits, dedicated labs, health-safety gears etc. for the frontline medical professionals. Given the context, the government restricted COVID-19 diagnosis only at the Institute of Epidemiology, Disease Control and Research-IEDCR for almost a month since the indentification of COVID-19 affected ones on 8 March 2020. The Center (IEDCR), governed under the bureaucratic control of the Ministry of Health of the government of Bangladesh, provided demand-based diagnosis primarily to the emigrants returning from the COVID-19 affected countries. The very centralized and hard to access diagnosis facilities sensibly kept COVID-19 diagnosis to a limited number, so as the number of the infected ones. A lesser number of COVID-19 infected (given the context of lesser number of diagnosis) was desired to rationalize much-talked statement of the respective authorities and the political leaders on the preparedness of addressing the pandemic. This, however, conveyed a perplexing scenario on the extent and the magnitude of the crisis, also conveyed a relaxed understanding to the common people that the virus might be less harmful in Bangladesh. The common perception around were; the virus has appeared as a curse on the corrupt ones hence less harmful to the pious and poor people, the virus is less effective under strong sunshine in the summer, etc. With this unhelpful understanding, people were as-usual in their daily lives, even were found crowding in religious gatherings, burial prayers and in the tourist spots on public holidays (ALJAZEERA, 2020).

With such misconceptions and restrictions Bangladesh (through the IEDCR) managed to test a total of 1438 COVID-19 suspects out of which 51 were identified as infected during the period from 8 March to 31 March 2020 (WHO, 2020b, The Business Standard, 2020a). The number of affected started to escalate with the increase of decentralized diagnosis facilities; 17 diagonosis facilities were established in early April 2020, and an additional 36 were established in May 2020. With these extended facilities, tests per million people increased from 156 in April 2020 to 1881 in June 2020. Similarly, the attack rate per million people has escalated from 17.3 in April 2020 to 290.8 in June 2020 (as on 01 June 2020) with confirmed cases in all the 64 districts (WHO, 2020c; WHO, 2020d). Though Bangladesh progressively scaled-up diagnosis facilities, yet the number of tests, currently 13,337 per million people (Situation Report 35; 26 October 2020), is quite insignificant in comparison to many other COVID-19 affected countries throughout the world.

Insufficient health care facilities and lack of motivation of the health professionals

While the government of Bangladesh conveyed a strong political motion on the preparedness to limit virus' spread, in practice neither the health care facilities nor the health professionals were properly equipped and motivated to confront the pandemic. The government took much time to establish dedicated health facilities to serve the COVID -19 patients, also to equip the front-line healthcare professionals with the supply of personal protective equipment (PPE), especially with the masks and gowns. Since the very beginning of COVID-19 outbreak the medical professionals have been demanding N95 masks and full proof medical-grade gowns. In the context of growing grief of the medical professionals for the PPEs, the government contracted medical equipments suppliers who delivered locally made masks labelled as 'N95'. Supply of fake N95 Masks to the medical professionals further increased their frustration, also created huge CSOs and media criticism on the long-standing practices of organized corruption in public procurement. The Prime Minister of Bangladesh Sheikh Hasina also expressed her exasperation ordering an investigation on the supply of forged N95 masks to a hospital dedicated for treating coronavirus patients (The Business Standard, 2020b).

On the other hand, the medical gowns procured from the local markets were not 'fit for the purpose' for the medical professionals. Most of the local apparel factories do not have a dust-free and medical-grade environment to make a full proof medical grade gown. They can only produce chemical resistant gowns, which cannot guarantee protection from the virus contamination while dealing with the COVID-19 patients from a close proximity (ibid). Given the context, many doctors and hospitals denied serving any patients with likely symptoms of COVID-19. There are exception and inspirational stories too; many doctors, by upholding their professional duty and ethics, have served the COVID-19 patients even with the limited protective gears. The high exposure of the medical professionals to the COVID-19 patients, their long working hours, low level of preparedness etc. made them the foremost victims. As of 31st October 2020, 2853 doctors in Bangladesh were identified as COVID-19 positive (BMA, 2020a), out of which 103 doctors died (BMA, 2020b). It's one doctor in every 56 death cases. According to the media report, doctor's death rate in Bangladesh is the highest, which was 4 percent in June 2020 compared to 2.5 percent of the World's average (Prothom Alo, 2020). The ratio of the doctor's death is also much higher than the usual global ratio; In Bangladesh the ratio of infected and death of doctors stand to 27.66:1, while the usual global ratio is 68.79: 1.

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To keep the healthcare professionals motivated the Prime Minister of Bangladesh announced a welcoming package e.g. an insurance plan and incentive scheme; USD 882.75 million (BDT 7.5 billion) for health insurance for the frontline employees and USD 117.7 million (BDT 1 billion) bonus payment for the public sector health professionals serving the COVID-19 patients (The Daily Star, 2020b).

As a whole, the health care services (both public and private) were neither prepared nor motivated to fight the pandemic. There are systemic problems too. This sector has long been ignored and suffered from the scarcity of resources, poor infrastructure and logistic facilities, bureaucratic influence, poor governance etc. that made the service providers largely unaccountable especially to the poor. According to the World Bank's data, Bangladesh had 0.5268 physicians, 0.3 nurses and midwives, 0.8 hospital beds per 1,000 people in 2017, one of the lowest in the world (Trading Economics, 2020a).

Besides, poor budget allocation, roughly around 5.0 percent of the annual total, far less than WHO's recommendation of 15 percent of the total budget share, was always a concern of the health professionals and experts. Though a substantial amount of health budget allocation is spent on subsidizing public health services, yet out-of -pocket health expenditure (percentage of private expenditure on health) is 67 percent (GoB, 2018), which is exorbitant. Around 10 percent of people spend more than one-fourth of their income on out-of-pocket expenditure that annually pushes the country's 7 percent of people below the poverty line (USD 1.90 daily income rate) (Trading Economics, 2020b).

Over the years, such a structured negligence and poor governance in the public health services, opened an enormous opportunity for the private businesses, which is extortionate yet preferred by the wealthy. A higher number of intensive care units (ICU) beds (737 in total) in the private hospitals than the public ones (432 in total) indicates the dominance of private businesses and the inequality of health systems in Bangladesh (Dhaka Tribune, 2020a).

Flexibility in lockdown

Bangladesh followed a relaxed 'lock-down' during the country-wide general holidays starting from 22 March 2020 (effective from 26 March, 2020). The announcement of the 'general holidays' was not well coordinated with the other concerned ministries and sectors, also was not accompanied by the decision of suspending public transport services alongside. As soon as on the declaration of the holidays, thousands of informal sector workers, especially the RMGs workers, rushed homeward congesting the public transports. Though the holidays were sequentially extended till the end of May 2020, the RMG factories were found intolerant in running production and called upon their employees to join the work. The RMGs workers, desperate to secure their jobs, were forced to travel back to Dhaka in the following week. They faced untold sufferings on their way back as the long-distance public transports were suspended in the meantime. Many of them, including women and children, were bound to walk for long distances, sometimes travelled congested in the short-distant local vehicles paying 3 to 4 times increased fare than the usual rate. Such an insensible attitude towards the helpless RMGs workers was hugely criticized by the media, CSOs and trade unions. Literally, the indecisiveness of RMG factory owners led to an unnecessary back and forth travelling of the workers, making them vulnerable to the growing risk of the virus spreading.

Though the RMG factories were instructed to ensure

Whole sale kitchen market, Karwan Bazar, Dhaka/April 2020 required protection measures and follow the health-safety guidelines they largely failed to do so. In practice, it is nearly impossible to implement the so called 'health-safety guidelines' fully as the RMGs workers stay congested both in their workplace and residence. hence, the inadequate safety and protection measures have caused an increased number of workers infected. According to the Bangladesh Garment Workers' Solidarity, as of 5 May 2020, 97 workers were infected, 10 among them died either by COVID-19 or with the likely symptoms (NEWAGE Bangladesh, 2020a).

Again, weeks before the Eid festival at the end of May 2020, the government allowed opening of shopping malls and other businesses. They also failed to ensure 'health-safety guidelines' and social distancing as this became hardly possible for the crowds of the festival shoppers. And, since 1 June 2020, the government eased the lockdown and allowed all the economic activities, industries, informal sectors, businesses, service sectors, mass transport etc. to run in a supposedly 'controlled manner' that directs the respective sectors to ensure social/physical distancing and maintaining health-safety guidelines by their own.

It is worthwhile to mention that the tireless efforts of the country's law enforcing agencies and the civil administration helped to establish a coordinated mechanism to fight COVID-19 especially in the capital and in the district towns. However, much of the successes achieved were spoiled due to indecision, confusion and flexibility on the reopening of garments factories and the shopping malls.

Religious belief and social stigma

Globally, the COVID-19 infected ones reportedly faced social exclusion, stigma, hatred, denial of treatment and more shockingly denial of rituals in burying, for instance, the first COVID-19 positive person in Delhi faced a bomb attack, a person of Korean origin was stabbed in Montreal. Similarly, in Bangladesh, many of the infected people were excluded by their neighbourhood communities and families, many were forced to leave their rented houses, and many more cases alike. This has been almost common everywhere that the COVID-19 patients faced humiliation by their neighbours. To avoid stigma and social harassments the affected ones either tried to hide the likely symptoms while meeting a doctor or flew away from their known surroundings.

