

A new century for the Middle East



THE United States, the European Union, and West-led institutions such as the World Bank repeatedly ask why the Middle East can't govern itself. The question is asked honestly but without much self-awareness.

After all, the single most important impediment to good governance in the region has been its lack of self-governance: The region's political institutions have been crippled as a result of repeated US and European intervention dating back to World War I, and in some places even earlier.

One century is enough. The year 2016 should mark the start of a new century of home-grown Middle Eastern politics focused urgently on the challenges of sustainable development.

The Middle East's fate during the last 100 years was cast in November 1914, when the Ottoman Empire chose the losing side in World War I. The result was the empire's dismantling, with the victorious powers, Britain and France, grabbing hegemonic control over its remnants. Britain, already in control of Egypt since 1882, took effective control of governments in today's Iraq, Jordan, Israel and Palestine, and Saudi Arabia, while France, already in control of much of North Africa, took control of Lebanon and Syria.

Formal League of Nations mandates and other instruments of hegemony were exercised to ensure British and French power over oil, ports, shipping lanes, and local leaders' foreign policies. In what would become Saudi Arabia, Britain backed the Wahhabi fundamentalism of Ibn Saud over the Arab nationalism of the Hashemite Hejaz.

After World War II, the US picked up the interventionist mantle, following a CIA-backed military coup in Syria in 1949 with another CIA operation to topple Iran's Mohammad Mossadegh in 1953 (to keep the West in control of the country's oil). The same behaviour has continued up to the present day: the overthrow of Libya's Muammar el-Qaddafi in 2011, the toppling of Egypt's Mohamed Morsi in 2013, and the ongoing war against Syria's Bashar al-Assad. For almost seven decades, the US and its allies have repeatedly intervened (or supported internally-led coups) to oust governments that were not sufficiently under their thumb.

The West also armed the entire region through hundreds of billions of dollars in weapons sales. The US established military bases throughout the region, and repeated failed operations by the CIA have left massive supplies of armaments in the hands of violent foes of the US and Europe.

So, when Western leaders ask Arabs and others in the region why they can't govern themselves, they should be prepared for the answer: "For a full century, your interventions have undermined democratic institutions (by rejecting the results of the ballot box in Algeria, Palestine, Egypt, and elsewhere); stoked repeated and now chronic wars; armed the



most violent jihadists for your cynical bidding; and created a killing field that today stretches from Bamako to Kabul."

What, then, should be done to bring about a new Middle East? I would propose five principles.

First, and most important, the US should end covert CIA operations aimed at toppling or destabilising governments anywhere in the world. The CIA was created in 1947 with two mandates, one valid (intelligence gathering) and the other disastrous (covert operations to overthrow regimes deemed "hostile" to US interests). The US president can and should, by executive order, terminate CIA covert operations - and thereby end the legacy of blowback and mayhem that they have sustained, most notably in the Middle East.

The region's political institutions have been crippled as a result of repeated US and European intervention dating back to World War I, and in some places even earlier.

Second, the US should pursue its sometimes-valid foreign-policy objectives in the region through the United Nations Security Council. The current approach of building US-led "coalitions of the willing" has not only failed; it has also meant that even valid US objectives such as stopping the Islamic State are blocked by geopolitical rivalries.

The US would gain much by putting its foreign-policy initiatives to the test of Security Council votes. When the Security Council rejected war in Iraq in 2003, the US would have been wise to abstain from invading. When Russia, a veto-wielding permanent member of the Council, opposed the US-backed overthrow of Syrian President Bashar al-Assad, the US would have been wise to

abstain from covert operations to topple him. And now, the entire Security Council would coalesce around a global (but not a US) plan to fight the Islamic State.

Third, the US and Europe should accept the reality that democracy in the Middle East will produce many Islamist victories at the ballot box. Many of the elected Islamist regimes will fail, as many poorly performing governments do. They will be overturned at the next ballot, or in the streets, or even by local generals. But the repeated efforts of Britain, France, and the US to keep all Islamist governments out of power only block political maturation in the region, without actually succeeding or providing long-term benefits.

