

Want No Trump



CHINITTO SINCE 1995
NIZAMUDDIN AHMED

A Chinese, a Brazilian and a German were engaged in a round of bridge in one of the failed businesses, this one a casino, of an American bragger. After the cards were dealt, it was the Brazilian's call and he offered one club. The German, ecstatic after the 2014 World Cup football victory, was intent on rubbing salt to Rio's semi-final wound and uttered 'seven clubs' with a wink, but immediately corrected it to two diamonds. That awakened the usually abusive and slurring Trump, not because the American loves anything that glitters, but because he enjoyed the seven goals ridiculing; he appreciates deriding anyone, particularly in this instance, because he hates football and generally because he dislikes anything non-white. Fidgeting all along, he seemed unprepared to call anything, he never prepares, but managed to say two spades. The Chinese was quick and called 'one no trump'. That visibly upset Trump, and he retorted: "That's why I do not want the Chinese in the USA. I will build a bigger wall than your Great Wall"



lost everything assumes superciliously that he has been able to salvage his honour. The presumptive salutation is indeed ahead of time but I have the gut feeling that someday he will dish out enough from his 'legal' tax savings to purchase a knighthood. After making a buffoon of himself and being as offensive as an ill-mannered eight-year-old, despite being beaten hollow by Secretary HR Clinton in the first TV debate September 26, Trump has been harping on the ballad that he 'won', a claim disputed even by polls under the most partisan GOP media. Such reckless self-confidence and

brash egotism (not desirable of a US Commander-in-Chief) enabled him to earlier floor a dozen and a half other Republican presidential contenders, which also exposed the economic and thereby moral vulnerability of white American middle class as well as their gullibility. I mean, how can one not see through the chap's dark suit, dyed blonde hair and twitching lips that has arrogance gelled all over? While we Bangladeshis can spot deception a mile away - not that we can every time make the hustler ineffective or face the music - it took the brag-about most powerful country in the world two major conventions and

ensuing nomination sessions, a hounding media worth millions of hours of airtime, and a televised faceoff before unearthing, thanks to *NY Times* (02 Oct), that the 'apprentice' in 1995 claimed a business loss of almost one billion dollars in his income tax statement. And for over two decades, the owner of hotels, skyscrapers, golf courses, winery, real estate, and the Miss Universe pageant has not had to pay any federal income tax because the law allows Donald to trump the law. In other words, he was perhaps living off the tax paid by Americans with much (to the power billion) lesser income. The impetuous businessman,

haughty television personality, and now politician as well as a self-proclaimed hater of Muslims, war veterans, Mexicans, Chinese (for causing climate change), immigrants (since after the arrival of his ancestors to America), crying children, fat women (including a former beauty queen) and Mr. Clinton (why on earth?) has seen his popularity rating plummet, not as much due to Hillary's performance, but due to his antics that can at best be likened to a teenager in love with himself.

During the first debate, Clinton accused Trump of not paying taxes for years, our Donald came back with the retort, "That makes me smart." One has to be convinced that the guy has no idea why and how a government should run the way it does. He is a child whose ambition is to become the POTUS but he has not had any preparation.

Independent voters in large numbers are pulling away from Trump. Republicans are concerned that Trump's possible 'dismal' performance may affect the standing of the party's candidates in the Congressional polls. Some of them, according to anonymous sources, are already on their mark, set and ready to go far, far away from Ivanka's dad.

All these boil down to the billion dollar question, why did the stalwarts of the Republican Party not foresee the possibility of such a candidate being nominated? If indeed the white middle class are threatened by people of colour and neo-immigrants, why has there not been a policy overhaul to tackle such an important and vital socioeconomic issue? Despite the odds, should Donald Trump win the race to the White House, shall it be a victory for democratic practice or a defeat for mankind?