"The analysis on the key causes of COVID-19 outbreak suggests that the government of Bangladesh either failed to apprehend the severity of the virus or didn't have much to do with the fragile health care facilities. Hence the government took a 'wait and act strategy' in responding to the health dimension of the pandemic."

The tendency of hiding and avoiding diagnosis has also increased the risk of chain transmission. There are many cases whereby a symptomatic person conceals COVID-19 manifestations and sought treatment from the local health centres and consequentially infects the visiting doctors. Under the circumstances, doctors and the general hospitals (non-dedicated for COVID-19 treatment) refused every potentially symptomatic patient who exhibited breathing problem even in the critical maternity conditions or due to old-age complications.

The analysis of the key causes of COVID-19 outbreak suggests that the government of Bangladesh either failed to apprehend the severity of the virus or didn't have much to do with the fragile health care facilities. Hence the government took a 'wait and act strategy' in responding to the health dimension of the pandemic.

Socio-Economic Dimensions of COVID-19 Pandemic: Bangladesh context

It’s understandable that the sequential extension of the general holidays from 28 March to 30 May 2020 (The Hindu, 2020) enforced standstill of all economic activities that subsequently caused great hardship by cuttings jobs and destroying income sources of the informal sector earners. A further aggravating situation in the context of prolonged lockdown would cause a certain loss in country's GDP growth, which has been 6.5 percent on an average since a decade and become all-time high to 8.2 percent in 2019-2020 financial year (Trading Economics, 2020c). The surprising growth in GDP made Bangladesh the world’s seventh fastest growing economy in 2019 (IMF 2020a). The miracle has happened mainly for three reasons; first, expansion of the private sector business especially, the ready-made garments industry hence consistent growth in the export earnings; second, migration of the unskilled and semi-skilled labor forces especially from the rural areas to the Middle-east and to the European countries, hence consistent growth in remittance earning; and third, tireless efforts of the small peasants to boost agricultural production, hence attaining the country’s food self-sufficiency and saving food import cost, especially that was for rice. Among them, the first two sectors e.g. RMGs and Remittance earning enabled the country to overcome the foreign exchange-investment gap, while also boosting foreign exchange reserve to currently USD 329.28 billion (Bangladesh Bank, 2020a) and making them available for accelerated economic growth

Hence, it has become a difficult political choice whether the government should enforce strong lockdown while accepting long-term impasses of the country's key drivers of economic growth, which ulimately will cause loss in GDPs, or should relax and withdraw lockdown to support the economic activities to function while allowing the virus to spread faster. The political government of Bangladesh undertook a very strategic position; relaxed and withdrew the lockdown, asked the industries to ensure health-safety of their employees and asked the common mass to be safe and secure by their own. With such unaccommodating strategic position Bangladesh avoided long-term impasses and, thereby, potential harm to its key drivers of economic growth. They are; a) the Ready-Made Garments (RMG) industries, b) wage earner’s remittance, c) agriculture and the diversified informal sectors. The following analysis briefly summarizes the significance of those sectors to the country’s growth and development and the socio-economic consequences to those sectors in the context of COVID-19.

The ready-made garments (RMGs): an engine of the country's export earning

The RMGs currently employs 4.5 million workforce, comprised mostly of the migrated rural women (Textile Focus, 2019). According to the RMG Industry Outlook 2019, the country’s RMGs export accounted to USD 34.13 billion- respectively 84 percent of the country’s export earnings and 12 percent of GDP (ibid). The sector intends to increase its export worth to USD 50 billion by 2021 while also to further increase its share to the global apparel export market from 6.4 percent in 2019 to more than 10 percent in 2021 (ibid).

RMGs workers are on the street demanding their due salaries/Dhaka, May 2020

Though RMGs in Bangladesh achieved a tremendous growth in production and exports, yet its supply base is largely import-dependent. Bangladesh imports more than 50 percent of textile items, garment accessories and capital machineries from China. According to the Central Bank of Bangladesh, during 2018-2019 Bangladesh imported textiles and other raw materials worth of USD 5.02 billion (The Financial Express, 2020a). COVID-19 outbreak in China in December 2019 primarily disrupted the supply chain as well as the production cycle of the Bangladeshi textile and RMG industries. However, the sector faced massive economic loss in the context of decelerated market demand and the consequent fall in export earnings. Prolonged lockdown especially in Europe and in the USA, the major export destination of Bangladeshi RMGs, caused bulk cancellation of export orders worth of USD 3.15 billion (The Financial Express, 2020b). The situation already caused a sharp decline in export earnings, for instance RMGs export in April 2020 fell by 84.86 percent from the corresponding month in 2019 (from USD 2.42 billion in April 2019 to 366.58 million in April 2020) (The Financial Express, 2020c). However, after the seven months of successive negative downturn since January 2020, RMGs exports in August 2020 gained a positive growth of 44.63 percent (The Financial Express, 2020g).

As discussed above, RMGs in Bangladesh is just not an engine of export earning, it's also about creating jobs and supporting livelihoods of more than 4.5 million workforces, though most of them are low paid and live on a hand-to-mouth with their poor wages. The declining trend in production and market demand (as evidenced from the export order cancellation) already made more than 1 million RMGs workers jobless (CGWR, 2020), the number would cross 2 million what the president of Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BGMEA) predicted (BBC, 2020a).

Wage Earner's Remittances: the fuel of the growth of rural enterprises

Remittances sent by the expatriate workers have also been affected by the global COVID-19 pendemic. The 2020 World Migration Report of the International Organization for Migration ranked Bangladesh 6th among 20 top countries of emigrant's origin. The report estimated a total of 7.5 million emigrants who contribute to approximately 12 percent of Bangladesh's GDP. Since the outbreak of COVID-19, the flow of remittances projects a clear regressive trend; USD 1452.20 million, 1276.26 and USD 1086.40 respectively in February, March and April 2020, however, have stated increasing from May 2020 onward, and boomed to USD 2151.05 million in September 2020 (Bangladesh Bank, 2020b). The upward trend in remittance earning contradicts with the earlier prediction on the sharpest decline of remittance flow by 22.1 percent in South Asia (World Bank, 2020c). However, the sudden boost in remittance inflow does not mean a corresponding increase of the emigrants' wages. There are two reasons on the rise of remittances flow; first, a big share of the remittances that once were sent through unofficial (illegal) channels are now being sent legally to reap 2 percent incentive that the government has provisioned recently, and second, many emigrants in the middle-eastern countries have been facing jobs cut due to the shrinking scopes of employment and sending their last earnings before coming back home (Dhaka Tribune, 2020b; UNDP, 2020).

> "The declining trend in production and market demand of the RMGs already made more than 1 million workers jobless, the number would cross 2 million what the president of Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BGMEA) predicted."

Many emigrants especially in the Middle Eastern countries are the construction workers and live on the daily wages. Shut down of businesses even for a day mean to them 'no work no pay'. Already around 0.1 million emigrants returned home (The Financial Express, 2020d), thousands are waiting to return to the country as they become jobless and remained stranded abroad.

There is also recurrent diplomatic pressure on Bangladesh from the middle-eastern countries, destination of more than 70 percent emigrants, to take back the emigrants as the employment opportunity has drastically been shrunk due to the collapse of fossil-fuel market. On the contrary, approximately 150 thousand are waiting to join work abroad but cannot fly to their new jobs due to the recent travel bans around the world (Dhaka Tribune, 2020c). It is uncertain to them whether they would be able to join the jobs at all.

Agricultural Production: life-line of the country's rural economy

The food and agricultural production (predominantly the subsistence agricultural practices) still plays a vital role in ensuring the country's food self-sufficiency while also directly supporting the livelihoods of the country's more than 40 percent people. Over the years, from 1972-1973 to 2016-2017, the rural smallholders have contributed to an increase of the country's food grain production by three and half times (BBS, 2017a) though the sectorial GDP contribution significantly dropped from around 50 percent in the 1970s to around 15 percent in 2019 (Ghose et al., 2014). Aside with food grain production, the agricultural sub-sectors e.g. fisheries, poultry and livestock etc. have expanded significantly while creating jobs for millions of educated yet unemployed rural youths. Such a growth in agriculture and its sub-sectors have been instigated by the demand of the growing numbers of non-farming urbanized population.

A prolonged suspension of long-distance transports associated with the successive extension of the general holidays (lock-down) severed the rural-urban supply chain leading to a drastic price-fall of the perishable goods. Many farmers were compelled to dump the vegetables, fruits, milk etc. Such a sudden economic losses caused an unbearable hardship to the smallholders, who also are burdened by other challenges such as, lack of institutional credit support, high-interest credit from the informal sources, crop loss due to erratic and extreme weather events, low farm-gate price in a long and exploitative supply chain etc. The Asian Development Bank (ADB) estimated more than USD 600 million economic loss of this sector that would put many smallholders under debt burden and extreme poverty (The Business Standard, 2020c).

The collapse of the aforementioned key economic drivers would incur Bangladesh a staggering 1.1 percent GDP loss (USD 3 billion, using 2018 prices) (The Daily Star, 2020b); downturn of GDP growth to less than 4 percent from the projected 8.2 percent during 2019-2020 financial year (The Business Standard, 2020d). Such an economic fallout would primarily affect the progressively developed informal sector that currenly employs 50 million people, which represents more than 85 percent of the country's total workforce (BBS, 2018). Already, enforcement of the partial lockdown has affected roughly 20 million day-to-day earners. The situation will aggravate the existing poverty condition through creating 'new poor' by 22 to 25 percent of the country's total population (PPRC & BIGD, 2020), adding them to the existing 20.5 percent poor estimated in 2019 (BBS, 2017b).