Fourth, home-grown leaders from the Sahel through North Africa and the Middle East to Central Asia should recognise that the most important challenge facing the Islamic world today is the quality of education. The region lags far behind its middle-income counterparts in science, math, technology innovation, entrepreneurship, small business development, and (therefore) job creation. Without high-quality education, there is little prospect for economic prosperity and political stability anywhere.

Finally, the region should address its exceptional vulnerability to environmental degradation and its overdependence on hydrocarbons, especially in view of the global shift to low-carbon energy. The Muslim-majority region from West Africa to Central Asia is the world's largest populous dry region, a 5,000-mile (8,000 kilometers) swath of water stress, desertification, rising temperatures, and food insecurity.

These are the true challenges facing the Middle East. The Sunni-Shia divide, Assad's political future, and doctrinal disputes are of decidedly lesser long-term importance to the region than the unmet need for quality education, job skills, advanced technologies, and sustainable development. The many brave and progressive thinkers in the Islamic world should help to awaken their societies to this reality, and people of goodwill around the world should help them to do it through peaceful cooperation and the end of imperial-style wars and manipulation.

The writer is Professor of Sustainable Development, Professor of Health Policy and Management, and Director of the Earth Institute at Columbia University. He is also Director of the UN Sustainable Development Solutions Network.

Stop the senseless cruelty against children

SIR FRANK PETERS

IT pains the hearts of many, no doubt, to read an editorial headlined "Another Minor Tortured", as was published in *The Daily Star* on November 13 this year.

The editorial notes that a frightened seven-year-old boy in Pabna, Md. Siam Hossain, had been confined to a room in a madrassa for some days with his feet tied in chains by a sadistic teacher.

Describing the cruel, sadistic law-breaker as a teacher is wrong, unfair and insulting to hard-working, compassionate, professional teachers and their honourable profession. He is not deserving of the noble title of a teacher, but, sadly, he is not alone.

It's been almost five years since eminent High Court Divisional bench Justices Md. Imman Ali and Md. Sheikh Hasan Arif outlawed corporal punishment in Bangladesh schools and madrassas.

In their summary on January 13, 2011, they defined corporal punishment as "cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment and a clear violation of a child's fundamental right to life, liberty and freedom."

I doubt if they even contemplated for a moment that a teacher would chain a helpless little child, away from his home, family and friends, and lock him in solitary confinement and ration his food as a means of torture. There are

ing what constitutes the violation of a child's rights and that such violations will be severely punished by law.

