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## South Asia least integrated after Africa Say experts, blame political decisions trumping economic logic

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Regional cooperation in South Asia remains in a precarious state, largely due to political decisions that often override economic logic, foreign policy experts said yesterday.

Despite widespread poverty and the looming threat of climate change, South Asia is the least integrated region in the world outside sub-Saharan Africa, they noted, urging honest conversations to improve people's lives.

The observations came on the final day of the two-day Bengal Delta Conference, organised by Dacca Institute of Research and Analytics (DAIRA) at the InterContinental Dhaka.

"SAARC is largely dormant, hampered by India-Pakistan tensions, contested borders, and fragile economies," said Michael Kugelman, senior fellow at the Asia Pacific Foundation, during a panel discussion as part of the conference.

Kugelman said Bangladesh is well positioned to contribute to regionalism because of its flexible foreign policy, reflected in its 2023 Indo-Pacific Outlook which echoed both US and Chinese priorities. Bangladesh also maintains strong ties with China, Japan, the EU, Russia, the UK, and multilateral lenders.

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**Tarique pledges safe Bangladesh for all ethnic groups**

BSS, Mymensingh



BNP acting chairman Tarique Rahman yesterday said an opportunity has emerged to uphold the fundamental rights of all individuals, including members of every ethnic group, in a dictatorship-free Bangladesh.

"Therefore, BNP is determined to build a safe Bangladesh with all ethnic groups," he said while speaking as the chief guest virtually at the national representative conference of the Bangladesh Jatiyatabadi Khudro Jatigoshti Dal at Tareque Memorial Auditorium of the Town Hall in the city.

Seeking support, cooperation and vote from the minority ethnic groups in the next general election, Tarique said if voted to power, BNP will create employment, ensure a working environment and establish a safe Bangladesh for all, regardless of their political allegiance, opinion, religion, caste and tribe.

"BNP's view is that no matter what language, tribe, religion or ideology, our first identity is that we are Bangladeshis. No matter where we live -- mountains, plains, cities, ports or remote villages -- every citizen of the state has equal rights."

Tarique mentioned that BNP has plans to protect the rights of small ethnic groups, take initiatives

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The broken and slippery staircase of Babubazar Bridge beside Sir Salimullah Medical College in Old Dhaka remains a daily hazard for thousands commuting between Dhaka and Keraniganj due to poor maintenance. The photo was taken yesterday.

PHOTO: RASHED SHUMON



## Inequality result of capitalist-type development

Says Serajul Islam Choudhury

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Dhaka University Professor Emeritus Serajul Islam Choudhury yesterday said the country's economic progress is a "capitalist type of development" which is behind inequality.

"We are seeing the 'visible images' of development, the reflections, and we are also being inspired by it. However, that development is a capitalist type of development which creates inequality, isolation, and destroys nature," he said.

He was speaking as the chief guest of the Bazlur Rahman Memorial Award 2024 ceremony, organised by the Liberation War Museum at its auditorium in the capital.

Prof Choudhury, one of the country's most revered intellectuals, said people had fought the Liberation War in 1971 to free themselves from oppression, achieve economic freedom, and end discrimination.

He stressed that the dream of liberation was a dream of social revolution "to establish collective and social ownership in place of individual ownership".

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## Evacuation of Gaza City 'undignified, risky'

Warns Red Cross as Israel steps up warnings, tightens siege

AGENCIES

The Red Cross yesterday warned that any Israeli efforts to evacuate Gaza City would put residents at risk, as Israel's military tightened its siege on the area ahead of a major planned offensive.

After nearly 23 months of devastating war, Israel is under increasing pressure to end its offensive in Gaza, where the United Nations has declared a famine and the majority of the population has been displaced at least once.

But despite the calls at home and abroad for an end to the war, the Israeli army is readying itself for an intensified operation to seize the Palestinian territory's largest urban centre and relocate its inhabitants.

