

# The Daily Star

FOUNDER EDITOR  
LATE S. M. ALI

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## Ruling party infighting kills journalist

### AL must come down heavily on errant party members

THAT a personal animosity between members of the Awami League should result in the death of a journalist is outrageous. We have lost count of the number of times we have had to report on casualties of ruling party infighting. On Thursday, supporters of Shahzadpur Municipality mayor and an AL activist clashed, which led to shots being fired. Abdul Hakim Shimul of the *Daily Samakal* was killed by a stray bullet. At least 10 have been wounded. The journalist's grandmother too succumbed out of shock and grief for her grandson.

The spectacle of some AL party members, squabbling violently over personal enmity and rivalry, has become the norm. Even openly brandishing firearms and shooting publicly is not new. The details of the clash make it clear that the gun was not fired in self-defense either.

A ruling party member, that too a public representative, openly flaunting this kind of muscle reveals the degree of impunity they enjoy. The mayor is now in hiding. We wonder, were there no casualties, would the party or the police even take action against the man?

The incident worries; if members of the same party can display such hostility towards each other, what can other parties, not to mention the general public, expect from them? Intraparty violence is a symptom of the South Asian political landscape, especially in countries with one predominant party. And it is more acute in our country. The government's lacklustre reactions till now are not enough to root out the problem.

We repeat, it is the central leadership that must act. And it must act strongly, and without showing any favours. Otherwise countless innocent lives will continue to be caught in the crosshairs of intra-party violence.

## First the Buriganga and now Dhaleswari

### The farce of relocating tanneries!

AFTER much stalling from all sides, the government got some 35 tanneries, out of 154, relocated from Hazaribag to the tannery estate, newly constructed in Savar, by December. While the government stance was that the industrial estate had been fully developed, that was not the case unfortunately. The very good aspect of the industrial estate was the central effluent plant (CETP). The authorities have dragged their feet on the issue for years, and for years Dhaka residents have paid the price as the principal river feeding the city, the Buriganga, went on being polluted to the point that marine life became largely extinct. Pollution levels have reached critical levels and the toxicity of the water has risen so much that it can no longer be treated effectively by WASA.

In that setting, we were relieved when tanneries finally started relocating to Savar. But what do we see happening to the Dhaleswari river? A repetition of the Buriganga fiasco; environmental groups are up in arms and we fully endorse their stand. Untreated waste is being dumped into the river and it has begun to stink. How can this happen if the CETP is in operation fully? Who will monitor whether it is so? It is up to the government to make sure what has happened to the Buriganga does not happen to the Dhaleswari. We cannot sit back and shift a grave problem to another part of the country and unless we learn from our mistakes, this sort of manmade disaster will continue to recur.

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

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### Rohingyas must get the help they deserve

I am writing in reference to the resettlement proposal of Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh to a remote island, as reported by the *Guardian* newspaper on February 2, 2017. I know that Bangladesh is not a rich country and that the responsibility of resettling the Rohingya must be shared by other countries as well. However, I hope that they are not forced to move to uninhabitable places and that the accounts of these refugees being turned away at the border are mere rumours.

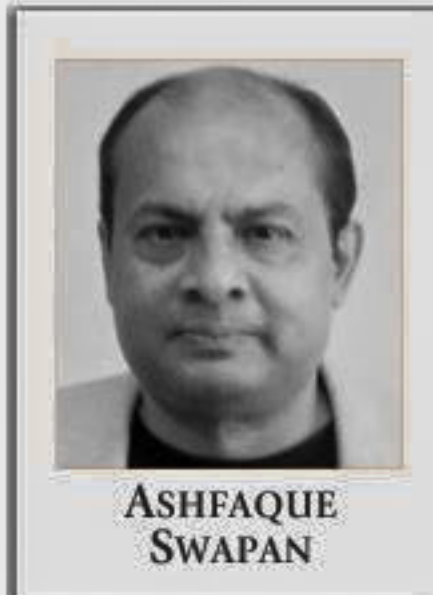
We expect the UN High Commissioner for Refugees to work with the Bangladesh government to address this problem as soon as possible. May God help us all in the important work of looking after the needy.  
N. Sheralam, Toronto

### Textbook errors must be corrected

We appreciate the government's efforts to improve the quality of education in Bangladesh, but we must also bring to light the mistakes that are occurring, which reflects the negligence of those involved in the various stages of writing, editing, and printing these textbooks.