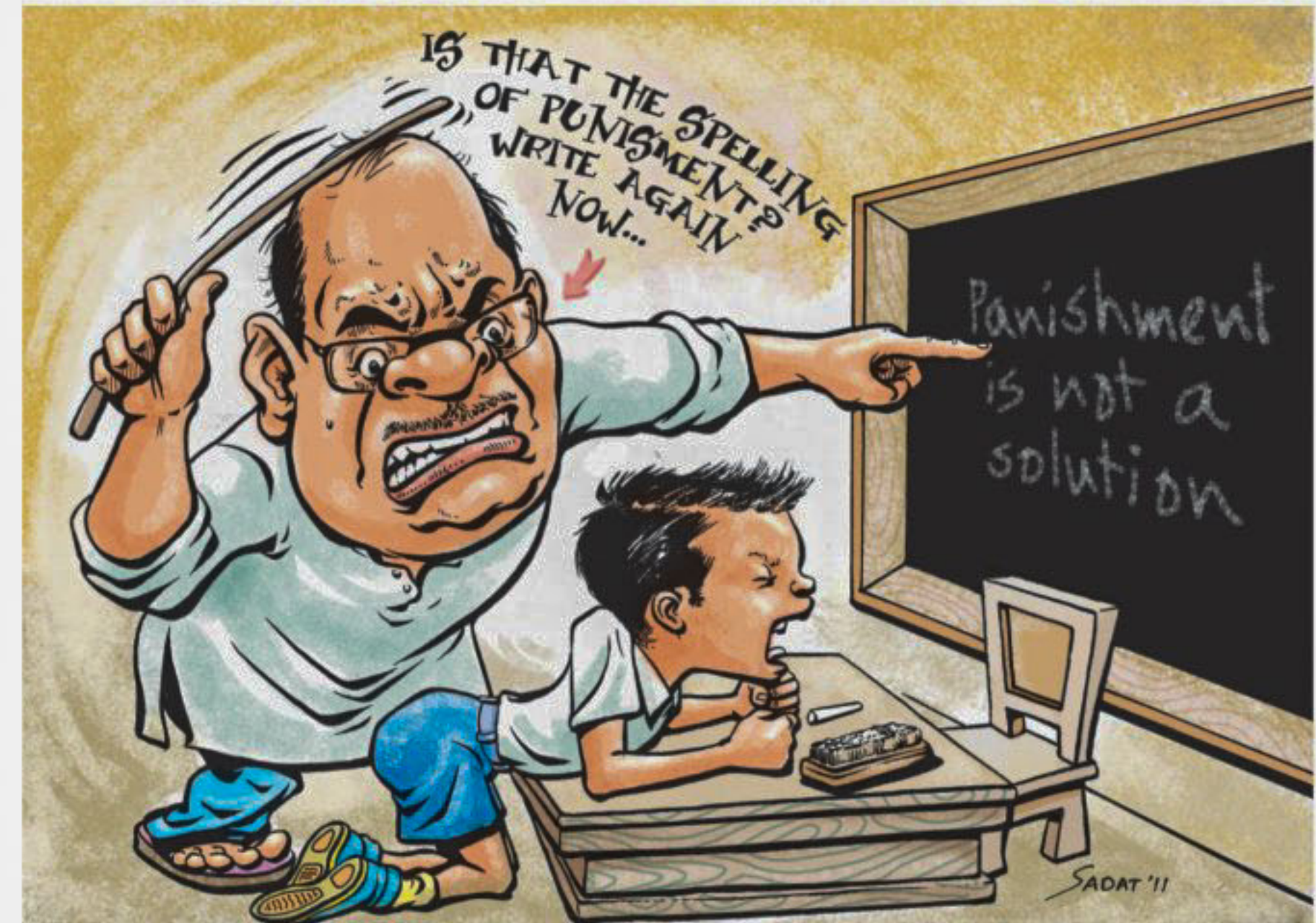
"It is not enough to suspend or fire teachers who physically and mentally harm students who have come to them for learning. The offenders must be arrested and meted out appropriate sentences that will deter other potential torturers from committing the same crime."

Bravo! These 'teachers' need to be weeded out from the educational system that gives teaching a bad name, chokes the growth of Bangladeshi children and damages them for life.

Having said that, I believe involving the police, criminal charges, convictions, imprisonment and so on, should be a last resort. The Education Department which is ultimately responsible for the behaviour of its employees ought to instigate a programme of self-regulation within each school at first before the heavy hammers are used.

Each school should be given an opportunity of cleaning-up its act. Give the head teacher all the support needed to do this and then hold the head teacher accountable for any misconduct by the teaching staff, irrespective of whether they have been in the profession for 40-years, have families and dogs to feed or their relative is a member of parliament.

The aim of the exercise should be to recognise the tumors in the system,



some horrific examples of corporal punishment to children that the human mind could not even imagine, unless perhaps you were author Stephen King, prince of the macabre.

A 'classic' case is that of the demented 'teacher' at Talimul Quran Mahila Madrassa who branded young girls with a red-hot cooking spatula in the name of 'discipline'. The objective of the exercise was to give them a sample of what hell is like! If she taught them nothing else, she certainly taught them that.

If this 'teacher' or any 'teacher' believes that such treatments will break a child's will, discipline the child and gain them respect, they are far more uneducated and stupid than I had ever imagined and should be a 100-miles from any teaching establishment. Not only are they breaking the law, they're also an enemy of the child, his/her family, and the State. A child damaged today is a broken adult tomorrow and owes NOTHING to society, except what society has given him/her (and we ought to view that as a warning).