COVID-19 Responses in Bangladesh: prioritizing socio-economic dimensions over the health crises

Other than the health crises, the far-reaching impacts of COVID-19 pandemic like unemployment, poverty, hunger, social crisis etc. have put the government in a challenging dilemma in terms of prioritizing an option; either to accept losses of lives or losses in GDP growth. However, it's the government that shouldn't have an option to choose either one; the first and foremost choice should be saving people's lives. The government of Bangladesh failed to stick on that rational choice, has compromised the health care dimension and prioritized addressing socio-economic consequences through opening-up economic activities, businesses and the markets to function.

Apparently, prioritizing recovery of the socio-economic consequences over the health crises of COVID-19 pandemic has contextualized from the understanding that the country's poor health infrastructure and services run downed with enduring corruption and mal-governance, absence of accountability and transparency in public procurement, blanket privatization of health care services etc. would hardly be able to address the health care dimension of COVID-19 pandemic. Such a structured and systemic mismanagement cannot be corrected overnight, hence it would be better to distract people's attention from the aggravating health crises to the measures towards recovering the economic impasses.

With that perspective, the government of Bangladesh brought-up a whole government approach of 'welfare strategy' that literally pushed out the 'health emergencies' behind the screen. The political government of Bangladesh

***Table 1:** COVID-19 Economic Stimulus packages of the government of Bangladesh*

Stimulus Package	Description
BDT 50 billion ($590 million)	BDT 50 billion (USD 595 million) cheap loan facility at 2 percent interest rate to the export-oriented industries to pay worker's salary. The borrowers will enjoy a six-month grace period to pay back the loan in installments.
BDT 677.5 billion (approx. USD 8 billion)	**Package 1:** BDT 300 billion (Approx. USD 3.5 billion) bailout package (capital loan) to the affected industries at 9 percent bank interest. Borrower could avail the facility at 4.5 percent interest, remaining half is subsidized from the government's Exchequer. It's a 3-years term loan, while government's subsidy to loan interest is for 1 year.
	Package 2: BDT 200 billion (Approx. USD 2.36 billion) capital loan facility to the small (cottage industries) and medium enterprises at 9 percent bank interest. The borrowers could avail the loan at 4 percent rate, remaining 5 percent is subsidized from the government's Exchequer. According to the loan distribution guideline developed by the Central Bank of Bangladesh, the small businesses in the rural areas will get 15 percent and the women entrepreneurs in particular will get 5 percent share of this stimulus package. It's also a 3-years term loan, while government's subsidy to loan interest is for 1 year.
	Package 3: BDT 127.50 billion (USD 1.5 billion) as Export Development Fund to the export-oriented industries at the reduced 2 percent interest rate from the existing 2.73 interest rate. Under Back-to-Back LC arrangement the additional fund would facilitate further import of raw materials. The amount increases the volume of fund from its existing USD 3.5 billion to USD 5 billion.
	Package 4: BDT 50 billion (Approx. USD 595 million) pre-shipment loan support to the export-oriented industries at 6 percent bank interest. This package is under the Credit Refinance Scheme of the Central Bank of Bangladesh. The scheduled bank could access to the capital finance at 3 interest and refinance to the industries at 6 percent rate.
BDT 50 billion re-financing loan scheme to the rural farmers	BDT 50 billion (Approx. USD 595 million) loan at 5 percent interest to pump running capital to the agricultural sector and sub-sectors, including the fisheries, poultry, livestock and dairy. This loan is for 18 months, which includes 6-month grace period. Bangladesh's Prime Minister also announced BDT 90 billion (Approx. USD 1.1. billion) subsidy in the financial year budget (July 2020 to June 2021) to keep fertilizers affordable to the farmers.

Source: Summarized by the authors from the government circulars did this amazingly by undertaking a very strategic, widespread and widely campaigned 'economic stimulus' and 'welfare packages'. On 26 March, 2020 Bangladesh's Prime Minister, Sheikh Hasina, declared an emergency stimulus package of USD 600 million (equivalent to 0.2 percent of GDP) and soon after on 4 April, 2020 declared another comprehensive package worth of approximately USD 8.5 billion (BDT 677.5 billion, equivalent to country's 2.5 percent of GDP) (The Hindu Business Line, 2020; Xinhuanet, 2020).

The government of Bangladesh announced other packages also; for instance, USD 294.7 million (BDT 25.03 billion) on food aid support in the rural areas, USD 588.8 million (BDT 50 billion) cheap loan facilities for the rural farmers, USD 294.4 million (BDT 25 billion) on job creation for the jobless youths and expatriate Bangladeshis, USD 147.2 million (BDT 12.5 billion) cash transfer to 5 million people affected by the COVID-19 pandemic, USD 979 thousand (BDT 83.125 million) cash support to the mosques and madrasas (The Daily Star, 2020c). Besides, the government allocated USD 29.5 million (BDT 2.51 billion) to the Open Market Sale (OMS) program to ensure essential food items to the low-income group at one-third of the market price (The Financial Express, 2020e). Table 1 presents an overview on the COVID-19 Economic Stimulus packages of the government of Bangladesh;

The government also promised to widen the coverage of the existing social safety nets to reduce extreme poverty situation and inequality. Again, aligning to the stimulus packages, the government relaxed several monetary policies to ease import of the essential commodities and medical appliances. They include, a) deferral of loan repayment to June 2020, b) flexibility in foreign exchange regulations for trade transactions until September 2020 and c) increase of transaction limit on mobile financial services.

Literally, the welfare and the stimulus packages include a range of beneficiary groups comprising of industrialists, small and micro-entrepreneurs, informal businesses, rural poor, subsistence agricultural farmers and agricultural labours, jobless youth and expatriate workers, elderly people, destitute women and so on. The government employed its entire bureaucracy, including the law enforcing agencies, to ensure neutrality in aid distribution and to ease stigma and social discrimination.

The ever-largest relief operation in Bangladesh's history, as claimed by the current political government (The Independent, 2020), is certainly a courageous step that gives a 'humane face' of the COVID-19 responses in Bangladesh. However, the ever-largest investment in relief and social-safety nets once again questioned the worth and inclusiveness of the economic growth that the country has achieved over the last decade.

Open market sale of the essential commodities/Dhaka, May 2020

A Whole Government Approach of Welfare Program: the political economy context

The political decision on the launching of a whole government approach of welfare program is undeniably praiseworthy, apparently have earned applaud from the common mass however, blurred the health care and life-saving issues in the national political economy debate. The intention of countervailing health pandemic with the welfare packages benefited the political party in power, while leaves a question whether was this a judicious choice of a democratic government and helpful for the enduring governance.

As understood from the expert's opinion, there are at least two perspectives that instigated launching a whole government approach welfare program; First, the current political leadership might not be ready to accept/allow any challenge towards its hard-earned and expressively publicized 'pro-development' image that, in turn, covers-up poor democratic practices and authoritative governance; Second, the long-term impasses would collapse the country's key drivers of economic growth and development e.g. the ready-made garments, remittance, food and agriculture and informal sectors would increase poverty, unemployment, inequality, social crises etc., which in the long run would lead to a widespread criticism on the failure of the current political government to combat the crisis. To any political government the cost of political failure is just incomparable to anything else.

Hence, for the sake of safeguarding portrayed 'development image' and upholding the very identical political stand 'development first than democracy', the current government seemingly was hesitant to accept any challenge towards consistent growth in GDP. Besides, the corporate lobby (e.g. RMGs) and the IFIs renewed ground of investment on the stimuluses worked together to make the economic crisis recovery as a national priority than addressing the health emergencies. The tactics worked well in terms of saving pro-development image of a political government, yet the cry of the common people for having a rightful access to the dedicated health services become even louder! People are surviving amid of fear and frustration; fear of being infected and frustration from the apprehension of not having required health facilities if infected.

The above analysis suggests that Bangladesh's political economy context has interpreted COVID-19 more as an economic crisis than a health crisis. It is not Bangladesh alone, the political leadership of several other countries namely Brazil, Sweden, Italy, UK, USA and to some extent India and Pakistan took a similar strategy. Such a strategy, though helpful for a short-term political gain, sends an unhelpful signal in addressing other longstanding global crises, for instance, the climate change, marine pollution, biodiversity loss etc., which are even more enduring, wide-spread and phenomenal.

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COVID-19 and Climate Change: indifferent impacts from different cause factors

The inherent causes of COVID-19 and Climate Change are different. COVID-19 is apparently not man-made, whereas climate change irrefutably is man-made. While the political debate on the genesis of COVID-19 may continue a few more years, yet the scientific findings have confirmed that almost 75 percent of all the emerging infectious diseases have caused by the naturally transmitted pathogens from the wildlife to the humans (The Guardian, 2020a). All the recent time deadly virus attacks- for instance, Nipah Virus Outbreak in 2001, Serious Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) in 2002-2003, Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS) in 2012, Zika Virus Disease in 2007, Ebola Virus Disease (EVD) 2013-2014 etc. have transmitted from their host wildlife to the humans. Likewise, the pathogen of COVID-19 (a SARS-CoV like virus) also has transmitted from a host animal (WHO, 2020b).

