



ILLUSTRATION: SOJIB ROY

# Silencing THE PAST

LAMIA KARIM

At a talk by Pakistani-American Professor Sara Suleri, author of *Meatless Days*, I listened to an eloquent rendition of the role played by Pakistani feminists against the oppressive policies of the former military dictator Zia-ul-Haq. Dr Suleri beautifully outlined the repressions under his rule that relegated women to the four walls of the home, thus reaffirming their domestic role as central to an Islamic ideal.

As the awe-struck audience, mostly North Americans and students from South Asia, listened to her arguments, I felt deeply uncomfortable with what remained unsaid. When the session opened for Q&A, the audience showered praises on the work of Pakistani feminists. I did not question their brave work, but I knew that Dr Suleri had erased a key aspect of Pakistan's feminist history. Raising my hand, I said, "Dr Suleri, you presented skillfully the formidable challenges faced by Pakistani feminists in resisting Zia's repressive rule. But could you please enlighten us about the role played by Pakistani feminists during the 1971 war in former East Pakistan, now Bangladesh, when hundreds of thousands of Bengali and indigenous women were raped by the Pakistan military?" Dr Suleri, who had moments earlier basked in the warmth of her audience, faltered visibly, and paced back and forth on the podium acknowledging the validity of my question. After a few minutes, she said that it was a difficult time for feminists and requires further reflection.

As the audience dispersed, a young Pakistani male graduate student approached me. "What is this about rape you mentioned?" I explained that in 1971, West Pakistani feminists had not only failed to acknowledge the atrocities committed by the military in Bangladesh, but certain prominent Pakistani feminists attended the United Nations to deny any atrocities by the military. Taken aback, he said that such events were entirely absent from his education.

SEE PAGE S2

## আস্থা ও নিরাপদে এগিয়ে যাই লেনদেনের স্বাধীনতায়

দেশের মানুষের ভালোবাসা ও আস্থায় নগদ প্রতিদিন এগিয়ে যাচ্ছে নতুন সম্ভাবনার দিকে। নগদের প্রতিটি অর্জন ও সাফল্যের জন্য সকল গ্রাহক, পার্টনার ও শুভাকাঙ্ক্ষীকে জানাই আন্তরিক কৃতজ্ঞতা ও অভিনন্দন।



একদিনে **২,০০০ কোটি** টাকা  
লেনদেনের মাইলফলক

**বাংলাদেশ ব্যাংক**  
কর্তৃক নিয়োগকৃত প্রশাসক  
দ্বারা পরিচালিত হচ্ছে নগদ

**নগদের কেওয়াইসি**  
বাংলাদেশ ব্যাংকের নীতিমালা  
অনুযায়ী পরিচালিত হচ্ছে

**দেশজুড়ে সর্বনিম্ন**  
ক্যাস আউট চার্জ

**সবচেয়ে বেশি**  
সরকারি ভাতা ও উপবৃত্তি বিতরণ