My son is in the fourth grade. While comparing his current science book to the science book of 2014, I found question exercises related to the content published in the 2014 textbook. Other questions seemed to have no connection to the content of the current book. It is wrong to prepare books for children by resorting to mere "cut and paste" techniques. Our government must prevent these practices immediately.  
Zakaria Rahman, By email

# An ill wind of intolerance buffets the world



ASHFAQUE SWAPAN

When US President Donald Trump threatened to ban Muslims during his campaign last year, many people were appalled but few took the threat seriously. It's like the three witches in Shakespeare's *Macbeth*. Dire predictions, seemingly impossible when pronounced, come to pass in all its ghastly awfulness later on.

Trump targeted seven Muslim-majority countries – and it has been pandemonium ever since. Refugees have been caught in a limbo, the acting US attorney general has been fired for refusing to uphold the draconian law, and spontaneous protests have erupted all over the US.

The people who are among the happiest surely include the murderous thugs of the Islamic State. This is a propaganda bonanza for them.

The past few years have been a roller coaster ride for the world. Two developments in particular – the post-Iraq war mess in the Middle East followed by the exodus from Syria, and the economic meltdown in the Eurozone – have sparked deep political and economic angst, always a fertile ground for xenophobia and intolerance.

In the United States, it has led to the victory of Trump's appalling race-baiting campaign. Far-right, often openly xenophobic, parties have come to power in Hungary and Poland. They are flexing their muscles in Greece, France, Germany and the Netherlands.

Meanwhile in the Middle East, the US-led illegitimate occupation of Iraq has led to a horrendous unravelling of the nation states, and murderous, obscurant bigots have stepped into the political vacuum to create the Islamic State.

A point that cannot be emphasised enough is that the overwhelming majority of the billion-plus Muslims of the world reject the mindless doctrine of the Islamic State. They have also been its first victims. The rise of the Islamic State is arguably the single most serious threat to plural, democratic Muslim societies around the world, in addition to posing a threat to the world in general. The tendency of Islamophobic Western commentators to conflate the wider Muslim world with the Islamic State miss this point: The vast, overwhelming majority of Muslims, whatever their many shortcomings, believe in democracy, the rule of law and some

degree of tolerance of diverse views and faiths.

Groups like Al Qaeda and Islamic State have caused grievous damage to Muslims by creating an atmosphere of hostility, suspicion and animus towards Muslims who live in and travel to non-Muslim countries, especially in Europe and North America. This is by conscious design. The goal is to cleave a sharper divide between Muslims and non-Muslims everywhere and hasten what US political scientist Samuel Huntington had predicted to be a clash of civilisations. Now Trump's actions are playing right into its hands.

race-baiting far-right fringe groups are supported, it is by no means clear that this exclusionary, divisive worldview will eventually triumph.

There are signs of that everywhere. Trump's Muslim ban has been widely lambasted in the UK. British Muslim of Bangladeshi descent Nadiya Hussain won the 2015 Great British Bake-off with enormous public support. Londoners shrugged off memories of harrowing terrorist attacks and Islamophobic critiques and elected Sadiq Khan mayor.

There is no denying the fact that Muslim countries have a longer way to go. All too often tyrants use religion as a useful club to

ideological movement engaged in the struggle for identity, to a protest movement against the authoritarian regime, and now to a national democratic party," party founder Rached Ghannouchi told supporters at a rally. "We must keep religion far from political struggles."

The change is reminiscent of what happened in erstwhile East Pakistan in the 1950s. In a region recently carved out on the basis of Muslim majority, a party fought the East Bengal legislative elections under a new name, Awami League, changing its name from Awami Muslim League to better represent all people. Its coalition trounced the

