

# Saarc Summit ends on a positive note

## Spirit of cooperation cuts an important deal

AFTER a day of uncertainty marked by a stand-off of sorts between Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi and his Pakistan counterpart Nawaz Sharif, who did not exchange greetings nor shook hands on the inaugural day, the second day saw them warmly shaking hands to the relief of everybody. And of the three agreements on the table, the most important one on structured cooperation in energy has been clinched.

The other two, viz. motor vehicles and regional railway pacts, too have been embraced with a three-month gestation period for approval. Overall, therefore, a region-wide infrastructure connectivity is envisaged.

A momentous energy accord has been signed featured by facilitation of an integrated operation of a regional power grid, creation of a regional energy market and provision for cross-border electricity trade. How genuine mutual interests and needs of South Asian nations can override any notion of bilateral tension between India and Pakistan has been proven to the hilt. In a way, Saarc has withstood another test of time.

Also, the deal signifies the triumph of collective will of the Saarc member-countries reflected through a robust commitment to work for the common good of the peoples of South Asian countries. It is also a measure of importance India and Pakistan have to the furtherance of Saarc as regional grouping for one-third of humanity.

Now that a major deal has been signed through collective political at the highest level, an effective composite regional machinery needs to be quickly put in place to implement it.

# Climate Fund use Capacity building needed

AS one of the most vulnerable countries in the world, being exposed to threats of climate change, Bangladesh is a natural claimant to its share of adaptation and mitigation funds. That's why it devolves upon Bangladesh a responsibility to set an example in the use of such funds and show that our integrity and efficiency are beyond question.

In fact, to gain access to \$9.3 billion international green climate fund we need to ensure capacity building with emphasis on transparency and accountability. At a recent discussion held by Transparency International Bangladesh (TIB), it was revealed that the authorities couldn't ensure proper implementation of projects under Bangladesh Climate Change Trust Fund (BCCTF) and Bangladesh Climate Change Resilience Fund (BCCRF). At least 85 projects were supposed to have been completed by the first half of 2009, but only 20 percent of the works was done.

As against this slow paced implementation, 70-80 percent of the projects' funds has been released. It is, therefore, critically important that we not only accelerate the pace of project implementation but also ensure that in terms of transparency and accountability we are above board.

Both in terms of utilising funds in hand as well as gaining access to new funds it's imperative that we apply due diligence and vigil.

# Why no crosswalk at Saarc Fountain intersection

RIDWAN QUAUIM

HATS off to DMP for their timely drive against jaywalkers. Many people have supported this drive, while others have opposed it and said that there should be crosswalks on Kazi Nazrul Islam Avenue, especially at the Saarc Fountain intersection. It is time to analyse why there should not be any crosswalks on this road, especially at the said intersection.

Kazi Nazrul Islam Avenue is one of the major arterial roadways in Dhaka, which are high capacity roadways serving longer-distance traffic to deliver traffic between different centres as smoothly as possible.

Major arterials are the backbone of a traffic network. Traffic congestion on a major arterial may cause congestion in other roads, which may lead to a collapse of the entire traffic system. This is why it is important to ensure smooth flow of traffic on these roadways at all times, which means ensuring that the flow of traffic on these roadways has less interruption.

The volume of vehicular traffic and pedestrian traffic is very high at the Saarc Fountain intersection, especially the number of left-turning vehicular traffic on all four sides. To ensure safety of pedestrians, it is better to provide an exclusive phase for them as it will reduce the conflict between pedestrians and left turning vehicles.

For example, one minute green time could be exclusively provided to pedestrians from all sides of the intersection after every five minutes. Because of the large number of pedestrians and the long distance they need to walk to cross the intersection, one minute is not enough to clear those waiting to cross the intersection. At least a few minutes of exclusive green time is required to allow all or at least most of the pedestrians to cross the intersection. Research has shown that a five minute waiting time could be too much and may lead them to violate the signal.

Providing one minute exclusive green time for pedestrian movement after every five minutes of vehicular movement means that there will be no vehicular movement for ten minutes in an hour. For a major arterial roadway this will mean huge overall delay to the vehicles on this road and on the nearby roads, causing serious traffic congestion in the whole network.

Thus, providing a crosswalk with exclusive pedestrian green time at this location does not benefit the pedestrians or even vehicular traffic. In fact, it increases the delay time for both pedestrians and vehicles. Therefore, instead of demanding crosswalks at this location and other areas on this roadway, one may demand road crossing facilities such as footbridges or underpasses with ramps or escalators.

The writer is a transportation engineer working in Thailand.

