

The Daily Star

FOUNDER EDITOR
LATE S. M. ALI

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A land of teenage mothers

What is the local administration doing?

THOUGH Bangladesh is often cited as a role model for the impressive achievements in maternal and child health and gender parity at primary education, child marriage remains a persistent challenge for the country. A grim picture of its pervasiveness came out in a report published in this newspaper yesterday. At Rasulpur Char, close to Barisal city, most of the teenage girls are either married off or going to be since the parents are illiterate, unaware and afraid of the prevailing social insecurity.

Since the young brides have little knowledge or access to family planning services they get pregnant at an early age. Even more worrisome is that none of the young mothers were vaccinated properly and their children were born with low weight. And they are suffering from malnourishment since the cycle of undernourishment passes down from mother to child. There is a school in the Char area but few teenage girls attend that. Most of them cannot continue their education after marriage.

Though the area is only 15 minutes from the Barisal city, the local administration seems unaware of the problem. This is a clear case of negligence of the local authority to curb child marriage and implement properly child marriage prevention laws. The authorities should look into this issue seriously and take preventive actions to save teenage girls from the curse of child marriage. A vigorous campaign should be launched to educate the locals about the ill consequences of early marriage.

Twin foot bridges

What a waste of public money!

THE Dhaka Chittagong highway has been expanded from 2-lane to 4, but the pedestrian-crossing bridge near Dania College in Jatrabari was constructed before the expansion. So while the road has been expanded, the bridge was not and one set of stairs leading up to the bridge sits uncomfortably on the road. Now the question is who looks after these constructions and when the highway was expanded, why wasn't the bridge expanded with it? Who takes the responsibility of vehicles crashing into the base of the bridge during times of low visibility? And what about the inconvenience caused to pedestrians who must come on to the road to climb the stairs to get on the bridge.

The sad situation does not end there, because there is yet another bridge for pedestrian crossing located a mere 100 feet from this one. The scene would have been comical, were it not for the fact that the two footbridges have to do with public money and public safety. This merely goes to show not only disregard for people's safety, but also the manner in which public fund is wasted. Why bother reconstructing an existing bridge when we can build another one from scratch? Public works are supposed to help people and public expenditure need to occur in a judicious manner. It is hoped that relevant authorities will take note of the prevailing situation of the twin bridges and make requisite changes for public safety.

COMMENTS

"Chhatra Jote agitates to stop Rampal plant"
(August 17, 2016)

Tamanna Mazed

The Government cannot impose development projects on general people. We are all against construction of any power plant near Sundarbans.

Ashrafur Islam

Stop Rampal Power Plant.

Shabbir Ahmed

Go ahead boys.

A tit (Baluchistan) for tat (Kashmir)

STRATEGICALLY SPEAKING



BRIG GEN SHAHEDUL ANAM KHAN
NDC, PSC (RETD)

diplomatic tussle between the two. Clearly India has assumed a more offensive approach in the diplomatic front vis-à-vis Pakistan which many see as a narrative scripted to counter the Pakistani policy and actions related to and in Kashmir.

A completely new front has been opened with India bringing in Baluchistan in the equation to thwart Pakistani rhetoric on Kashmir, an Indian riposte if you like, to Pakistan. What so far has been a feather-glove approach by India to the Pakistani position on Kashmir, the one-upmanship has come to involve a province of Pakistan. It is an Indian tit for Pakistan tat. But this stance, as reported in some Indian print media in October, 2015, has been in the works for a while without being articulated, as a policy of graduated response.

To put the matter in perspective it may be appropriate to cite the utterances made by both sides in recent times. And it all started with Burhan Wani's death in police firing on 8 July and the subsequent turmoil that has so far resulted in more than 60 deaths and nearly 5,000 injured in the Valley. Wani to India was a separatist and a terrorist and to Pakistan a freedom fighter. He has also been described as a new age militant in Indian Kashmir, driven to the

THE Indo-Pak bilateral relations have recently witnessed ratcheting up of rhetoric from both sides. And it seems that all holds are being applied in the

ranks of militants by his experiences as a young kid of the treatment meted out to these fellow Kashmiris.

Not only did the government of Pakistan come out in full support of the Kashmiri separatist as they have done all along so far as a matter of policy, the Pakistan High Commissioner in New Delhi also restated this position at the Pakistan Day function in New Delhi on 14th Aug. To express support for a breakaway group on the soil of that country would

not forgetting to mention the fact that the people of this area (and of those of Pakistani Kashmir and Gilgit) have thanked him for keeping them in his mind and alluding to their condition. The appreciation of the Baluchi's is in reference to his warning last week that if Pakistan continued instigating violence in Kashmir Valley that has been going on since 8 July of this year, "India would be compelled to expose Islamabad's many wrongdoings in regions fighting terror and atrocities by its security

back to the early seventies which the Pakistani establishment has not been able to put down completely. It has been going on since then as low intensity conflict led at various times by various groups like the Baluchistan People's Liberation Front (BPLF). Presently the Free Baluchistan Movement directed by the London-based Nawabzada Hyrbyair Marri, with a militant arm, Baloch Liberation Army (BLA), and Baloch Liberation Organisation (BLO), the political wing, which is leading the movement.

