

Spurious drugs The menace must be eliminated

THE news that spurious drugs worth hundreds of crores of taka enter our market on a regular basis is indeed disturbing. Apart from being a gross violation of the law, it poses a serious threat to public health.

The local drug producers have claimed that they meet 96 per cent of our total requirements. So it is not clear how drugs coming from abroad can have such a big market in Bangladesh.

The drug administration has to dig deep into the matter to know what is really happening. It has chalked out a plan to counter the spurious drug trade. To begin with, the imported drugs will be put under pre-customs inspection in the ports.

The report says spurious drugs are coming from the neighbouring countries. The ports are the entry points where lack of inspection allows the huge load of drugs to reach their destinations. So the illegal business is thriving on poor enforcement of the law.

Matters have been made worse by the fact that thousands of unlicensed drug shops are operating in different places. The drug administration should look into such irregularities if it wants to add the element of transparency to marketing and sale of drugs.

The law appears to have become too brittle a thing in the drug business. Many drug shops in the city are selling spurious and unregistered drugs under the nose of the law enforcers. If that can happen in the city, it is not hard to imagine what is going on in other places.

Spurious drugs are as much a threat to public health as to the local drug manufacturing industry. The drug administration has chosen the right course of action, but it must now be seen that the action plan is implemented with a sense of urgency. The crackdown on the illegal trade must be vigorous and unrelenting.

Poaching in the Sundarbans

We must do more to protect our natural heritage

THE poaching of over 500 deer in the Sundarbans during the course of last month's Rash Mela is only the latest illustration of how little we in this country seem to value our nation's natural heritage. Last week this paper reported on the trapping and selling of migratory birds that make Bangladesh their home in winter and only last month came the distressing story of a wild elephant that had been slaughtered in a protected forest reserve in the Chittagong hill tracts.

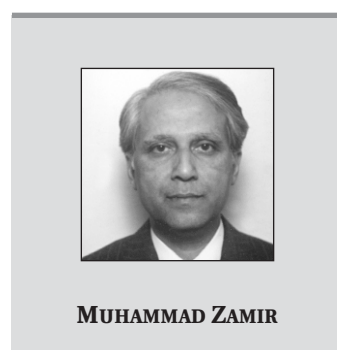
The latest outrage was perpetrated last month under the cover of the annual Rash Mela festival when crowds of pilgrims converged on the forest. The forest department was apparently unable to check the thousands of boats entering the forest in the name of carrying pilgrims to the festival site and hordes of poachers took advantage of this situation to plunder the forest for game all week long.

It is true that the annual convergence of devotees on the remote islands of the Sundarbans makes the tracking of poachers during the festival difficult for the forest department authorities. Nevertheless, the slaughter was so widespread and open that it beggars credibility that the authorities were powerless to put a stop to it or at the very least to take steps to contain the plundering.

Even more distressing than the forest department's apparent fecklessness was the utter lack of moderation and decency shown by the poachers. By all accounts the week-long festival was marred by what amounted to an orgy of butchery with deer being trapped, skinned, and eaten in massive quantities. According to one account, the poachers gorged themselves on nothing but fresh venison all week long.

The forest department must improve its policing of our natural heritage and take strong measures to counter the poaching that runs rampant. And as a nation we need to raise awareness of the value of conservation so that people understand that it is unacceptable to continue to plunder our steadily dwindling wildlife in this shameful manner.

Global society and knowledge-driven education



MUHAMMAD ZAMIR

IN the contemporary era, the word 'global' has become a favourite catch-word with policy makers, politicians and academics in their references to matters pertaining to global economy, global ecology and global climate. The concepts of sustainable development, global democratic polity or the creation of global institutions -- all try to focus on issues that affect the interests and welfare of people on a global scale. In doing so, they perceive global society as a construct and a phenomenon.