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"Hey where did that come from?" the other three said in unison. "Why! He can say 'want no trump' and I cannot be political? From China to Bangladesh. The following has remained one of my favourite anecdotes: A Bangalee was once roughed up, his shirt torn off, he was punched all over and slapped on the face more than once by some toughies. When he returned to his meek friends observing from a distance, he was pretty cool about the incident. Asked what happened, replied he unabashedly: "They sure beat me up a little, but they could not take my 'ijjat' (honour)". "Sir" Donald Trump reminds me constantly of our friend, who having

The case for stronger ties in South Asia

NAHELA NOWSHIN

THE historic adoption of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by the 193 UN Member States has led governments to commit to implement national action plans geared towards fighting poverty, combating climate change, promoting inclusive economic growth, and more. The 17 SDGs — dominating policy making discussions worldwide — attempt to strike a balance between the economic, social and environmental dimensions whilst providing a universal framework for tackling global challenges.

Governments, civil society groups, academics and other stakeholders in many of the 193 countries have begun the process of transposing these global objectives in the context of their respective national realities and circumstances. As such, country-wise prioritisation of the SDGs and their mainstreaming into national planning strategies is critical. Here, the mapping of the SDGs from the 'global to national' perspectives necessitates focusing on regional frameworks.

In the case of South Asia, the potential benefits from regional agreements such as the SAPTA and the subsequent SAFTA have remained under-realised because of formidable challenges. South Asia has been trailing behind other regions in terms of competitiveness because these challenges have continued to remain unaddressed or not adequately addressed.

The latest findings of the Global Competitiveness Index (GCI) show that most South Asian countries rank in the lower half. India ranks the highest, in all of South Asia, having moved up several spots since last year to the 39th position out of 138 economies.

Bangladesh climbed up a notch to claim the 106th position, with Sri Lanka, Bhutan, Nepal and Pakistan clinching the 71st, 97th, 98th and 122nd positions respectively. The GCI scores are calculated on the basis of twelve 'pillars' of competitiveness that include indicators such as business sophistication, market size and innovation.

Most countries in South Asia have improved in competitiveness making it the fastest growing region in the world. But despite having made significant strides in areas such as health and primary education, the region is lagging in the indices of infrastructure, financial market development and technological readiness.

A major hindrance to South Asia's competitiveness is the fact that it is one of the least economically integrated regions in the world. The strongest piece of evidence corroborating this is that intra-regional trade accounts for a mere six percent of South Asia's total trade whereas for the EU, NAFTA and ASEAN, the numbers are 66 percent, 48 percent and 27 percent, respectively. Further, intra-regional investment in South Asia is less than 1 percent of total investment, explaining why it costs more to trade within South Asia compared to trade with the rest of the world.

Although policymakers have taken commendable steps to promote intra-regional trade and investment over the years, there remain significant hurdles to achieve the full potential of these measures. In this connection, a recent publication by the Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD) has proposed enhancing four types of connectivity to deepen regional integration in South Asia: trade connectivity, investment connectivity, people-to-people

connectivity and transport connectivity. In view of this, issues related to trade and transport connectivity merit particular attention to stimulate investment and development of value and production chains in South Asia.

For Bangladesh, non-tariff barriers (NTBs) are a serious bottleneck to ease of trade with other countries in the region. Some of these are complex customs procedures and certification standards and the lack of physical infrastructure at border points. Since an

enormous share of Bangladesh's trade with regional economies is conducted through land ports, the aforementioned factors pose a significant threat to the country's competitiveness. It could be argued that the implications of trade facilitation issues are even more far-reaching for landlocked Bhutan and Nepal.

Given that the ease of doing business is much worse in South Asia in comparison to other regions, reducing

the cost of doing business, to put it simply, ought to be one of the national priorities for countries such as Bangladesh, Nepal and Pakistan. The good news is that in recent times, South Asian countries have begun to show increased commitment towards deepening regional ties. Regional initiatives such as BBIN's (Bangladesh-Bhutan-India-Nepal) Motor Vehicles Agreement (MVA) and bilateral commitments like Bangladesh-India Memorandum of Understanding 2010

are a step forward in the form of strengthened cooperation in the areas of transport and energy. Furthermore, bilateral cooperation between Bangladesh and India is increasing at a faster pace than any other pair of countries in South Asia. The commencement of transshipment operations and bus services between the neighbouring countries have raised the prospects of greater trade dramatically.