Exploiting the Baluchistan situation by India is a strategic alternative for it. And the presence of a BLO leader, Balaach Pardili, in India since at least 2009, who the Baluchis consider as their political representative in that country, and who reportedly, "addressed a gathering in New Delhi on October 4, 2015 reading out a statement from BLO's exiled leader Nawabzada Hyrbyair Marri" demonstrates India's disposition towards the Baluchi movement. Interestingly the historical circumstances of Kashmir and Baluchistan and their 'joining' India and Pakistan respectively have stark resemblance, and if Pakistan calls Kashmir a legacy of Partition, India on its part has started calling Baluchistan a legacy of Partition too.

What is occupying the mind of the South Asia watchers is the consequences of the likely fallout of the two countries and its effect on the region of South Asia as a whole, given that the security scenario in the region has always been influenced by the degree of the tension prevailing between the two countries at any particular point in time.

The writer is Associate Editor, The Daily Star.

To express support for a breakaway group on the soil of that country would be a diplomatic incivility, but the shield of technicality was invoked to show that the premises of the Pakistan High Commission were the territory of Pakistan. But be that as it may, there is no doubt that the incident has brought about a complete 'rerouting' of India's policy towards Pakistan.

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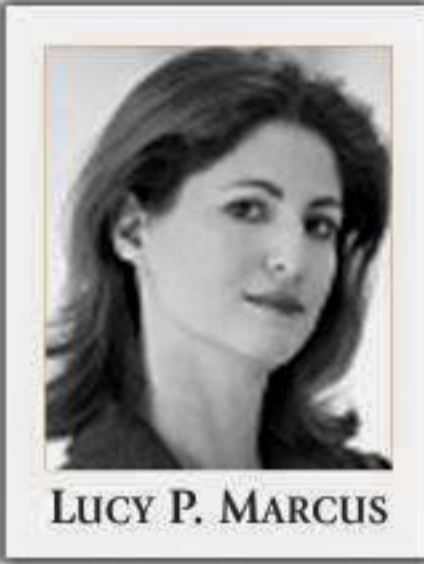
India's new approach was perhaps inevitable and the first step was Prime Minister Modi's mention of Baluchistan from Delhi's Red Fort on India's Independence Day regarding Pak actions in its Baluchistan province and

forces."

Evidently, it is a quid pro quo which India has discovered as an effective riposte to Pakistan. But it also has clearly brought to the fore the two countries' policy of mutual destabilisation. For long Pakistan has been accusing India of fomenting trouble in that province. It has not been as if the separatist movement on Baluchistan is a new phenomenon. By some accounts there is a Bangladesh being replicated by the Pakistani military in Baluchistan. The current uprising goes

PROJECT SYNDICATE

The Olympics' Lesser Gods



LUCY P. MARCUS

THE Summer Olympic Games are in full swing in Rio. Every time the world's top athletes gather for the Games, people everywhere have the opportunity not just to root for their countries, but also to become engrossed by stories of sacrifice and success, of broken bones and broken records. Beyond the incredible

feats of athleticism are powerful triumphs of the spirit, like that of the Syrian refugee swimmer Yusra Mardini, who less than a year ago jumped into the Mediterranean to help push her broken-down dinghy, containing 19 other refugees, to safety in Greece.

In this sense, the Olympic Games are as much about inspiration as they are about competition. But, thanks to the International Olympic Committee, the Games are also about something much darker. In fact, the IOC – together with its national branches, as well as the associations representing particular sports – embodies some of the most prominent problems the world is facing today, from inequality to exploitation to sheer hypocrisy among our leaders.

Over the years, the IOC and its national branch organisations have been accused of everything from poor governance to corruption. Most recently, a Washington Post analysis damningly depicted the chasm between the earnings of the executives who run the show and the athletes who make it.

Many, if not most, athletes perform for little or no money. Sponsorships can provide funds, but they also include restrictive rules that limit athletes' ability to raise more money for their training. As the Olympic sailor Ben Barger noted, the money that the "Olympic Movement" produces "goes to executives first, then administrators, then coaches, and then athletes."

So, for example, while IOC President Thomas Bach luxuriates rent-free in a lavish hotel suite in Switzerland, US Olympic medalist rower Megan Kalmoe lives close to the poverty line. Such extremes cast a pall of exploitation over the whole affair.