There is overall agreement that various historical transformations are taking place and that in their own way these steps are creating their own dynamics in the process of evolution of the social framework. There is consensus that this inter-action is leading to divergence as well as convergence amid all the changes. The principle of obtaining shared knowledge and the learning process itself, while augmenting mutual growth and understanding, are also creating distinctions. This is partially because global society is not always promoting equitable chances and opportunities for human welfare and there is absence of orderly interaction and sustained cooperation to reduce uncertainties and inconveniences at the global level.

The combination of increased computing power, diminishing prices

of hardware, improvement of wireless and satellite technologies and reduced telecommunications cost have all but removed the space and time barriers to information access and exchange. This in turn blurs realities and gives the impression that we are all living in a global village. Consequently, more often than not, we are faced with the prospect of losing our individual identities and unique traditions, laws, customs, arts, literature, language and heritage. This has led to a debate as to

institutions have an important role to play in this regard. They have to take advantage of the opportunities offered by the new information and communications technologies. Failure to do so will mean the widening of the digital divide that is facing most of the developing countries, particularly the low-income countries.

Success can probably be best achieved by expanding tertiary education coverage in a sustainable manner, addressing inequalities of

education with social sciences and humanities as well as vice versa. Teachers preferably should also encourage students not to specialise only in narrow areas but have a broad-based knowledge-widening education. This kind of education will accommodate inter-disciplinary approaches, integrate liberal arts with professional studies, and promote learning communities that will then show intellectual vitality.

Developing countries like

direct influence on national productivity, which largely determines living standards and a country's ability to compete in the global economy.

It is evident from the examples of Malaysia, Thailand, Singapore and South Korea that tertiary education institutions have supported knowledge-driven economic growth strategies and poverty reduction by (a) training a qualified and adaptable labour force, including high level scientists, professionals, doctors,

tertiary education institutions in curriculum design and educational research.

There is another area which needs careful examination and support. We have to remember that most of the scientific, technical and technological innovations are the products of basic and applied research undertaken in universities. Unfortunately, due to serious resource constraint in the public Universities and lack of serious interest in private Universities, little is being accomplished in this area.

It would be worthwhile to realise that if Bangladesh, both rural and urban, is going to be part of the global society, we have to get our act together and not always be guided by just the profit motive.

It is true that we need specialists in Business Administration, Management, Information Technology and Law, but we also require a rounded education. Pluralistic and democratic societies depend on research and analysis that are fostered through social sciences and humanities programmes.

I believe that we need a comprehensive approach in the development of the education sector. There has to be a balanced distribution of budgetary resources to ensure that developing countries like Bangladesh invest appropriately in all branches of education.

This issue needs to be addressed in a bi-partisan manner. Otherwise, it will reduce the ability of the country to compete effectively in global and regional competition. It will also lead to decline in the quality of life and a deterioration in terms of social cohesion. It will also make it that much more difficult for us to attain sustainable transformation and growth, as part of the global village.

Muhammad Zamir is a former Secretary and Ambassador.

POST BREAKFAST

We need a comprehensive approach in the development of the education sector. There has to be a balanced distribution of budgetary resources to ensure that developing countries like Bangladesh invest appropriately in all branches of education. This issue needs to be addressed in a bi-partisan manner. Otherwise, it will reduce the ability of the country to compete effectively in global and regional competition.

the need for controlling, managing and implementing the information technology enhanced opportunities by balancing the socio-political and socio-economic changes through a dynamic, inclusive and productive education mechanism by planners as well as decision makers.

The World Bank in one of its recent publications entitled 'Constructing Knowledge Societies', 2002, has correctly recognised that among the most critical dimensions of change are the convergent impacts of globalisation, the increasing impacts of knowledge as a main driver of growth and the information and communication revolution.

Knowledge based education has now become central to the creation of the intellectual capacity on which knowledge production and utilisation depend. We have to promote lifelong-learning practices and update knowledge and skills if we are to retain competitive advantage. Traditional

access and outcomes and introducing greater flexibility in governance structures and management practices.

At this point is raised the question as to what should be the focus in efforts to reform education. Should it be just basic education in the poorest countries as opposed to equal importance being attached to investment in advanced human capital and tertiary education systems?