The hard-hitting editorial that calls a spade a spade goes on to say... "We cannot emphasise enough the need for the government to thoroughly monitor the behaviour of teachers towards their students, whether in madrassas or regular schools. Clear directives must be given to the authorities of these institutes regard-

address them, and bring about change for the benefit of the children of Bangladesh... for the benefit of the entire nation. Child abuse by salaried government employees has been going on for much too long, even after the law formulated in 2011 strictly prohibited it.

Teachers themselves need to be more conscious of the fact that parents and guardians are beginning to exercise their children's rights by 'vigilante law', and are becoming less tolerant of corporal punishment towards their loved ones. Several teachers have been beaten up by incensed family members in reprisal for corporal punishment, and this must also stop. Two wrongs don't make a right.

Nowadays, before subjecting the child to any form of corporal punishment, 'teachers' need to pause and ask themselves if their action will have a boomerang effect.

If they proceed with the unlawful wrongdoing, they act alone without the support of the Prime Minister, the government, the Education Department, the police, the child's family, the local community and conscientious fellow teachers.

The general opinion is that there are enough crimes in society already without they teaching them in the classrooms.

The writer is a former newspaper and magazine publisher and editor, a royal goodwill ambassador and humanitarian.



Our customers speak for us...

“bti has been successful in giving us the home we were looking for, their strength in construction is highly commendable.”


Mrs. Shahida Begum & Family
The Delight
Agrabad, Chittagong



REHAB MEMBERSHIP #001
ISO 9001:2008 CERTIFIED
www.btibd.com



building technology & ideas ltd.
since 1984
in pursuit of excellence...



Independent University, Bangladesh (IUB)

Undergraduate Admission

Spring 2016

Top 5% scorers in admission test will get 100% scholarship

Degree Programs Offered

School of Business (BBA, B.Sc.) :

- Accounting • Finance • Marketing • Management • Management Information Systems (MIS) • International Business (IB) • Human Resources Management (HRM) • Investment Management • BSc in Economics

School of Engineering & Computer Science (B.Sc.) :

- Computer Science & Engineering • Computer Science • Computer Engineering • Electrical & Electronic Engineering • Electronic & Telecommunication Engineering • B.Sc.(Hons) in Mathematics

School of Environmental Science & Management (B.Sc.) :

- Environmental Management • Environmental Science • Population Environment

School of Liberal Arts & Social Sciences (BSS, BA, LLB) :

- Media & Communication • Anthropology • Sociology • English Literature • English Language Teaching (ELT) • Bachelor of Laws (LLB Hons.)

School of Life Sciences (B.Sc.) : • Microbiology • Biochemistry

Admissions & Financial Aid Office (Ground Floor), Plot-16, Block-B, Bashundhara R.A, Dhaka-1212. Tel: 8431645 - 53, 8432065 - 76 Ext - 1354, 1355 Fax: 8431991 Cell: 01780 185006 e-mail: admission@iub.edu.bd

New Major! B.Sc. (Hons) in Mathematics



Application Eligibility

- Combined GPA of 8.0 in S.S.C and H.S.C with minimum 3.5 in each
- Minimum GPA 2.5 in five subjects in O-levels and GPA 2.0 in two subjects in A-levels
- International Baccalaureate
- Microbiology & Biochemistry students must have biology in S.S.C or O' level
- Environmental Science students who have taken Chemistry/Physics in S.S.C or O'Level will get preference


Scholarship and Financial Aid

- IUB offers scholarships over Tk. 8 crores per year for meritorious & needy students.
- 20% -100% Financial aid based on performance in IUB and financial need.

Academic Partner

Member



The Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business, USA

'IUB Quarks' is the proud winner of NASA Space Apps Challenge'15 Bangladesh HACKATHON

100% scholarship with free board & lodging will be provided to meritorious underprivileged FEMALE students from outside Dhaka provided by Shaheed Khalek & Major Salek Bir Uttam Trust

Admission Test :

Wednesday, 6 January 2016 at 10.30 am

Last date for Applications :

Tuesday, 5 January 2016 till 4.00 pm

Classes Commence :

Sunday, 17 January, 2016

Apply Online :

www.iub.edu.bd/admission