# From Business Ledgers to Geopolitical Maps

## How Md. Imdadul Haque Sohag Connects Enterprise, Strategic Inquiry, and Policy Analysis

A bank loan file and a map of the Bay of Bengal may appear to belong to entirely different worlds. Yet, in the analytical framework of Md. Imdadul Haque Sohag, they represent closely connected dimensions of economic resilience, institutional capacity, and strategic policy.

One reveals how capital reaches—or fails to reach—an enterprise; the other shows how trade routes, energy flows, and geopolitical competition shape a country's external environment. Together, they point to a question that runs through much of Sohag's public work: How can Bangladesh convert domestic structural constraints into stronger national capability and greater strategic agency?

For businesses, access to finance can determine whether production continues, employment expands, and an enterprise remains commercially viable. In much the same way, disruptions to energy supplies can affect industry and agriculture, with wider consequences for inflation, productivity, and macroeconomic stability. Ports and economic corridors, meanwhile, carry significance far beyond infrastructure: they connect commerce with national security, diplomacy, and sovereign decision-making.

The relationship among these issues—finance, production, governance, energy, trade, and strategy—forms a recurring theme in Sohag's work.

## The Practical Foundation: Commerce and Constraints

With roots in Kaliganj, Jhenaidah, Sohag began his professional journey in the practical world of commerce. His academic background, including a BBA and an MBA from Atish Dipankar University of Science and Technology, provided formal training in management, while his involvement in business exposed him directly to the operational challenges faced by enterprises.

Commercial decisions are often made under conditions of uncertainty. Financing delays, volatile input costs, regulatory pressures, and supply-chain disruptions can quickly undermine otherwise viable plans. Through his business experience, Sohag encountered many of these constraints firsthand.

He currently serves as Managing Director of Ayat Matin Group, Proprietor of Sohag Traders and Yafat Filling Station, and Managing Director and CEO of Naldanga Rajbari Park & Resort. He is also a master distributor for Sena Lubricants.

These experiences contributed to a broader insight: the difficulties faced by individual enterprises are not always isolated commercial problems. Restrictive lending conditions, weak institutional coordination, and regulatory inefficiencies can also reflect deeper shortcomings in financial governance and the wider policy environment.

## From Market Realities to Policy Analysis

Over time, Sohag’s experience in commerce developed into a broader engagement with policy analysis and public commentary. The survival of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), weaknesses in the banking system, inflation, access to credit, and energy security increasingly became central subjects of his writing.

Readers of The Daily Observer know him as a columnist, geopolitical analyst, and researcher whose work ranges from banking and enterprise development to women’s economic participation and regional strategy.

His research preprints available on SSRN include The Collateral Trap: Overhauling Bangladesh’s CMSME Credit Architecture, which examines structural barriers within the financing system and considers how existing economic potential can be translated into greater productive capacity.

This approach reflects a consistent feature of his analysis: a focus not only on immediate economic outcomes, but also on the institutional structures that shape them.

Strategic Autonomy and the Indo-Pacific

Despite the breadth of his interests, Bangladesh’s strategic position in the Indo-Pacific remains a major focus of Sohag’s geopolitical analysis.

In examining great-power competition, he considers how Bangladesh can protect its national interests while managing relationships with the United States, China, and India. The Bay of Bengal occupies a central place in this discussion as a maritime space where trade, connectivity, energy security, climate vulnerability, and diplomacy increasingly intersect.

His articles, including Indo-Pacific and the Bay of Bengal: Bangladesh’s Balancing Act and The Indo-Pacific Doctrine: Bangladesh’s Strategic Choices, advance the concept of a “capability-based balancing policy” rather than exclusive alignment with any single geopolitical bloc.

In Bangladesh’s Indo-Pacific Imperative: From Geopolitical Balancing to Strategic Agency, he argues that Bangladesh should move beyond a predominantly reactive approach to external competition and strengthen the institutional, economic, and diplomatic capabilities required to pursue its own sovereign priorities.

The emphasis is therefore not simply on balancing larger powers, but on increasing Bangladesh’s capacity to act independently within an increasingly complex regional order.

## Academic Reach and Public Influence

The reach of Sohag’s work extends beyond newspaper commentary into academic and competitive-examination contexts.

His article “Commercialisation of Education: A Looming Threat to Our Future” has been cited in doctoral research at the University of Manitoba, Canada, providing an example of his public commentary entering an academic research context.

His writings on the Indo-Pacific and strategic balancing have also appeared in or been adapted for competitive-examination materials, including BCS Confidence Current Affairs. Through such circulation, his policy arguments have reached audiences that include civil service candidates, students, researchers, and readers interested in public policy and development.

The significance of this reach lies not simply in visibility, but in the movement of policy commentary across different spheres—from journalism and research to examination preparation and broader public debate.

## Historical Inquiry and Civic Engagement

Sohag’s research interests also extend into regional history, linking contemporary questions of governance with earlier structures of political and fiscal authority.

His work on Naldanga moves beyond conventional narratives centred solely on zamindari and rajbari. Instead, it examines the region within the wider institutional context of Mughal and colonial Bengal. His paper Reassessing Regional Authority in Mughal Bengal reflects this approach by revisiting established interpretations and examining the administrative structures that shaped regional authority.

This historical inquiry complements his contemporary policy work. In both cases, the central concern is institutional: how authority is organized, how resources are distributed, and how governing structures influence social and economic outcomes.

Civic engagement forms another dimension of his professional profile. Sohag has held a leadership role on the managing committee of Naldanga Ibrahim Secondary School and has participated in local community-policing initiatives. He also contested the 2024 Kaliganj Upazila Parishad election as an independent candidate for chairperson.

That electoral experience provided direct exposure to local governance, administrative processes, political organization, and citizens' expectations—areas that are often discussed abstractly in policy analysis but experienced differently at the grassroots level.

The Road Ahead

Md. Imdadul Haque Sohag's professional trajectory—from entrepreneurship to policy research and geopolitical analysis—can be understood less as a change of direction than as an expansion of analytical focus.

Commerce provided exposure to the realities of finance and enterprise. Civic engagement offered insight into grassroots governance. Research supplied a framework for systematic inquiry, while public commentary created a platform through which those ideas could enter wider national discussion.

As Bangladesh approaches graduation from Least Developed Country status, adjusts to changing energy dynamics, and navigates intensifying competition across the Indo-Pacific, the distinction between domestic economic policy and foreign strategic policy is becoming increasingly difficult to maintain.

Financial resilience affects productive capacity. Productive capacity shapes national competitiveness. Energy security influences economic stability. Ports and corridors affect both commerce and strategic connectivity. Institutional strength, in turn, determines how effectively a country can respond to each of these pressures.

Seen from this perspective, the business ledger and the geopolitical map are not separate analytical objects. They are different expressions of the same broader question: how a state builds the economic, institutional, and strategic capacity required to protect its interests and expand its room for independent action.

That question remains at the centre of Sohag's work—identifying Bangladesh's existing strengths, examining the constraints that limit them, and exploring how those strengths might be converted into sustainable national capability and strategic agency.