

# The Daily Star

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## An act of savagery Punish the perpetrator severely

AS we write this editorial, a young and promising woman is desperately fighting for her life with doctors seeing minimal chances of her surviving. We hope and pray, with the rest of the nation, that they are proved wrong, and that Khadiza Begum Nargis not only survives, but recovers fully.

The horrific attack on the young woman was perpetrated by a student at Shahjalal University of Science and Technology — one Badrul Alam. The way he attacked her was nothing short of beastly as captured on video by bystanders. In the video, Alam is seen to be hacking the young woman with a meat cleaver in the most brutal way. Shockingly, none of the bystanders came to her aid, perhaps, fearing retribution given the perpetrator's affiliation with the ruling party and the air of impunity ruling party members, in most cases, enjoy.

Meanwhile, the Bangladesh Chhatra League in a statement tried to distance itself from Alam, despite his Facebook information painting quite a different picture. That the BCL, instead of focusing on condemning his actions, tried to disown him, despite the fact that he is clearly affiliated with the organisation, is shameful. Because when it comes to the rule of law, does it really matter which party he belongs to? Should he not be punished regardless of party affiliation for the savagery he displayed?

This propensity to commit such vicious acts in our society, especially against women and children, is extremely worrying. The air of impunity created over time, particularly because of failures to prosecute ruling party affiliates for their past misdemeanours, must be abolished. To that end, meting out exemplary punishment to Badrul Alam is the least that should be done.

## Death certificate for live baby

### Another case of gross doctor negligence

WE have in the past few weeks editorialised what seems to be becoming a trend in many public and private medical institutions, the erosion of ethics in the medical profession when it comes to treating patients. In less than two weeks, the second incident of a newborn child being declared dead was found to be alive. The child was born prematurely at Centre for Specialised Care and Research on October 4 in Chittagong and parents, both doctors, were informed that the child's breathing was normal and transferred the baby to the neonatal intensive care unit for observation by on-duty doctors. Strangely enough the baby was declared dead within two hours of birth and handed over in a box with death certificate issued.

It is perchance that the mother decided to have a second look in the box and the baby moved although the body temperature was cool. Now here comes the twist; on duty doctors refused to examine the baby stating that death certificate had already been issued. Parents took the baby to a private hospital where it is undergoing treatment and is in a critical state. The question is what sort of "doctors" are we dealing with here? Apparently junior doctors and interns are generally in-charge in night shift at many private hospitals. It is imperative that the concerned ministry take stern measures against those responsible. These allegations, if proven true, constitute medical negligence and these so-called medical practitioners should be held to account for their negligence.

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

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### World Teachers' Day

This year World Teachers Day marked the 20th anniversary of the 1966 ILO/Recommendation Concerning the Status of teachers. This year's theme is "Valuing Teachers, Improving their Status". It was estimated that in 2030, 3.2 million more teachers would be required to gain universal primary education and around 5.1 million more for the purpose to achieve universal lower secondary education. Today around 1.4 million teachers are missing in classroom due to which nearly 250 million children are deprived from the basic skills of reading and writing.

The international community needs to stand united to support teachers worldwide, especially in countries with the highest number of out-of-school children.

Sana Samad

A student of Pakistan

### Traffic suffering

There are too many roads blocked in Gulshan and Banani, causing immense traffic. Everyone has to take a longer route to his or her destination. It is enough to make more check posts as they have done though but blocking roads is just too inconvenient.

The roads are also blocked by other students and activist groups. It requires police intervention, who are supposed to prevent public sufferings and maintain smooth flow of traffic.

The traffic is already in an awful state due to absence of subway, which all big cities have. I request the authorities to consider building a subway as soon as possible for that is the only solution. JICA was all ready to start the construction work. What happened?

Dr. Sabrina Rashid

Bangladesh Specialized Hospital Dhaka

# Victim of new Cold War in South Asia

## SAARC: We need more, not less of it

### STRATEGICALLY SPEAKING



BRIG GEN SHAHEDUL ANAM KHAN  
NDC, PSC (RETD)

FIRST it was an Indian government official belonging to the "National Institution for Transforming India" berating SAARC mercilessly and calling it an association

for regional confrontation, and advocating its dissolution and replacement by BBIN and BCIM, and now it is a former Indian envoy to Bangladesh who thinks Bangladesh should forget about SAARC and concentrate more on other sub-regional arrangements for development. The audience on both the occasions, by the way, was predominantly Bangladeshi

ing cooperation and trust among the eight nations of the region. And God knows that there is deficit of both in the region.