While, the science and the historic evidences of pandemic suggest that the very cause of COVID-19 (the SARS-CoV-2 virus) is not anthropogenic, but the gravity of the pandemic and the associated socio-economic consequences are largely anthropogenic. Unlike COVID-19 pandemic, the cause of climate change is anthropogenic. However, in both the cases (COVID-19 and Climate Change) the gravity and extent of impacts are anthropogenic and are largely determined by the political decisions on the responses to the crises. They both disproportionately affect the poor and marginalized communities and societies. While the impacts of climate change are triggering undue economic burden and forcing thousands of people to be exiled, the COVID-19 is predominantly affecting those climate risk escaped and risk exposed people. For instance, in Bangladesh, the majority of the RMGs and informal sector workforce are climate migrants who are low paid, live crowded in a tiny accommodation and, thereby, are relatively more exposed to risks, should they be triggered either from health or climate or other socio-cultural crises. They disproportionately face extreme adverse challenges in all and every situation; whether they are trapped in the climate hot-spots or escaped and fled to the urban slums to earn a living.

Amid of COVID-19 outbreak many migrants, especially women employed in the RMGs and in other informal sectors, lost their jobs and worried to be excluded from the benefits of the stimulus packages. Meantime, Bangladesh's Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BGMEA) expressed its concern on the impending job cut of thousands of workers due to unexpected closure of the factories. Already as many as 350 BGMEA-enlisted factories (around 20 percent of the total) have become un-operational (lay-off) (Gulf Today, 2020). Apart from the RMGs sector, many women who are involved in essential, yet low paid services e.g. health workers, salespersons in the super markers etc. have lost jobs and become more risk exposed. The situation is likely to further deteriorate the socio-economic deprivation along with gender-based violence to women. There are also concerns regarding the risks of trafficking and sexual exploitation of young women, children and women headed households who are believed to be particularly vulnerable to the risks (Shamsuddoha, 2015).

In either situation, they become subject to the human rights violations from the consequences of exacerbating poverty and inequality, damaging traditional livelihoods and extinction of certain cultural practices (Lachowski, 2013).

It is common everywhere that the people with superior socio-economic status get superior services, they also could escape from both the health and economic crises by relying on savings or working from home. It has also been evidenced that the well-offs are more resilient to any perceptible risk. In the context of climate change they could undertake required ex-ante measures for risk reduction, also could undertake planned relocation and migration from the climate hotspots to the relatively risk free areas with secured livelihoods options.

IFIs Response to COVID-19 and Climate Change: a renewed ground of capital investment

It has become obvious that the immediate and far-reaching impacts of COVID-19 will collapse every aspect of the development activities. According to the IMF's World Economic Outlook Update 2020, the global economy could decline by 4.9 percent, would experience fall in global trade by 11.9 percent and price of oil could fall by 41 percent by 2020 (IMF 2020a). The associated economic fallout could push as many as a half-billion people or 8 percent of the total human population under poverty line with a potential to add 420–580 million new poor under the most extreme scenario (20 percent income or consumption contraction) (Sumner et al., 2020). Further on this, the 2020 Global Report on Food Crisis projects that there is an increase in the number of people with acute food insecurity from 135 million at the beginning of 2020 to 265 million by the end of the year in 55 food insecure countries (FSIN, 2020).

Hence, reviving and rebuilding of economic activities have become a priority, especially for the COVID-19 affected developing counties. The situation created a huge demand for new capital investment, which in the way around offered a renewed ground of capital investment for the international financial institutions (IFIs). The IFIs namely the WB Group, ADB, AIIB and IsDB meantime have announced COVID-19 investment schemes respectively of USD 160b, 20b, 10b and 10 billion (World Bank, 2020b; ADB, 2020b; AIIB, 2020). IMF, currently with USD 1 trillion lending capacity, is on the way ahead of launching a new facility called Short-term Liquidity Swap (SLS) that would allow the members who are eligible for the Flexible Credit Line (FCL) to use 145 percent of their quota (IMF, 2020c). Aside from the member's quotas, IMF intends to mobilize new resources from the rich lending members under its New Arrangements to Borrow (NAB).

However, it's unlikely that the developing countries will be able to mobilize required finances, especially grants, to address COVID-19 pandemic and the associated socio-economic consequences. They might get prioritized access to the loan and will further be drowned in debt, which already has reached to an all-time high of 191 percent of their combined GDP (Project Syndicate, 2020). For instance, to implement the stimulus packages Bangladesh sought USD 2.6 billion loan support from the five multilateral development banks; respectively 850 million, 732 million, 600 million, 250 million and 150 million from the World Bank, IMF, ADB, AIIB and the IsDB. And, so far has been able to mobilize respectively 600 million from ADB, USD 250 million from AIIB and USD150 million from IsDB, (ADB, 2020a; The Business Standard, 2020e; IMF, 2020b). In addition, the World Bank approved $1.05 billion on job creation, accelerated economic recovery and building resilience in regards to the COVID-19 pandemic (World Bank, 2020a). Though Bangladesh's low debt-to-GDP ratio, was 12.5 percent in June 2019 (CEIC, 2020), provided much economic headroom to take more loans, yet the country's external debt has increased to USD 37.8 billion in June 2019 from the previous year's USD 33.5 billion debt.

While the IFIs are very keen in investing crisis recovery packages, however, they are not really concerned about the absolute losses that a country faces/suffers from the crisis. This has become even a harsh truth in terms of financing to address climate change e.g. mitigation, adaptation, and loss and damage etc. for which UNFCCC put an obligation to the developed countries for providing 'new and additional' resources from the context of their historical ir(responsibilities) of causing climate change. The developed country group have never been loyal in fulfilling the financial commitments they made in the COP (Conference of the Parties of the UNFCCC) negotiations.

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Instead of providing need-based incremental financial resources, the developed country group used finances as a 'low hanging fruit' to keep the climate vulnerable countries happy and in their favour. They also used 'climate finance' as a powerful trade-off agenda item to avoid/delay a legally binding agreement that would put them under the obligations for GHGs emission reduction. Throughout the history of climate change negotiations, every decision on climate finance has been contextualized and shaped-up from the denial of GHGs emission reduction by the developed countries. For instance, decisions on the establishment of climate funds e.g. Special Climate Change Fund (SCCF), Least Developed Country's Fund (LDCF) and Adaptation Fund at COP 7 in 2001 and, discussion on the establishment of a long-term fund at COP 15 in Copenhagen in 2009 were basically contextualized from the arguments of the climate vulnerable developing countries to limit rise of Earth's average temperature (e.g. global warming) so that the impacts of climate change are reduced and could be avoided. Leaving the root cause of climate change (e.g. GHGs emission and the consequent global warming) unaddressed the developed country group always preferred to counterbalance the argument of the developing countries by provisioning finances to support adaptation to the growing and unprecedented impacts of climate change.

The politicalization of climate finance in the global negotiation was blatantly exposed at COP 15 where the developed country group escaped from agreeing to a legally binding agreement in exchange of committing finances. At CO P 15, the developed country group grossly disregarded the 'decency of diplomacy' and imposed the so called "Copenhagen Accord', prepared by several rich countries in a non-inclusive and top-down way. The Accord included the establishment of a Fast Start Finance (USD 30 billion during 2010 to 2012) and the provision of establishing a long-term finance of annually USD 100 billion from 2020. In the concluding plenary of COP 15, the developed country delegates clearly mentioned that 'the fund' will not be operationalized unless the developing country delegates accept the Accord that the developing countries' delegates termed as "offering a bribe" (Shamsuddoha, 2010). Yet, there is momentous criticism on the inadequacy of climate finances and the bureaucratic barriers to access those. Box 1 summarises the requirements and gaps of climate finance.

Again, leaving the UNFCCC managed climate funds less resourced and bureaucratic, the developed countries have been channelling climate finances either through the MDBs or directly to the developing country governments bi-laterally as part of fulfilling their ODA commitment. In 2018 the MDBs (namely AfDB, ADB, EBRD, EIB, IDBG. IsDB, WBG) invested USD 43,101 million in climate change projects, of which 71 percent was loan, 24 percent was as different financing intruments and only 5 percent was grant financing. Alongside, the MDB's investment mobilized USD 68,050 million co-financing that scaled-up that year's climate finances portfolio to USD 111,152 million (EBRD, 2019). MDB's loan and other tricky financings like line of credit, guarantee, equity etc. are in a complete mismatch with the demand of the developing country group that have long been arguing for 'new and additional' (on top of the existing ODA commitments) grant financing for addressing climate change. While many decisions of the Conference of the Parties (COPs) to the UNFCCC required the developed countries to provide additional and incremental resources, however, these have not been implemented in full.

***Box 1:** Climate Finance: Requirements and Gaps*

Climate finance referes to the new and additional financial investments required for addressing the cause and consequences of climate change, which are mitigating GHGs emission, adapting to the impacts and addressing/compensating loss and damages associated with the impacts of climate change. The best available estimations on the cost of addressing climate change are; a) annually between US$140 billion and US$300 billion by 2030 for adaptation (UNEP, 2016), b) annually between USD 180 billion and USD 540 billion between 2010 and 2030 for mitigation (UNFCCC, 2008; IIASA, 2012) and, c) annually between USD 200 and USD 300 billion by 2030 for addressing loss and damages (Richards and Schalatek, 2017). The estimates are based on the 2-degree Centigrade temperature rise scenario, which does mean that the adaptation and loss and damages would rise proportionally with the rise of global average temperature and the associated impacts.