Various seminars and workshops convened in the recent past have more or less generally agreed that there is need for a balanced and comprehensive view of education as a holistic system, that includes not only the human capital contribution of basic education, but also the critical humanistic and social capital building dimensions of tertiary education. This recognition is important particularly for low-income and developing countries like Bangladesh.

In this context it would be advisable to integrate professional and technical

Bangladesh have to understand that social and economic progress is achieved principally through the advancement and application of knowledge and that we are at risk of being further marginalised in a highly competitive world economy because our tertiary education systems are not adequately prepared to capitalise on the creation and use of knowledge. This potential downturn can be avoided if the state puts in place an enabling framework that encourages tertiary education institutions not only to be more innovative and more responsive to the needs of a globally competitive knowledge economy but also to the changing labour market requirements for advanced human capital. The classical example is India and how it has made inroads into the world market for information technology.

If we look around South East Asia and the Far East, we will notice how tertiary education has exercised a

technicians, teachers in basic and secondary education, and future government, civil service and business leaders, (b) generating new knowledge, and (c) building the capacity to access existing stores of global knowledge and to adapt that knowledge to local use.

The United Nations Millennium Development Goals (MDG's) for education included universal enrolment in primary education and elimination of gender disparities in primary and secondary education. These are goals which the present Bangladesh Government and the previous Administration have followed with great sincerity. There have been important strides forward. The aspect that however seems to have been overlooked was the need for creating a suitable education support system. Not sufficient stress appears to have been given to training of teachers and school principals and the involvement of specialists from

Baghdad blues



IKRAM SEHGAL
writes from Karachi

GEORGE W Bush Senior lost to Bill Clinton on the election slogan "it's the economy, stupid!" despite his great success in the relatively clean Gulf War-I to oust Saddam Hussein from Kuwait. Though enough indicators point to the US economy booming next year, the irony is that George W Bush Junior's "military success" in Iraq could be the cause of his downfall in Presidential elections 2004. The slogan this time may well be "it's Iraq, stupid!".

Heavily populated by the Kurds, Iraq's north is relatively peaceful. Despite simmering resentment against the US occupation, Basra area being held by British troops and with factional infighting among the Shias, violence was relatively muted in the south east with its disproportionate Shia community until Wednesday's suicide bomber attack on Italian police base in Nassiriya which killed at least 25. Within the Sunni triangle, which generally encompasses Baghdad, Fallujah and Tikrit there is a "war" after the "war", escalation force-multiplied with the downing of two US helicopters by shoulder-fired ground to air missiles.

The Soviet Union dominated the battlefield in Afghanistan till the force-multiplier induction of US-supplied Stinger missiles to the Mujahideen,

severely restricting the movement of Soviet troops on the ground and in the air. As any counter-guerilla expert will testify, the lack of air dominance, even though offset to some extent by both armed and reconnaissance UAVs, hampers counter-guerilla activity. To maintain the tempo of counter-guerilla operations, the US will have to take inordinate number of casualties relative to what they are suffering now.

In the north there is an ethnic fault line between the majority Kurds and

Division). These Divisions are composite forces with elements of National Guard, Reserves and additional heavy armed helicopter support to that already integral to the Divisions. Compared to the 1st Armoured, the 4th Infantry is a fully digitised formation and 82nd Airborne is highly mobile. The troops are overstretched on the ground and there is a requirement for better quality, better training, better intelligence, more translators, faster delivery of key

depends upon major ground movement on up-armoured HUMVEES, tanks being too heavy in many areas and the Bradley Infantry Fighting Vehicle (IFV) having limitations. In the case of 4th Armoured, they have unique self-protection with a sophisticated digital network with video displays in its command centers and vehicles that give precise map locations, this is particularly helpful in cities and towns like Tikrit, Baqubas and Samara. With

results, mortar attacks were added in September. There will be improvement in attacker tactics skill and intelligence over time, with fewer but better planned attacks with more use of foreign fighters and experienced cadres.