The issue of the relevance of SAARC or the lack of it has again become a talking point after the cancellation of the 19th Summit that was to be held in Islamabad. This is not the first time that a SAARC summit has been postponed as obvious from the fact that we have had only 18 summits in the 31 one years of its existence when, as per SAARC Charter, summit is an annual event. But it may not be out of place to mention that of the nine postponed summits four of them had to do with India. Bangladesh too had to endure a postponement, the 13th Summit originally scheduled for January 2005 was eventually held in November. But never did one hear calls

regional cooperation in forging a common development strategy. However, one should not be surprised at these comments. It has only exposed the attitude of a section of Indian scholars, academia and practitioners of diplomacy who have been unwilling to countenance any regional order that necessitated India's status as regional power and its predominant role in South Asia to be subsumed under a greater cooperative regional architecture. And the animosity that has been there was between only India and Pakistan; one cannot recall of any two regional countries whose relationship was less than the friendliest. And Indo-Pak animosity predates the formation of SAARC.

SAARC is not the consequence of Cold War dynamics and neither was it born as a compulsion of the tussle

(South Asian Regional Cooperation), and later another 'A' was added to make the arrangement an 'association' signifying the willingness of the countries for greater integration and deeper involvement, which an association is supposed to achieve, and which sets such an association apart from organisations like BIMSTEC or BRICS or SAGQ (South Asian Growth Quadrangle).

Regrettably, the association has been held hostage to the animosity and conflict between the two biggest countries in the region. If it has not delivered in the way that one had expected it to, it is because of how the two stifled its progress by their respective positions on various regional issues. The dangerous aspect now is that the region is now split in two camps effectively isolating Pakistan regionally.

We must ask ourselves, given that what we see develop between the two countries which is a consequence of a greater international game of isolation and encirclement, whether Bangladesh should become involved in the Indo-Pak confrontation, because it would appear from various comments on foreign policy issues in the last fortnight, coming from various quarters in Bangladesh except the foreign ministry, that we have willy-nilly become so.

It is for India to deal with Pakistan in any manner it chooses including using the diplomatic stratagem of isolating it. However, the efficacy of that expedient has not been apparent as yet. Russia has gone ahead with Friendship 2016 Exercise with Pakistan from September 26 and Iran has expressed its willingness to join the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor.

The recent developments in the region are seen by many as the replay of the Cold War politics in South Asia, something that the regional countries had tried to avert so far but have unfortunately become embroiled in. And SAARC has become a victim of it.

It would do well for Bangladesh to steer clear of the Indo-Pak quarrel and avoid giving the impression that it is being drawn in into the Indo-Pak equation. And it is also for Bangladesh to ensure that SAARC, which is Bangladesh's brain child, does not become the victim of the Indo-Pak rivalry. SAARC may not have been the model regional association but it must be kept alive.

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but the venues were different. Both the comments do great injustice to the regional organisation.

That the annual summit of the regional leaders has been postponed, notwithstanding the compelling reasons for it, is a dampener for those who would like to see the regional body not only survive but do so with a flourish and play a more effective role in enhanc-

ing for doing away with SAARC as openly as one is hearing now, not even when a limited war was fought between India and Pakistan in 1999 and postponement may have been necessary under the circumstances.

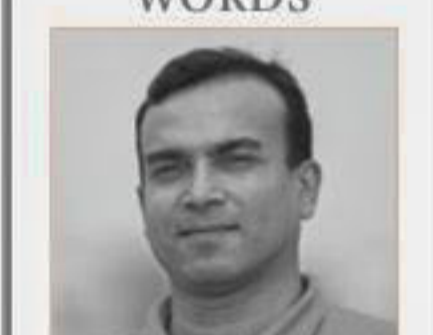
It is blatantly outrageous when some people term SAARC as 'South Asian Association for Regional Confrontation.' It betrays a negative mentality regarding

between two super powers that saw the world split up into two distinct camps. SAARC was born in spite of the Cold War and not because of it.