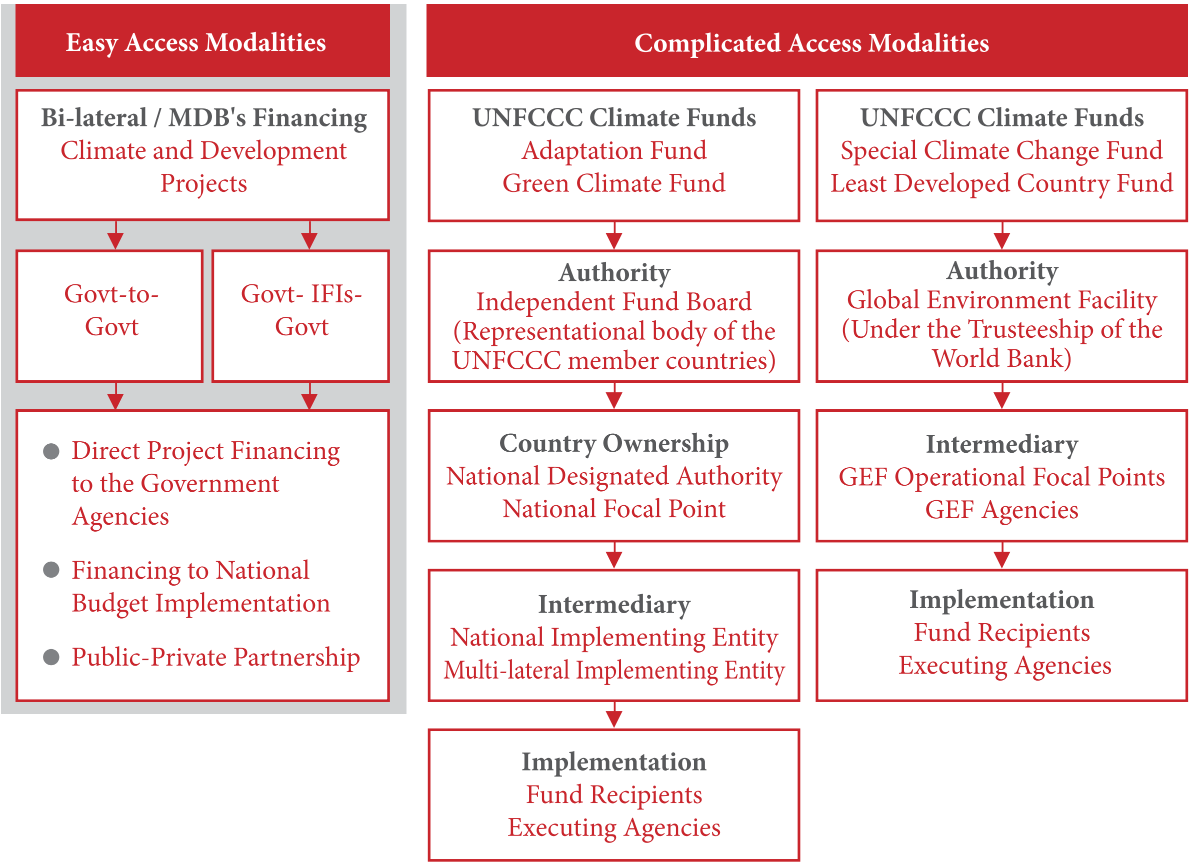
In contrary to the above estimations, as of January 2020 the climate funds namely the SCCF, LDCF, AF and GCF disbursed respectively USD 355.61, USD 1.4 billion, 477.8 million and 1.2 billion (GEF, 2019; World Bank, 2020b; GCF, 2020a) since their establishment. The GCF, with a relatively larger portfolio currently of USD 8.2 billion (confirmed commitments), so far, approved pipeline projects worth of 5.3 billion (GCF, 2020b). However, the GCF finances are not entirely grant, they are business focused, fervent to the co-financed projects and highly tied-up with the structural barriers.

Literally, the COP decisions, which are non-binding in nature, provide a systemic scopes to the developed countries to escape legal obligation and procedurally deny the moral obligations of providing new and additional finances. Instead, they follow and nurture a double-standard by imposing and instituting complicated modalities in the governance and management of climate funds. For instance, while the developed country group favored a simplified procedure and business-as-usual governance for accessing to the MDB's climate finance as well to the bi-lateral development finances, in contrary to this, they introduced a set of complex procedures and fiduciary requirements (e.g. arrangement of new institutions with accountable governance) for accessing to the climate funds (to the Adaptation Fund and Green Climate Fund). The Funds require the developing countries to; a) establish a National Designated Authority (NDA), a national public entity who will be the overall policy contact to the GCF, b) establish project implementing intermediaries named as National Implementing Entities (NIEs)/ Multilateral Implementing Entities (MIEs) that will ensure due diligence (including fiduciary management, transparency and accountability) of project implementation and, c) develop a line-up of the project executing agencies. Figure 1 shows the double standard of the developed country group in provisioning climate and development finances.

> "The dissimilar fiduciary requirements and governance mechanisms for the bi-lateral development projects and climate change projects does mean that the recipient countries (climate vulnerable developing countries) need to ensure effective utilization of UNFCCC managed grants-based finances only, not the MDB's climate finances or the bilateral development finances."

The dissimilar fiduciary requirements and governance mechanisms mean that the recipient countries (climate vulnerable developing countries) need to ensure effective management and utilization of the UNFCCC managed grants-based finances only, not the MDB's climate finances or the bilateral development finances. Such a one-eyed strategy of ensuring 'fund

***Figure 1**: Double standard in climate and development financing*



effectiveness' cannot ensure comprehensiveness of 'development effectiveness'; be this either 'climate or non-climate' projects or 'aid and non-aided' projects. It's pretty sure that the far-reaching consequences either of COVID-19 and Climate Change cannot be addressed unless a 'whole of government approach' with the consistent and harmonized policies and governance, irrespective of climate and development projects and finances, are established.

Policy Responses to COVID-19 and Climate Change: allowing-following and allowing-adapting

The debate on the causes of COVID-19 and Climate Change is a political concern and interest. Hence, the responses to them largely depend on the motivation of a political government and the political economy context around. A timely and proactive responses of a political government would reduce the impact and costs of a crisis and vis-a-vis. This has been a truth for both the COVID-19 and Climate Change. At the early stages of COVID-19 outbreak, many countries were uncertain if they should introduce hard preventive measures e.g. complete lockdown and shut-down of production and businesses or should pursue a business-as-usual approach. Instead, the political leadership of a number of countries, including Brazil, USA, and the UK etc. are found delivering useless political speeches rather than taking required measures as per WHO guidelines. They neither perceived the science of the exponential spread of the virus nor listened to the scientists who continue to warn and call the political leadership to be prepared with the preventive measures. Besides, countries namely USA, Italy, Spain, Sweden, Brazil, Bangladesh etc. took a reverse strategy- allowing and following the virus.

In addressing climate change, countries have also adopted similar strategy -allowing the impacts and adapting. Countries neither uphold the spirit of the 1992 UN Framework Convention on Climate Change wherein they framed a common objective to stabilize the GHGs at a level that would prevent dangerous anthropogenic impacts nor listened to the scientists who have recurrently been warning the policy stakeholders on the dangerous anthropogenic impacts of climate change and calling for robust mitigation actions. Even at the recently held UNFCCC negotiations (e.g. at COP 24 in 2018 and COP 25 in 2019) countries couldn't agree on referencing the IPCC's Special Report on 1.5-degree Centigrade of Global Warming (SR 15) published in 2018. The report conveyed a strong message to the policy makers to consider 1.5-degree Centigrade, not 2-degree Centigrade, temperature rise target above the pre-industrial level to protect the world from the dangerous climate catastrophes. Countries were in diverse opinion whether they should just 'welcome' the report or 'make a note' on the key recommendations of the report (Shamsuddoha, 2020).