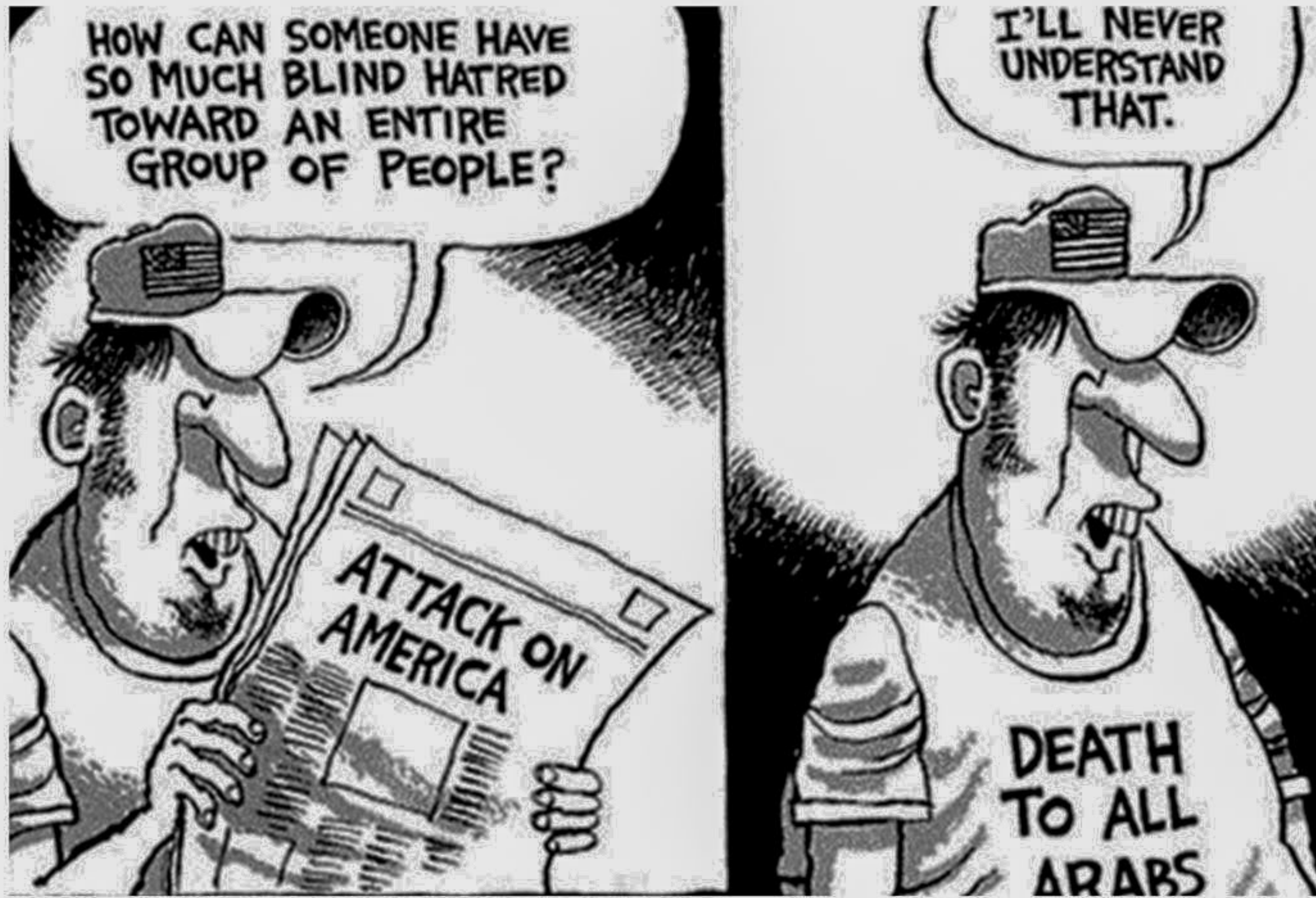


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Sorry, Mr. Huntington, I don't buy it, despite Trump's antics. We live in an increasingly mixed-up, globalised world. It's a world where many Western countries are more diverse with substantial Muslim populations. Many of the oil-rich Arab states, while almost entirely Muslim, depend heavily on the expertise and labour of a population that belongs to diverse faiths. A clash of civilisations would tear up the world.

Even in a world where Trump wins elections with xenophobic invective, where the Islamic State draws disaffected, young men to a violent, exclusionary, repressive worldview, where European

bludgeon civil rights, gender equality and minority rights.

Fortunately, there are stirrings of change even in the heart of the Arab world. In May last year, Tunisia's ruling Islamist party Ennahda announced that it will separate its political and religious work, Reuters reported. Ennahda was the first Islamist party to come to power in the wake of the 2011 Arab Spring revolutions.

"Free elections, a new Constitution and a compromise politics between secular and Islamist parties have helped Tunisia avoid the turmoil seen in several other Arab nations," according to Reuters. "Ennahda has changed from an

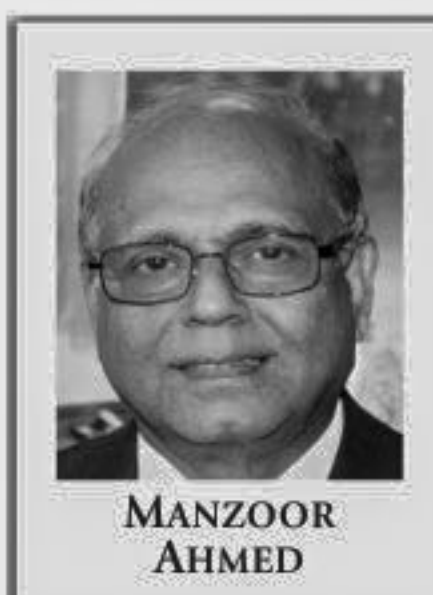
Muslim League. Sure, we are going through a difficult time, and bigots and charlatans are having a field day. But if we are willing to stand and fight for humanist, plural, inclusive values, we can and will bring the world closer towards that goal.