It is impossible that a mass evacuation of Gaza City could ever be done in a way that is safe and dignified under the current conditions," International Committee of the Red Cross President Mirjana Spoljaric said in a statement.

The dire state of shelter, healthcare and nutrition in Gaza meant evacuation was "not only unfeasible but incomprehensible under the present circumstances".

An Israeli military statement on Friday declared Gaza City a "dangerous combat zone", adding that daily pauses in fighting intended to allow limited food deliveries would no longer continue.

The military did not call for the population

to leave immediately, but a day earlier COGAT, the Israeli defence ministry body that oversees civil affairs in the Palestinian territories, said it was undertaking preparations "for moving the population southward for their protection".

A journalist working for AFP on the northern edge of Gaza City reported he had been ordered to evacuate by the army, adding conditions had become increasingly difficult, with bombardments coming closer to his position and gunfire and explosions heard nearby.

The UN estimates that nearly a million people currently live in Gaza governorate, which includes Gaza City and its surroundings.

The territory's civil defence agency reported intense Israeli strikes in Gaza City's Sabra and Zeitoun districts, and an "escalation" in the Sheikh Radwan area north of the city centre.

On Friday, Philippe Lazzarini, head of the UN's Palestinian refugee agency UNRWA, warned that there were "nearly one million people between the city and the northern governorate who basically have nowhere to go, have no resources even to move".

On Friday, the United States said it would not allow Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas to travel to New York next month for a United Nations gathering of world leaders, where several US allies are set to recognise Palestine as a state.

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**BCL leader 'beaten, hacked' to death**

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Barishal

Police recovered body of a leader of banned Bangladesh Chhatra League yesterday morning near his home in Bhola town.

Md Saifullah Arif, 23, was beaten and hacked to death at some time between early hours of yesterday, said police and family members.

Arif was the vice-president of Bhola Sadar upazila unit of Chhatra League, said his father, Bashir Uddin.

He was absconding for a long time after the ouster of the Awami League government on August 5 last year. He returned home, in the town's Nabi Mosque Road area, two days ago to see his ailing father, sources said.

Bashir said Arif had dinner with his family late Friday night after which everyone went to sleep.

Around dawn, when Bashir went out for Fajr prayers, he found Arif lying motionless on a road near his home.

The assailants might have called Arif, taken him out of the house, and killed him, Bashir said.

On information, police

## From the classroom to a cobbler's stall

14yr-old son of Ruplal, killed in a mob beating, drops out of school to support family



S DILIP ROY

Joy once dreamed of studying and building a bright future for himself and his family. But on August 9, that dream was dashed forever.

For the son of slain cobbler Ruplal Robidas, of Ghonirampur Dangapara village in Rangpur's Taraganj upazila, education has become a luxury -- the struggle now is simply to survive.

Along with his father, 14-year-old Joy Robidas lost his childhood too.

A ninth-grader at Taraganj Government Model High School, he has now taken up his late father's profession.

On Friday morning, Joy was seen sitting on the small wooden stool, the same one his father once sat on, in Taraganj bazar, repairing shoes with his

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Bangladesh captain Litton Das and Saif Hassan celebrate their eight-wicket victory over the Netherlands in the first of three T20Is at the Sylhet International Cricket Stadium yesterday. Both Litton (54 off 29) and Saif (36 off 19) stayed unbeaten, but the winning foundation was laid by pacer Taskin Ahmed's four wickets off 28 balls, with Saif also contributing with two key top-order dismissals, after the hosts chose to field.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED



Late Alhaj Giashuddin Ahmed

Bismillahir Rahmanir Rahim

## 15th Death Anniversary

Today is the 15th death anniversary of Late Alhaj Giashuddin Ahmed. On this day of remembrance, we the family members, directors, officers and employees of Popular Jute Exchange Limited as well as other sister concerns fondly recall the memories of his industrious & benevolent life, and pray for the salvation and eternal peace for his departed soul.



POPULAR JUTE EXCHANGE LIMITED

1, Tolaram Road, Narayanganj, Bangladesh.