In addition to undertaking regional initiatives to facilitate trade and market access, there is an urgent need to promote dialogue on matters of regional cooperation and connectivity in South Asia. An example of a platform for such a debate is the South Asia Economic Summit (SAES) conceived in 2008 by five leading think tanks in the region. At the ninth SAES, to be hosted by CPD in Dhaka in mid-October, issues related to regional integration in South Asia in the context of the SDGs and emerging challenges are expected to be discussed. High level policymakers, experts, eminent economists, business leaders, development partners and other key stakeholders from South Asia and beyond will take part in the Summit whose overarching theme is 'Reimagining South Asia in 2030'.

Civil society groups, policymakers and think tanks of South Asian countries, following in the footsteps of the aforementioned initiatives, should come together to exchange ideas, express concerns and propose solutions to the various issues stifling economic integration in the region.

As a region where nearly 40 percent of its total population lives on less than \$1.25 a day, the urgency to fight poverty by capitalising on and recognising the economic benefits of regional integration for South Asian countries is further heightened. With the help of these kinds of initiatives, both on the policy and dialogue fronts, awareness will hopefully be raised with regard to the importance of bolstering regional cooperation in South Asia in a globalised world.

The writer works at the Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD), Dhaka, Bangladesh.

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QUOTABLE Quote



GEORGE ORWELL, 1984
Freedom is the freedom to say that two plus two make four. If that is granted, all else follows.

CROSSWORD BY THOMAS JOSEPH

- | | |
|-----------------------|-----------------------------|
| ACROSS | DOWN |
| 1 Fossil resin | 1 Crunch targets |
| 6 Stately | 2 Ran into |
| 11 "Uncle Miltie" | 3 Seventime NHL All-Star |
| 12 Bitter | 4 Mystery writer Peters |
| 13 Panache | 5 Woodwind part |
| 14 Singer Crystal | 6 Pester |
| 15 Opera set in Egypt | 7 Simple wind instrument |
| 17 April weather | 8 "Trumbo" star |
| 18 Massive amounts | 9 Leslie Caron film |
| 20 The Emerald Isle | 10 First place |
| 22 Granola bit | 16 Oxygen: Prefix |
| 23 Stupors | 18 Fling |
| 26 Manger fill | 19 Solemn promise |
| 28 Broad comedy | 21 Flat floater |
| 29 Escort to the exit | 23 "Terrible" age |
| 31 Cry of insight | 24 Bounce back |
| 32 Hardy heroine | 25 Theater unit |
| 33 Macrame unit | 27 Impressive |
| 34 Night fliers | 30 Olympics jersey initials |
| 36 Singer Tori | 33 Eucalyptus |
| 38 Stellar hunter | 34 Pear variety |
| 40 Bother | 35 Open space |
| 43 Note from the boss | 37 Base meal |
| 44 Skiing spot | 39 Take in |
| 45 Insertion symbol | 41 Suitcase |
| 46 Annual visitor | 42 Pot fill |

YESTERDAY'S ANSWER

A	L	S	O	M	A	S	C	O	T
P	A	W	N	A	S	H	O	R	E
D	A	V	I	T	S	T	A	G	E
E	M	I	S	T	A	C	E	D	
S	A	L	E	M	T	E	S	T	S
A	M	I			I	R	A		
G	E	N	E	S		D	I	V	E
A	N	G	S	T	A	B	E		
		C	R	I	M	E	L	A	B
H	E	R	O	I	C	R	I	C	E
O	V	E	R	O		I	N	N	S
P	A	C	T	E	N		A	G	E

BEETLE BAILEY by Mort Walker



BABY BLUES by Kirkman & Scott