It is obvious that some would like to see the end of SAARC. It is also true that its formation was seen with a degree of circumspection by India, it believing that the association was a ploy to gang up against it. Initially it was only SARC

# An original sin

### IN OTHER WORDS



AMITAVA KAR

A recent report by a UN-affiliated group refuels the long-standing debate over reparations for African-Americans. The group of experts which includes leading human

rights lawyers from around the world presented its findings to the UN Human Rights Council recently, showing a link between the present and past injustices against the black people in the United States. The history of slavery in the US justifies reparations, they argued.

"In particular, the legacy of colonial history, enslavement, racial subordination and segregation, racial terrorism and racial inequality in the United States remains a serious challenge, as there has been no real commitment to reparations and to truth and reconciliation for people of African descent," the report stated. "Contemporary police killings and the trauma that they create are reminiscent of the past racial terror of lynching."

The issue is hardly new. In every Congress since 1989, John Conyers, a Democratic Congressman from Michigan, has introduced a bill that recommends forming a commission to study reparation proposals. H.R. 40 does not require reparations or authorise any payments. It simply calls for ample research into the nature and financial impact of African enslavement as well as the ills inflicted on the blacks during the Jim Crow era. Based on the findings, remedies can be suggested.

But every year, the bill stalls. It's hard to understand why, though. Polls suggest that racism is on the decline—the young are far less prejudiced than the old. In today's America, if anyone expresses a racist opinion at work, it will almost certainly end his or her career. Companies caught discriminating are punished by the legal system as well as customers. Obama's rise to the US president from a junior Senator from Chicago was not based solely on the desire of wide-eyed liberals to purchase racial reconciliation on the cheap. Americans wanted change. In MLK's day, interracial love was

illegal in many states. Today, more than 15 percent of marriages cross racial lines. Segregation was the law in the South and the custom in the North. Today, all-white neighbourhoods are virtually non-existent and segregation is declining in all metropolitan areas. The median earnings of black and white women with college degrees are about the same.

And yet a humiliating gap has opened up between the promise of the ideals and the reality of the time. According to available data, black median household income fell significantly between 2000

and 2011. The traditional black family has collapsed. In the 60s, many called it a crisis when nearly 25 percent of black children were born out of wedlock. Today it is more than 70 percent (for whites, about 30 percent), and most of these children are being raised by single mothers living alone. Lacking the safety net that a second adult provides, they are hit the hardest by the economic crisis. Some say blacks themselves are to blame for these dismal figures. Aren't individuals ultimately responsible for their own fate? If new immigrants can

make it big in America, then why can't they? Answers to these questions tend to fall into two camps. The lingering effects of racism are hard to shake off. Poverty begets poverty. Those who struggle at school are lagging further behind in the workplace. Black schools are underfunded; the criminal-justice system is biased against blacks. If this analysis is correct, the best solution may be more funding for inner-city schools, stricter enforcement of anti-discrimination laws and more training for police officers and judges.

to descendants of slaves. Instead, he just tries to show the hollowness of believing "that a society can spend three-and-a-half centuries attempting to cripple a man, 50 years offering half-hearted aid, and then wonder why he walks with a limp."

While many whites consider reparations to be too radical, white politicians, judges and ordinary citizens have accepted the principle of reparations for certain past damages. The current worth of all black labour stolen by whites through the means of slavery,



A terra-cotta statue of a child slave inside the main house at the Whitney Plantation in Wallace Louisiana. PHOTO: REUTERS

Skin colour is nothing like the barrier it once was in the US. But slavery remains America's original sin. "An America that asks what it owes its most vulnerable citizens is improved and humane," writes the indispensable Ta-Nehisi Coates in his 2014 cover story in the Atlantic. "An America that looks away is ignoring not just the sins of the past but the sins of the present and the certain sins of the future."

Coates does not insist that US Federal Government—and presumably, various state governments—should give money

Jim Crow, and discrimination, interests included is estimated by some economists in the range of \$6 to \$24 trillion. Many wonder where the money will come from. Well, did the US government not find more than a trillion dollars to bail out private companies in the Great Depression and trillions for recent unjust and irresponsible military actions?

The US has a moral and constitutional obligation to mend its shameful past.

The writer is a member of the Editorial Team at The Daily Star.