The US is engaged in a massive drive to recruit Iraqis "cleansed" of Baath Party links to the Border Police, the Iraqi Police and the Iraqi Civil Defence Corps (ICDC). In fact the first Iraqi Army Battalion with 49 officers and 649

The US has felt a need to increase the number of US Military Police (MPs), they are excellent for training Iraqis and for operations within the urban areas. Better HUMINT is a dire necessity as well as reaction thereof, the US objective is to cut reaction time down to two hours from receiving information to launching a raid. Because of lack of translators and analysts, the material gathered cannot be coped with. There are increases in Iraqi walk-in volunteers, others seek payment or influence, the numbers will increase manifold if Saddam is captured. Ramadan has led to step-up in attacks, US troops are being educated sensitivity to Ramadan, with profile of their actions suitably altered to local customs and traditions.

The US is fighting a losing battle for the hearts and minds of the populace. Because of the guerrilla attacks the UN and ICRC staff have been evacuated to Cyprus. Oil pipelines have been sabotaged in the north affecting the cash flows. Certainly dollars are better than bullets, the US\$ 87 billion approved by US Congress will go a long way in alleviating the sufferings of the Iraqi people. However, cynics point to administration-favourite companies like Halliburton, Bechtel, etc, who will maximise their profits and do little on the ground. Certainly a lot of effort has gone in to successfully bringing electricity, gas, water, sewerage, transportation, telecommunication and medical facilities on line. The radio, TV and press facilities are far better but any number of reasons can lead to crises not planned for. Despite all the good work done to restore Iraq to normalcy, the public perception of "Baghdad Blues" remains.

Ikram Sehgal, a former Major of Pakistan Army, is a political analyst and columnist.

AS I SEE IT

Certainly a lot of effort has gone in to successfully bringing electricity, gas, water, sewerage, transportation, telecommunication and medical facilities on line. The radio, TV and press facilities are far better but any number of reasons can lead to crises not planned for... The public perception of "Baghdad blues" remains.

the Sunni Arabs. While the Kurds are generally peaceful, there is likely problem about the return of "Kurdish property" from Sunnis. Turkey's opting out of sending troops has eased tension in Kurdish areas about their imminent presence. In the south the divide is more acute between the Shia majority and the former ruling Sunnis. The Sunnis see a major power shift to the Shias and the Kurds, as is apparent from the ethnic composition of the Iraqi Governing Council where the Sunni minority reflect their approximate population size.

The major areas of conflict are 1/3rd Sunni portion of Mosul and the towns of Huwayjat, Baiji, Tikrit, Ar Dawa, Samarra, Balad (south of Baghdad), Mansur (covered by the 4th Infantry Division), with Baghdad and the Green Zone west to Fallujah (covered by the 1st Armoured Division) and south Baghdad (covered by 82nd Airborne

equipment and quick availability of funding for civilian support services. While the rank and file are not averse to the mission or the risks inherent, they feel they have been deployed too long and too often. This could lead to less and less re-enlistment, putting added strain on future deployment. At the same time National Guard units and reserves feel they do not get equal treatment as do the regulars in living quarters, protection or equipment.

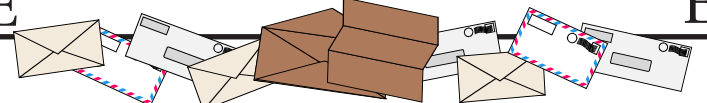
The major problem before the helicopter downing was from IEDs (improvised explosive devices), almost 50 per cent are usually detected. Mortars have been used but not effectively, they have been traced out by radars and UAVs. Even though the raids conducted by US troops have over a 70 per cent success rate, the rocket attack on the Baghdad hotel was an example of stand-off attack which may escalate in the near future. The US

Human Intelligence (HUMINT) to back it up, this is extremely useful. UAVs are integrated in 4th Armoured at the Brigade level but are used mostly at night. Instead of light forces as advised by some military experts, the correct quantum is the right partnership and force mix.