And the exploitation is not only financial. The IOC and its partners have a history of ignoring the perils that arise from the relationship between coaches and the young athletes they train – a relationship that has provided fertile ground for manipulation and abuse. Coaches can use their position of authority to lead young athletes to start doping or to take advantage of them sexually. As a recent Indianapolis Star report on US women's gymnastics has revealed, such conduct is rampant, and the national federation overseeing the sport – an Olympic organisation – has consistently failed to address it.

But the athletes are not the only ones the IOC disregards; the Committee is also apparently



indifferent to how host cities and countries comes to be host cities and countries. What exactly it takes to win an Olympic bid is fuzzy, though gifts, junkets, and wining and dining clearly factor into it. Whether Tokyo's winning bid for the 2020 Olympics was aided by payments to a company linked to the son of the disgraced former world athletics chief Lamine Diack is currently under investigation.

The process may be murky, but the results are clear. In Rio, tens of thousands of Brazilians were displaced to make room for Olympic infrastructure, some of which has been criticised for posing safety hazards. There is something deeply jarring about the glittering new projects that sit cheek by jowl with the poverty of the favelas and the juxtaposition of extravagant ceremony and the depth of the political and economic crises facing Brazil. The party goes on, while its host edges toward the abyss.

Clearly, the IOC's priorities are badly skewed. Can the Olympic Movement be redeemed?

To answer that question, it is worth considering the experience of FIFA, another non-profit sports organisation beset by corruption. In the two years since the truth about FIFA came to light, the rumblings of change can be heard, as what seemed to be an impenetrable system begins to crumble under the pressure of activists, sponsors, and soccer associations. This suggests that change is possible.

The first step is exposure. The good news is that, nowadays, it is harder than ever to keep such large-scale wrongdoing under wraps, not least because of the efforts of committed journalists and brave whistleblowers. The testimony of the runner Yuliya

Stepanova was the key to exposing Russia's state-run doping programme. The bad news is that the IOC simply ignored the World Anti-Doping Agency's report on Russia's official scheme and stopped well short of banning its national team.

As FIFA's experience showed, once sponsors become concerned about their reputations, their interests shift. Now that they have been revealed, the enrichment schemes – which benefit, above all, the sponsors, executives, and a couple of superstar Olympians – are hurting profits. So, too, will continuing to turn a blind eye to powerful countries' efforts to cheat. Sponsors must show themselves to be responsive and responsible, saving face by recalling the Olympic spirit. The rule of law and ethics, built into the fabric of corporate governance, must now take centre stage.

The Olympic Games reflect not just who we are, but also who we hope to be. The system that underpins them has widened the gap between the two. The IOC has become a monument to some of humanity's worst tendencies – the greed, hypocrisy, and exploitation that have led so many to distrust institutions. One hopes that the example of FIFA will help to mark a path to redemption for the IOC, and that the Olympic Movement's governing body embarks upon it before the flame of what is worthy and inspiring about the Games is snuffed out.

The writer is CEO of Marcus Venture Consulting. Copyright: Project Syndicate, 2016. www.project-syndicate.org (Exclusive to The Daily Star)

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

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Sarwar Hossain, a tragic hero

The report titled 'Hero dies a tragic death' published in The Daily Star on August 16, 2016 is sad and at the same time uplifting. Amid all the bad news, it is good to know that there are still people out there who will not hesitate to save the lives of others endangering their own. Sarwar Hossain, the 26-year-old pickup driver drowned in a canal while trying to save two University students. I think such selfless acts should be recognised by society. Social organisations and good-hearted people should come forward to help the family of Sarwar Hossain. We are proud of his heroic deed, may he find eternal peace.

Nur Jahan
Chittagong

Worsening condition of Dhaka

Dhaka is one of the most densely populated and most polluted cities in the world. And it is getting worse every day. In my opinion, it is not a city; rather an overcrowded jungle with no rules and civic sense among the residents. Just think about life in Dhaka on a rainy day and you will agree with me. We appreciate the government for undertaking several mega projects in order to mitigate the suffering of the residents but I am afraid that they may turn out to be inadequate even when implemented. That's because we simply have too many people in this city. Unless decentralisation takes places, the problem will not go away. Unless we can create more facilities at the local level, living conditions in Dhaka will continue to get worse.

Anonymous

World Humanitarian Day

World Humanitarian Day is observed each year on August 19 to honour the aid workers who risk their lives in humanitarian service, and inspire people to advocate for humanitarian action. The day was designated by the General Assembly seven years ago to coincide with the anniversary of the 2003 bombing of the United Nations headquarters in Baghdad, Iraq. This year, the UN and its partners are calling for global solidarity with the more than 130 million people around the world who need

humanitarian assistance to survive. Under the theme of 'One Humanity', World Humanitarian Day will highlight how the world came together in Istanbul for the World Humanitarian Summit earlier this year, and made strong commitments to support people affected by crisis and ensure that aid workers can safely and more effectively deliver to those in need. Let us pledge to work to serve humanity better.

Sana Samad
On email