Historically, countries especially the developed ones first denied the impacts of climate change, then delayed adopting a legal agreement and now deferring and denying the righteous implementation of the agreement, e.g. the Paris Agreement. The disobliging political position on the differentiated (common but differentiated responsibility and the respective capacity principle of the UNFCCC) responses for addressing climate change made the negotiation 'slowed', while allowed the global warming to be ever faster with its widespread impacts. Since the ratification of the UN Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) in 1994, the member states have succeeded to yield only two agreements. The first one, the Kyoto Protocol adopted in 1997, made the developed countries legally obligated to reduce GHGs emission by a certain percentage within its first commitment period from 2008 to 2012. The second one, the Paris Agreement adopted in 2015, requires all the Parties to contribute to the emission reduction with the progressively scaled-up targets, communicated by their nationally determined contributions-NDCs, to be coherent to limit global average temperature rise well below 2-degree Celsius above the pre-industrial levels. Ironically, the implementation of the Kyoto Protocol was ruthlessly challenged by the denial of the USA that was responsible for contributing around one-third of the global atmospheric GHGs concentration by then. Though most of the developed countries implemented their obligations under the Protocol, yet global emissions have increased by 32 percent in two decades, from 1990 to 2010 (UNEP, 2015). The second commitment period of the Kyoto Protocol from 2013 to 2020 hasn't entered into force even now on today. Similarly, the political antagonism of several countries has already challenged implementation of the 2015 Paris Agreement. The USA denied complying with any obligation under the Agreement. Many countries, both from the developed and developing economies, have constantly been denying to scale-up their emission reduction commitments coherent to the Paris Agreement goal. They are in the race of speeding-up national economic growth and development while contributing to an unprecedented rise in global GHGs concentration, which already has reached to 403 ppm in 2019 from about 280 ppm in the pre-industrial era (NCEI, 2018). In the last decade, the annual rise of global GHGs emission was 1.5 percent (UNEP, 2019) that has instigated prevalence of multi-category and high-impact disaster events across the globe. The IPCC's Global Warming of 1.5-degree Centigrade Special Report warned that the further delay and inaction in mitigation actions would overshoot global average temperature to 2.7-degree or even to 3.5-degree Centigrade by the end of the century (IPCC, 2018), and 1.5-degree Centigrade temperature rise may be reached by 2030 (UNFCCC, 2016). Such a rise in global warming and the associated multi-category, high intensity weather events are certainly anthropogenic, and are undeniably being instigated by the political wrongs of the countries that continue to pursue mere growth led development paradigm. Countries, irrespective of developed and advanced economies, are passionate to nurture the political wrongs from their national political economy context. While they commonly welcomed the definitive global goal of the Paris Agreement of limiting global average temperature rise well below 2-degree Centigrade, however, they are yet to be politically motivated to implement the agreement. The developed country group has sequentially been delaying their historical (ir)responsibility and the advanced developing countries, the present-time big emitters, are denying their current responsibility of aggravating the climate change to a further extent. Both of them consider global climate actions preventive to national economic growth and development, hence continue relying either on fossil-fuel consumption or export. For instance, while India took a mega plan on solar power expansion, it also aspires to double its coal consumption by the next 25 years, making it the world's second-largest coal consumer after China. Similarly, while Russia assured its compliance aligning to the global goal of the Paris Agreement, it also declares continuing export of oil and natural gas by exploring new sources (Klare, 2016).

Some countries are also found taking extremely dubious positions. They are cutting down domestic levels of carbon emission, however, aggressively financing dirty projects in the other countries. For instance, China, currently responsible for one-fourth of global emission, is divesting from the coal to the renewables, however, continue to progressively financing coal-fired power projects globally through its Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). Currently, as many as 60 Chinese financed coal plants are in pipeline. In conjunction, it will emit 276 mega tonnes carbon equivalents annually (The Diplomat, 2020). India is likewise investing billions in the coal fired power generation projects in the neighbouring countries.

> "While implementation of the Paris Agreement requires a complete divestment from the fossil fuel by 2050 (OECD and EU countries by 2030, China by 2040, and from the rest of the world by 2050), the continued investment in the fossil energy projects not only will fail implementation of the Paris Agreement but also will hold the current global leadership liable for making the crisis irreversible."

In a similar tone, the Multilateral Development Banks (the World Bank, IMF, ADB, AIIB, NDB) continue financing the coal-projects through their loan intermediaries, though all of them have expressed commitments to align their financial flows coherent to the Paris Agreement goal. For instance, AIIB's Emerging Asia Fund has financed thirteen (13) fossil fuel-run power plants in Bangladesh through an intermediary called 'Summit Power International' based in Singapore (BIC et. al., 2019). In 2019, AIIB's investment in fossil-fuel projects was USD 1.6 billion (20 percent of total investment in 2019).

Continuation of such bilateral as well as multilateral investments in the dirty projects (coal and other fossil energy projects) have caused an increase in GHGs emission by 2 percent, reaching at a record of 37.5Gt CO_2 out of total 55.3 Gt CO_2 in 2018 (UNEP, 2019). While the implementation of Paris Agreement requires a complete divestment from the fossil fuel by 2050 (OECD and EU countries by 2030, China by 2040, and from the rest of the world by 2050), hence the continued investment in the fossil-energy projects not only will fail implementation of the Paris Agreement but also will hold the current global leadership liable for making the crisis irreversible.Except for a few exceptions, the political responses to COVID-19 and Climate Change and the debate around them are indifferent. There are contradictions too on the justification of the policy arguments as very often they are on narrowly focused national interests. Table 2 presents the resemblances of the policy debates on COVID-19 and Climate Change responses, also exhibits their contradictions.

Table 2: *Policy debates on COVID-19 and Climate Change responses.*

Policy Debate and Arguments	COVID-19	Climate Change	Contradictory Rationale/ Opinion
Natural vs Anthropogenic	Several scientific studies, including the World Health Organization (WHO) confirmed the pathogen of COVID-19 (CoronaVirus) has naturally transmitted from the wildlife. The USA, from the very beginning of COVID-19 outbreak, continue to argue that COVID-19 has been caused by a 'Chinese virus' produced in China's Virology Lab in Wuhan. On the other hand, Chinese Foreign Affairs ministry stated that the US military could be to blame for the virus (The Guardian, 2020b).	The debate was strong in the initial years of the UNFCCC. Though by now it has been well established that climate change is anthropogenic, yet, the USA's Republican President Donald Trump denies anthropogenic cause and historical responsibility of the developed countries for causing the present-day climate crisis. According to him, 'the concept of global warming has been created by and for the Chinese in order to make USA's manufacturing non-competitive. He has called climate change 'mythical', 'non-existent', or 'an expensive hoax' (BBC, 2020b).	The USA and a few developed countries for long have tried to establish the present-day climate crisis as natural, though the science established the climate crisis as anthropogenic. On the other hand, the USA is trying to establish COVID-19 outbreak as anthropogenic. Though it is still debated, yet the science has identified the cause of COVID-19 outbreak as natural. In both cases, the USA's position is contradictory and self-centric. Such a position on the common/global critical issues mere will deter the collective efforts of addressing the crises.

Policy Debate and Arguments	COVID-19	Climate Change	Contradictory Rationale/ Opinion
Loss Compensation and Litigation	Accusing China for COVID-19 outbreak, the USA (Missouri) filed a civil suit in the federal court against the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), the governments of Wuhan and Hubei province, various ministries of the Chinese government, the Wuhan Institute of Virology, and the Chinese Academy of Sciences. (The Heritage Foundation, 2020)	Developing country group accuses the developed countries for the Loss and Damages (L&Ds) that have been mounting in the context of delay and denial of mitigation action. Developed country group has denied that liability context, also denied compensating climate change induced L&Ds. Furthermore, the developed country group put an irrational moratorium on the long-standing compensation demand of the developing countries by a decision (1/CP.21, para 51) at the Paris Climate Conference in 2015.	While the USA filed several loss compensation litigations on the ground of anthropogenic causes (?) of COVID-19 outbreak, however, the country has been the strong opponent on the demand for L&D compensation (and Finance) associated with the clearly established anthropogenic causes and impacts of climate change.
Compensation for Delayed Action	The USA again accused China for not taking appropriate and timely actions to limit COVID-19 outbreak. The US president stated in a press briefing that 'We believe it could have been stopped at the source. It could have been stopped quickly and it wouldn't have spread all over the world'. The USA would investigate China's role in COVID-19 response and would seek damages. The US president also supported a provocative article published in German tabloid 'Bild' that calls China to pay USD 165 billion (Euro 150 billion) as the reparation of the COVID-19 damages in Germany (The Guardian, 2020c).	Over the years, since the ratification of the UNFCCC in 1994, the late and little mitigation actions by the developed countries made climate-induced L&Ds an inevitable burden especially to the climate risk exposed developing countries. Developed countries have long been denied their liability of causing L&Ds, also denied to provide additional resources for addressing L&D though the Paris Agreement (Article 8) requires them to ensure enhanced action and support for addressing L&D in the developing countries.	The USA's argument on the loss compensation for delayed action on COVID-19 response coincides with the long-standing demand for the climate change-induced L&D compensation. Opinion: Globally climate-induced loss and damages are in rise. Already, the direct consequences of more than 11,500 extreme weather events between 1998 and 2018 globally caused the death of 526,000 people with USD 3.47 trillion economic loss in terms of Purchasing Power Parities (German Watch, 2019). The assessment, however, didn't consider the residual impacts of extreme as well as slow onset events, also didn't consider costs of the non-economic L&D.

Policy Debate and Arguments	COVID-19	Climate Change	Contradictory Rationale/ Opinion
Denying Global Governance	Amid of COVID-19 pandemic, the USA and several think tanks in the North are blaming WHO for acting too slow to limit the spread of the virus from its source country. The U.S president accused WHO for being too 'China-centric' (BBC, 2020c) and launched an investigation on the alleged "severe" mismanagement of the WHO's response on COVID-19. The country also halted its membership fee until the investigation report comes out (The USA Today, 2020).	In recent times the USA withdrew its support/ membership from several global and regional agreements and institutions, which include the 2015 Paris Agreement, the UNESCO and UNHCR. The country also has cancelled 2 billion fund commitment to the Green Climate Fund, and amid of COVID-19 it suspended its membership fees to the WHO.	Opinion: The UN and its specialized bodies like WHO, UNFCCC, FAO etc. are financed by the mandatory fees of the UN member states. For instance, USA's USD 116 million membership fees in 2020-2021 represents about 15% of the WHO's USD 5 billion annual budget. Hence, halting membership fees will not only weaken this UN organization financially but also will weaken the spirit of global solidarity of fighting the global crises together.