# The chain of command issue

## STRAIGHT LINE



MUHAMMAD NURUL HUDA

THE chain of command question in public service, particularly in law enforcement organisation, has once again attracted media attention. Some observers have commented that the virus of politicisation has been eating away at the vitals of police administration. On the subject of police professionalism some observers have taken issue with the politicians' attitudes that have allegedly resulted in the blurring of distinction between the party and the government and also between the government and the State.

The above, without doubt, make disturbing reading but in the fitness of things should perhaps compel concerned citizens to introspect and look back with a view to getting a clear insight into this serious public issue. Looking back, one would see that our colonial masters, the British, had no incentive to reform the system. Pakistanis who followed were 'no more than faithful' to their predecessors and neglected police reforms.

When seen in some historical perspective one would find that the inherited colonial system has been expanded and strengthened and largely continues to perform its repressive role and political surveillance functions at the cost of its proper role. A deeper look would reveal that internal incentives do not exist in desired manner to professionalise the service.

Ground realities indicate that there do not exist sufficient safeguards to insulate the police from group conflicts in society and enable it to act in a non-partisan manner. Cynics say that politicians do not want to professionalise the service because control over it is central to political conflict in a sharply polarised society. It would not be an exaggeration to say that policing in all countries is politically partisan to an extent; and that portraying the police in liberal states as neutral arbiters in public order situations could be misleading.

The interesting phenomenon is that Bangladeshi state, which was the product of a bloody freedom struggle,

adopted a written, liberal democratic constitution but retained the colonial administrative, police and judicial structures without recasting them to meet the changed situation.

Historically speaking, the British, an alien element, were interested in maintaining imperial control for surplus extraction. They needed to have information on the moods and opinions of the public and on the possibilities of agrarian and industrial unrest. By mid 1930s police coercion became a vital instrument of state policy.

To the British, crime and politics were inseparable; defiance of state authority was a serious crime and a prelude to rebellion; political resistance was a crime or a likely occasion for crime.

The resources and skills developed in combating the former were freely deployed in defeating the latter. It is, thus very significant to appreciate the political purposes behind the origin of our police system.

Some cynics say that politicisation of the police is the price for the democratic functioning of the country. The prevalent wisdom tends to put all the blame on the political class, ignoring the negative role of the police leadership.

The harsh reality is that we have failed to introduce administrative changes in tune with the provisions of our Republican constitution. The police have remained largely distant from the people and disliked as before.

The Police Act of 1861, despite its preamble, prioritises collection and communication of intelligence affecting the public peace. The prevention and detection of crime is included in the duties of the police only in Section 23 of the Act.

A considered view is that political leaders and other government functionaries should be ready to proactively give up their long-held powers of 'superintendence' over the police in favour of apolitical public safety commissions charged with the responsibility of designing and implementing measures necessary to ensure political neutrality of police operations.

There is no denying that in a democracy police could not be wholly autonomous and political intervention is both inevitable and necessary to some extent. Therefore, there is a need to specify areas where government interference is justified and others where it is not.

The writer is a columnist of The Daily Star.

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# Global solutions for globalisation's problems

## World Affairs



IAN GOLDIN

THE last few decades of globalisation and innovation have resulted in the most rapid progress that the world has ever known. Poverty has been reduced. Life expectancy has increased. Wealth has been created at a scale that our ancestors could not have imagined. But the news is not all good. In fact, the achievements brought about by globalisation are now under threat.

The world has simultaneously benefited from globalisation and failed to manage the inherent complications resulting from the increased integration of our societies, our economies, and the infrastructure of modern life. As a result, we have become dangerously exposed to systemic risks that transcend borders.

These threats spill across national boundaries and cross the traditional divides between industries and organisations. An integrated financial system propagates economic crises. International air travel spreads pandemics. Interconnected computers provide rich hunting grounds for cybercriminals. Middle Eastern jihadis use the Internet to recruit young Europeans. Living standards rise—and greenhouse-gas emissions follow, accelerating climate change.

As a byproduct of globalisation, crises that once burned locally and then quickly flamed out now risk sparking international conflagrations. A pandemic, flood, or cyber attack in the City of London or Wall Street could send the entire world into a financial tailspin.

If the progress that globalisation has delivered is to be sustained, countries must accept shared responsibility for managing the risks that it has engendered. National governments—whether powerful, like the United States and China, or weak, like Iraq and Liberia—are unable to address these cascading and complex challenges on their own.

Only a small fraction of the risks arising from globalisation require a truly global response. But, by definition, these risks transcend the nation-state; thus, coordinated action is required to address them effectively. The nature of the response needs to be tailored to the threat.

In the case of pandemics, the key is to support countries where outbreaks occur and help those most at risk of infection. Widespread dangers, such as climate change or a new financial crisis, can require the cooperation of dozens of countries and a broad range of institutions. In nearly every case, an international effort is needed.