We should take hope from an observation by US civil rights leader Martin Luther King, Jr. "The arc of the moral universe is long," King said, "but it bends toward justice."

The writer is a contributing editor for *Siliconer*, a monthly periodical for South Asians in the United States. He has been writing for US-based South Asian media for over 25 years.

## BANGLADESH HOSTS E-9 MEETING

# Can education uphold human solidarity?



MANZOOR AHMED

IT is hardly a run of the mill event when nine of the most highly populated countries (Bangladesh, Brazil, China, Egypt, India, Indonesia,

Mexico, Nigeria and Pakistan) get together to discuss the challenges of achieving the goal of Education for All. This is precisely what is happening from February 5 to 7. This international conference of the E-9 group as they are called, is being hosted for the first time, by Bangladesh. Launched in 1993 in New Delhi as part of the Education for All movement, this is the 11th biannual E-9 meeting but the first one in the global Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 2030 era.

The importance of the event is seen in participation of a large number of high level government officials from these nations. It will, for instance, include ministerial delegations from the nine countries headed by ministers or vice-ministers. Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina will address the inaugural session. Irena Bukova, Director General of UNESCO, will also be present.

Having shared their progress, concerns and plans in education during the first two days, the countries are expected to adopt an outcome document to be called the Dhaka Declaration on the final day.

SDG4, one of 17 Sustainable Development Goals, is a pledge the world community made in September 2015 at the United Nations "to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning for all." This overarching goal has been elaborated as seven targets.

The targets relate to the 'what' and 'why' of education. There are targets about good quality and universal early childhood development, and primary and secondary education; eliminating gender and other disparities; enabling

youth and adults to acquire relevant life and livelihood skills, and literacy as a foundational tool.

The 'why' aims to prepare children, youth and adults to become responsible members of community and global citizens, embrace diversity, live harmoniously together and with nature, and contribute to peaceful and sustainable development.

At a preparatory meeting for the conference on Wednesday, February 1, Nurul Islam Nahid, the Bangladesh Minister of Education aptly pointed out that "Achieving the global agenda of inclusive and equitable education and lifelong learning by 2030 will very much depend on the effort and success of the nine countries." The E-9 countries represent more than half of the world's population, two-thirds of the world's

global environment of divisive socio-political forces and rhetoric, in which human solidarity, appreciation of diversity and respect for human rights and human dignity are under growing threat.

The conference, no doubt, provides a platform to create a strong voice of the global south represented by the E-9 Partnership as a speaker pointed out. Others saw the E-9 partnership as an occasion to promote the empowerment of people, and enhance human capabilities, through education and learning, collectively and in each country.

One speaker argued that human capability, empowerment and agency and the role of knowledge and learning are central to achieving all SDGs and targets. In that sense, education targets and strategies need to consider the links with other goals and targets; and by the same token, education and learning components of all SDGs and targets have to be articulated and given sufficient attention.

The Minister of Education of Pakistan, the chair of the E-9 group since 2014, will pass the baton at the Dhaka meeting to the Minister of Education of Bangladesh, who will be the new chair of the group for the next two years.

The Minister of Education of Bangladesh, as the chair, now has the responsibility of taking initiatives in collaboration with E-9 partners and UNESCO to make E-9 an effective forum. He has the challenge, working with his partners, of upholding the role of knowledge, education and learning in all relevant SDGs and related targets through overall national, regional and global SDG 2030 coordination as well as SDG4 coordination.

The collective effort and determination of the E-9 partnership have the possibility of raising a strong voice for hope, human solidarity and unity, challenging the divisive and dystopian world view that seems to be emerging in the global north, especially, USA and Western Europe.

The writer is Professor Emeritus at BRAC University



The modalities or 'how' emphasise on adequate educational facilities and infrastructure, sufficient numbers of well-prepared and qualified teachers, and expanding scholarship support from developed countries to the least developed ones.

But what special role can the E-9 group play in ensuring education for all their people, most of whom are deprived of educational opportunities?

Referring to the uniqueness of the group and its role, speakers at the preparatory meeting noted that the