Political Economy Context of COVID-19 and Climate Change: rise of populism on the falling ground of liberal democracy

The political economy around COVID-19 and Climate Change, as narrated above, have contextualized by two factors in common; the 'power centric' political interest, and strong domination of the 'profit-centric' corporate motivation on the political systems. The power-centric political interest of the national governments prioritizes achieving short-term and visible successes that could be showcased as powerful campaigning tools in the consecutive general elections. Essentially, the rise of unemployment, poverty and inequality associated with the COVID-19 ramifications will cause potential harm to that political interest. For instance, the Trump administration in the USA was more concerned about the economic stability ahead of the USA's presidential election scheduled in November 2020 (CNN, 2020). The US president expressed his

annoyance several times on the economic downturn and attempted to relax health restrictions for the sake of an enabling businesses environment.

On the other hand, the corporatized political system (with the overwhelmed domination of private interests over the public ones) influences public policies and decisions putting profit ahead of people and the planet. As evidenced from the COVID-19 responses, many governments were influenced/pressurized by the big corporates to reopen the businesses. They not only dominated the political system, but also used the voices of CSOs and academicians (through providing incentives) to justify their arguments. For instance, in the days of growing COVID-19 related deaths as many as 150 Italian academics urged the government to unblock the economy. The joint statement of those academicians was published in the Italian financial daily Il Sole-24 Ore, owned by the business lobby Confindustria (The Reuters, 2020).

Similarly, in Bangladesh, the business leaders of the RMGs argued the government to ease health restrictions for the sake of people's livelihoods that means allowing the industries and businesses to run (The Financial Express, 2020f). They were more concerned about the export earnings than the health-risks of the pandemic. Even in the days of the increased number of COVID-19 affected in Bangladesh in May 2020, the RMGs and textile sectors enjoyed the freedom of keeping the factories open (NEWAGE Bangladesh, 2020b). The government directed them to strictly follow health-safety guidelines especially maintaining social/physical distancing though it was logically understood that ensuring health-safety guidelines could hardly be implemented in the labour-intensive RMG factories where thousands of workers stay congested in long hours.

Allegedly, the Bangladeshi RMGs and Textiles were under pressure from the 'global brands' to deliver outstanding orders otherwise they might be cancelled and diverted to other countries, for instance, to China and Vietnam. To avoid further losses the RMGs owners accepted COVID-19 pandemic as a part of their business life (News18World, 2020). Globally, the corporate ideology perceives workers mere as 'a means of production'. Hence, it is not unlikely that the RMGs owner would want the workers to put their life at stake to secure their jobs and livelihoods. Nevertheless, reopening of businesses essentially will restore the production cycle, supply chain, economy etc. yet putting human life at risk for the profit is probably an inhuman act.

> It is not an identical political ideology (e.g. left or right) rather a 'political trick', provoked by the personified views of some selective individuals who prefer to be 'populist' rather than an 'idealistic'. Globally, countries with a rich history of practicing 'liberal democracy' have now been superseded by the 'populist political forces', appeared as an undeniable challenge to the existance of 'liberal democracy, and in broader sense to the existance of the human rights-based political philosophy.

Again, as the responses to climate change, countries adopted a likely corporate-bias strategy. Instead of undertaking an absolute economy-wide mitigation actions, the developed country group (led by the USA) forcibly introduced a 'market mechanism' (e.g. flexible mechanism of the Kyoto Protocol) making the emissions (e.g. GHGs) a tradable item of corporate interest. The mechanism, a package of the so-called flexibility elements (e.g. Joint Implementation-JI, Clean Development Mechanism-CDM and the International Emission Trading-EMT) of the Kyoto Protocol allowed the developed countries (grouped under Annex 1 at the UNFCCC) to achieve their obligatory GHGs emission reduction targets by investing mitigation actions in the developing countries and crediting the certified mitigation outcomes in their favour. The Mechanisms literally allowed the developed countries (private sectors) to buy undue rights to continue GHGs emission, while skipping and transferring their own targets to the others. The same 'carbon trading' mechanisms have fervently been incorporated to the Paris

Agreement (Article 6.2 and Article 6.4) and now have been considering as the panacea of fulfilling mitigation commitments made under the Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) of both the developed and advanced developing countries. In the process of developing Paris Agreement's Rulebook during the post-Paris climate negotiations, countries are found inquisitive in identifying/ negotiating the options to better use the Market Mechanism (Article 6.2 and 6.4) and their loopholes e.g. Kyoto carry-over credits, double counting of the corresponding adjustments etc. while bypassing the other measures (e.g. non-market mechanisms) and responsibilities of progressive mitigation actions coherent to the 1.5 degree to < 2 degree Centigrade temperature rise goal of the Paris Agreement.

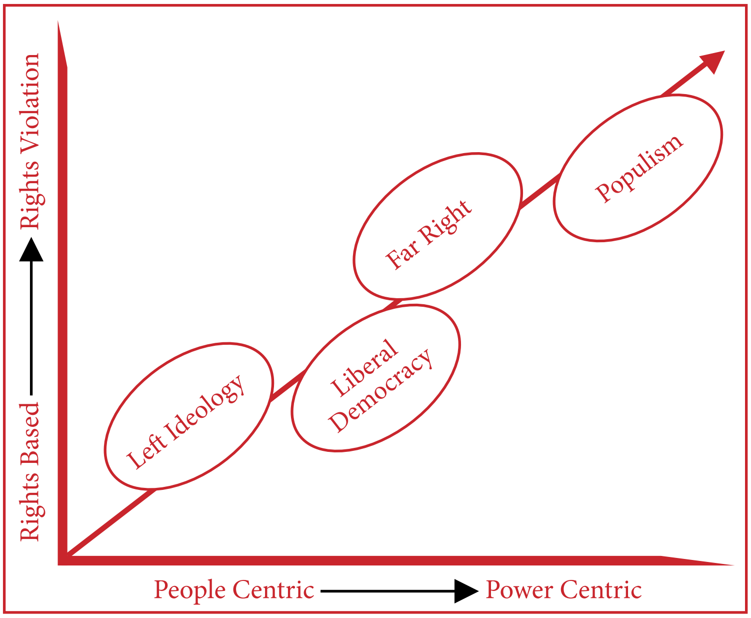
Besides, strong lobby and investments of the fossil fuel giants on the political governments are also to be blamed for weakening the coordinated political efforts towards climate actions. Since the adoption of the Paris Agreement at COP 21 in 2015, the five largest publicly-traded oil and gas majors (ExxonMobil, Royal Dutch Shell, Chevron, BP and Total) have invested over USD 1 billion on misleading climate-related branding and lobbying (Influence Map, 2019). The global fossil fuel giants, while they publicly support limiting global average temperature rise below 2-degree Centigrade in 2100, in actuality they anticipate a warmer world. For instance, the contingency business models plan of BP and Shell are prepared considering 5-degree Centigrade of global warming in 2050 (The Independent, 2018).

The above analysis suggests, it's the 'national political economy context' that shapes the discourses, agendas and priorities of both the COVID-19 and Climate Change responses. Such an identical national political economy context takes a narrowly defined 'pro-development standpoint' either to cover-up 'authoritative governance practices' or to be re-elected in the consecutive general elections.

This is not a political ideology as such (e.g. left or right) rather a 'political trick', provoked by the personified views of some selective individuals who prefer to be 'populist' rather than an 'idealistic'. Globally, countries with a rich history of practicing 'liberal democracy' have now been superseded by the 'populist political forces', appeared as an undeniable challenge to the existance of 'liberal democracy, and in broader sense to the existance of the human rights-based political philosophy.

The political theorists and political economy analysts have termed this political strain as a 'far right regime' (Bello, 2020). However, the political economy orientation of those 'populist political forces' suggests, though politically they pretend to 'far right' or 'neo-nationalist'(Sharmin, 2020), in practice they apply all the possible tricks, ranging from the market liberalism to market protectionism, from strong state regulation to deregulation, secularism to fundamentalism and so on. Very often they also rely on spreading religious hostility, anti-emigrant sentiment, conservative state policies etc. as they are proved to be very effective means of exploiting emotion of the majority in exchange of

Figure 2: *A conceptual scenario on the rise of populism*



Populism in the political systems

Actors A mixed group of people from different ideological group

Interest Economic and political incentives

Ideologies No ideological position as such; Power Centric

Context Nationalism, Religious hostility, Antagonism, Anti-immigrant sentiment

Threats Authoritative practices, Development by any means, Denial of global governance, Limiting freedom of expression, Non-existence of different views and ideologies diminishing rights of the minority. Figure 2 presents conceptual scenario on the rise of populism.

Actors around the populist political regime are organized either for economic or political incentives. They are the privileged groups of the political systems who are largely unaccountable for their deeds. They could be the private sector, CSOs, bureaucrats, media, think tanks, business associations, professionals' groups, and so on. The group, for their own advantage and existence, deny dissimilar political philosophies, convictions and viewpoints while making divergent perspectives and sentiments non-existent. In an extreme situation, they counter dissimilar ideological views with all the possible means and forces, and make them completely non-existent. In existence, they are not broad-based and representational.