An important characteristic of the risks of a globalised world is that they often become more serious over time. As a result, the speed at which they are identified, along with the effectiveness of the response, can determine whether an isolated event becomes a global threat. One need only look at the rise of the Islamic State, the outbreak of Ebola, the fight against climate change, or the financial contagion of 2008 to see what happens when a danger remains unidentified for too long or a coordinated response is missing or mismanaged.

And yet, just as the need for robust regional and international institutions is at its greatest, support for them is waning. A growing number of citizens in Europe, North America, and the Middle East blame globalisation for unemployment, rising inequality, pandemics, and terrorism.

Because of these risks, they regard increased integration, openness, and innovation as more of a threat than an opportunity.

This creates a vicious circle. The concerns of the electorate are reflected in rapidly growing support for political parties that advocate increased protectionism, reductions in immigration, and greater national control over the marketplace. As a result, governments across Europe, North America, Asia, and Oceania are becoming more parochial in their concerns, starving international agencies and regional organisations of the funding, credibility, and leadership capabilities needed to mount a proper response to the challenges of globalisation.

In the short term, countries may be able to duck their global responsibilities, but the threat posed by events beyond their borders cannot be kept at bay forever. Unaddressed, the endemic dangers of a globalised world will continue to grow. In confronting dangers such as the Islamic State, Ebola, financial crisis, climate change, or rising inequality, short-term political expediency must be overcome—or the entire world will come to regret it.

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(Exclusive to The Daily Star)

# LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

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## Billboard business by ruling party goons

Nowadays billboard business has become very lucrative means for the ruling party men to earn money. Earlier we saw that steps were taken by the CCC to demolish the billboards from the main area of Chittagong city. But again the beauty of the city got shadowed by the mushrooming illegal billboards. These precariously built billboards claimed some precious lives recently when those collapsed upon the passers-by.

What is most disturbing and disgusting is the reinstallation of these billboards even after their demolition following the public and media uproar over it. Newspapers reported that this is the easiest business run by the ruling party men by intimidating and bullying the business community. They have been earning a huge amount of money by investing nothing. We hope the demolition process will go on and the authorities will not give in to any kind of pressure.

Anas Ahmed  
Chittagong

## Challenge of higher population growth globally

According to a UN-led analysis published this year, the world population may grow larger than previously estimated, reaching 11 billion by this century's end. That would mean two billion more people on Earth than expected by 2100, largely due to high birth rates in Africa, said the report in the US journal 'Science'.

More people on Earth will likely exacerbate problems such as climate change, infectious diseases and poverty. The world countries should take the matter seriously and be prepared to face this challenge of growing population.

Tanha Kabir  
On e-mail

## Risks eucalyptus, acacia pose to ecology

It is very worrying that people all over the country are planting eucalyptus trees on their home yard, on the highlands and uncultivated land. Specialists and environmentalists warn that eucalyptus and other trees like this are very harmful for our land and environment because these types of trees absorb huge quantity of water and take in more oxygen rather than they produce. In many areas farmers and village people are planting eucalyptus and acacia trees without knowing the bad consequences. It is high time the government came forward to save our environment from the harmful trees and immediately imposed a ban on planting such trees.

English Teacher  
Civil Aviation High School,  
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## Expose goings-on in Biman

The national airline has shamed us all as we came to know from media reports that high ranking officials of Biman were involved in gold smuggling. This ill-fame will not go away soon. Their image and reputation, and the stigma that it has caused have taken Biman into a nosedive; one wonders if it can ever recover from it. I am sure all readers and taxpayers will agree that there has to be an immediate and thorough inquiry into this dirty business involving all concerned. The whole matter should be reported publicly in detail and this ugly issue warrants to be treated as anti-state activity.

S. A. Mansoor  
Dhaka

## Comments on news report, "Some names still not on charge sheet," published on Nov. 25, 2014

### PlainSpeaker

SAMS Kibria was a top AL leader. What is the government doing to find out and punish those who murdered Kibria?

"It was essential and necessary to hold the general elections" (Nov. 25, 2014)

### OpeeMonir

It is unfortunate that she was not thinking about our greater interest. It is also surprising that rather than being a diplomat, she was expressing her views like a political leader.

"Govt alone can't fight corruption" (Nov. 23, 2014)

### PlainSpeaker

Corrupt leadership encourages corruption and corrupts a nation entirely.

"What should Bangladesh do with Jamaat?" (Nov. 23, 2014)

### M. Emad

Jamaat-e-Islami and Al-Badr are the enemies of Bangladesh.

"Arrestees put blame on other Biman men" (Nov. 24, 2014)

### Sunny Jessore

Biman chairman should be removed immediately.