Being ignored in the national political economy context, the actors of dissimilar ideological positions become more inclined to the global issues, for instance, climate justice. They associate with the international alliances, organize global events and demand justice in global governance. While they (CSOs, media, experts etc.) could conveniently chant slogans like 'no to fossil fuel' or 'where is the adaptation money' etc. in the global events and platforms (e.g. Fridays for Future, Extinction Rebellion, Climate Action Network, Climate Justice Now, ActAlliance etc.) but it is discommoding/ inconvenient for them to content against their national governments to stop coal fired power projects or to cease corruption in the management of climate funds.

> 'As 'populism', in practice, does not belong to any defined political ideology hence its success depends either on charismatic or authoritarian leadership or a combination of both.
>
> Whatever is the context and extent, the authoritarian practices are always disruptive to the deliberative democracy and democratic governance as they are intolerant to the dissimilar political ideologies, freedom of expression and free flow of information'

However, the extent of instituting authoritarian practices depends on a country's history of democratic practices and the autonomy of the democratic institutions. Whatever is the context and extent, the authoritarian practices are always disruptive to the deliberative democracy and democratic governance as they are intolerant to dissimilar political ideologies, freedom of expression and free flow of information.

Such a political economy context tends to deny the global governance as a strategy to avoid national obligations, also make the national governance decayed. The situation leads to a scenario of 'accountability crisis' both in national and global level, and intensifies consequences of the crises, be they instigated by a natural or anthropogenic causes.

Conclusion and Way Forward

Both the COVID-19 and Climate Change have already confirmed many bitter instances of social and economic fragility, governance crisis, rise of abuse, exploitation, hatred and xenophobia, and once again exposed the

Rise of the populist political forces

failure of the global political leadership to fight the crises commonly and comprehensively. Nonetheless, the undesirable experiences resulting from the COVID-19 and Climate Change responses put a big question mark on the global development paradigm in terms of investment, production and consumption, governance, nature-human relationship and gives us an opportunity to revisit those. This also reminds us the urgency of tackling other far-reaching crises that even would be more devastating. Based on the political economy analysis of COVID-19 and Climate Change responses, the policy paper put forward several recommendations for consideration in national and global level;

First, ensure prioritized support to the countries and communities struggling with the double burden of COVID-19 and Climate Change: Evidently the socio-economic ramifications of COVID-19 are an unwarranted addition to the far-reaching negative consequences of climate change. The pandemic is primarily hitting those who are already hard-hit by the impacts of climate change. Hence, the policy responses to COVID-19 should not be limited only to the implementation of stimulus packages. Rather a long-term plan, aligned to achieving climate goals and SDGs, is required to make development activities benefitting the planet and its people.

Presumably, the global fianacing for addressing COVID-19 will largely be capital lending, but they should not put extra burden to the already heavily indebted countries. In contrary to the COVID-19, finances for addressing climate change should be entirely grants based. Developed countries should fulfil their annually USD 100 billion grant commitment to the Green Climate Fund, and should open-up a stand-alone financing facility for addressing loss and damages associated with the impacts of climate change.

Second, ensure readily accessible grants-based resources along with debt service relief for the climate vulnerable and COVID-19 affected developing countries: Emphasizing faster recovery from the socio-economic ramification countries are ramping-up investments for strengthening public health, restoring industrial and agricultural productions, expanding social safety nets and so on. While the G20 country group is expected enhance their lending through the IMF's New Arrangements to Borrow (NAB), however, they also should beef-up currently less resourced grant based financial facilities, for instance the Catastrophe Containment and Relief Trust (CCRT), to support most vulnerable countries with immediate grants-based resources and debt service relief.

Besides, the G20 country group should continue and increase bi-lateral project financing with significant percentage of grants share, they also should deliver existing ODA commitments along with the new and progressive commitments. The G20 country group should lead the process of developing a New Deal of development cooperation beyond the scope and mandate of ODA. Given the context of gradually declining ODA support to the lower middle-income countries, the New Deal should help the developing countries who are hard hit by the COVID-19 pandemic and Climate Change.

Third, ensure quality, responsible and green financing integrating to the climate resilience and SDGs objectives: The post-COVID-19 world essentially would demand a renewed development paradigm that should deny mere economic growth focused dirty development practices. The rich countries should stop financing carbon intensive projects and infrastructures while should progressively promote green financing integrating to the climate resilience and sustainable development goals objectives. G20 countries should agree that they will not finance any action and initiative in their national jurisdiction and beyond that contradicts with the global climate and sustainable development goals.

Fourth, strengthen regional initiatives for addressing the crises in common: The regional governments could utilize their existing regional bodies to fight COVID-19 and Climate Change in a coordinated manner. Leaders of the South Asian Nations (seven out of eight) have announced an emergency fund to address the COVID-19 pandemic together. With a sheer contribution of India (USD 10 million), the current pledge to the fund accounted to USD 21.8 million (The Print, 2020). Countries are yet to develop further details on the implementation of the finances pledged so far. However, such a regional initiative should not be just addressing immediate consequences of COVID-19, also to address far-reaching consequences like food and water insecurity, cross-border migration, trans-boundary pollution etc. Likewise, the European Union undertakes a roadmap called 'the European Green Deal' to make their economy sustainable by turning climate and environmental challenges into opportunities across all policy arenas and making the transition just and inclusive for all. Implementation of such regional initiatives would make the regional and global bonding stronger towards addressing the common causes.

Fifth, upholding the multilateralism with broad-based stakeholders' participation and nurturing democratic practices: The responses to the COVID-19 and Climate Change already put a question mark to the spirit of multilateralism.

The notion of self-protectionism among individuals, communities and countries are building-up silently, which would provoke a clear rise of individualism and nationalism. Influential nation states, currently in the lead of global geo-politics, are behaving strangely. In the context of COVID-19, export ban on the protective medical equipment from Germany to the neighbouring countries, attempts of Donald Trump to move CureVac from Germany to the USA (IMD, 2020), snatching of Germany bound protective masks by the USA, ban on the export of Hydroxychloroquine from India and lifting thereafter following a phone call and threat of retaliation by the US president (The Japan Times, 2020) etc. are a few examples of growing intolerance and nationalism.

Such a tendency of self-protectionism and politicalization of the crises, both in terms of COVID-19 and Climate Change, is purposively weakening the essence and efforts of multilateralism. The socio-economic ramification resulting from COVID-19 pandemic could likely be recovered, but it's unlikely to avoid foreseeable climate crisis without a stronger global effort. Countries need to fight the global crises together for an Earth compatible to live in.

"The pandemic is primarily hitting those who are already hard-hit by the impacts of climate change. Hence, the policy responses to COVID-19 should not be limited only to the implementation of stimulus packages. Rather a long-term plan, aligned to achieving climate goals and SDGs, is required to make development activities benefitting the planet and its people."

Sixth, strengthen global as well as national governance: The mechanism of global governance has been established under the UN Systems to facilitate collaborative actions towards effectively responding to the global crises together. However, the rise of populist political forces and their style of 'authoritative governance' are confronting to the global governance. Those countries are either denying the global agreements or withdrawing their support from the global governance systems.

It's also undeniable that there is a deficit in broad-based stakeholders' participation and democratic practices in the UN Systems. Countries with economic power should limit their political domination on the governance of the global systems and institutions. The G20 country group could play a significant role to make the global governance broad-based and representational by providing more spaces for the vulnerable countries and the global CSOs in the decision making process.

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About CPRD

Center for Participatory Research and Development–CPRD (www.cprdbd.org), a progressive think-tank in Bangladesh, has been consistent in implementing research, advocacy and capacity building activities for establishing climate and development justice. CPRD promotes alternative development ideas, build capacity of the NGOs/CSOs and supports development of knowledge-based youth leadership and facilitate their involvement and influence in the national and as well as global policy discourses on climate change and sustainable development.

So far, CPRD published a number of policy papers, articles, research briefs, journal articles, book chapters etc. on trade and globalization, food security and livelihoods, disaster risk reduction, climate justice, displacement and migration, loss and damage etc., many of which introduced new knowledge and debate in national and global policy discourses.

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Brot für die Welt

COVID-19 and Climate Change Response: Useful Learnings from an Undesirable Political Economy Context

Author's Pick

Though the causal relationship between COVID-19 and Climate Change are apparently dissimilar, but their political economy narratives and responses are alike. The political narratives on COVID-19 and Climate Change have decisively ignored the scientific narratives, hence either denied or delayed in responding to the crises.

Without addressing the root causes of the crises, the political leadership have prioritized addressing the consequences; which are respectively allowing climate change impacts and adapting, and allowing the virus to spread-out and following. In both the cases policymakers were seemingly overwhelmed by a dilemma whether they should compromise loss in 'national growth and development' for saving lives or compromise loss of lives to keep the economy growing. However, countries in general have prioritized the 'economic growth' agenda because of their power centric political-economy narratives.

The political economy context that literally trades-off people's lives for their political interest, as evidenced from the COVID-19 responses, questions the political will of the governments to rescue the Earth from the ever-greater impacts of climate change.

COVID-19 is an unpredictable and sudden crisis that made the countries helpless. Yet, it has established the significance to be prepared to face the almost certain, far-reaching and irreversible impacts of climate change.