In contrast to US claims that foreign attackers are usually behind the attacks on US forces, 70-80 per cent of those captured are criminals freed by Saddam Hussein before his regime collapsed, they are paid US\$ 150 to US\$ 500. Foreigners are infiltrating through Mosul and the Iranian border, but there is no evidence of Al-Qaeda action, even Al-Ansar activity cannot be confirmed, most attackers are not even truly Islamist. At first the attackers resorted to direct fire but not able to cope with US night vision devices and thermal sights, they turned to RPGs. In August they shifted to IEDs with better

other ranks (ORs) is now coming on line, divided into four companies of six officers and 112 ORs each and a HQs staff of 17 officers and 201 ORs. The major coalition mistake made was the disbanding of the Iraqi Army, a better modus operandi would have been to concentrate them in their peace locations to carry out detailed screening. A subsistence pay and allowance would have been enough to keep them on line during the verification process, less than 30 per cent were dedicated Saddam-ites. The new Iraqi Army, would then be engaging in counter-guerilla operations instead of 450,000 potential guerillas created overnight. This policy can be reversed but probably will not be because it would confirm the "strategic error". Still there must be a sustained outreach effort to bring former Senior Iraqi Army officers into local government.

TO THE EDITOR TO THE EDITOR TO THE EDITOR TO THE EDITOR TO THE EDITOR



Letters will only be considered if they carry the writer's full name, address and telephone number (if any). The identity of the writers will be protected. Letters must be limited to 300 words. All letters will be subject to editing.

Cricket by aristocrats and the tokais

Watching the 2nd ODI from the VIP box the other day, I was bemused by one well-known star batsman of yesteryears when he said "...in our days cricket was played by boys who came from good and well to do families where character was instilled by their traditional and affluent family background. Today our team consists of tokais or street urchins. They can reach a certain level of excellence and then no more as their upbringing and family background soon lay bare their true mentality."

Our 10th position is well understood and appreciated. But when one compares our performance to that achieved by the 9th position holder we are made to think whether we are at all fit to be in that list of ten.

When four top order batsmen fall for just seven runs, one is compelled to think something is wrong. Either they do not understand the coach and

pretend to understand, or the coach is unable to make them understand what he wants them to do.

In the last Test match in Chittagong, when we had two days in hand and there was no way to reach that mammoth total, we could prove a point to the world by simply playing the overs and the remaining sessions. There was no need to prove that they "can" hook, drive and cut and that too into the hands of the waiting slip cordon. They should have been told to defend and play out the sessions for the sake of their country. The recent U-19's 34 runs debacle in Pakistan indicate what the future holds for us. **Md. Mahmoodul Haque**
Gulshan 2, Dhaka

South Asia: Can it become a super power?

Since the British India got partitioned in 1947, political stability had not returned to this vast and rich subcontinent inhabited by more than one and a half billion people (a huge

market by any criterion). The subcontinent is well protected by nature -- the Himalayas in the North, the Khyber Pass in the West, and the Indian Ocean and the Arabian Sea in the South.

Sensing that this has the potential to become a super power one day, a ploy has been on to create internal dissension and weaken its unity. If you ask if the SAARC will last, political leaders of this region keep mum on the issue. The same is the case with the OIC. Mahathir's lament is echoing around the globe.

How to get out of this colonised stupor? The original Pakistan lasted for only one generation -- creating Bangladesh in 1971. Currently Pakistan continues to struggle to find political stability in a feudal environment (zamindari system). Nepal in the sub-Himalayan range is in trouble with the Maoist creed (vs. monarchy). In the South, Sri Lanka is bleeding for a generation. And, in over crowded Bangladesh, good politics is a

mirage. Further to the east, NE India is in turmoil, with various tribal communities having their own dreams. Even Chittagong in Bangladesh is passing through a turbulent phase.

The islands of the Indian Ocean are also drawing attention. Diego Garcia is too far south from the main continent to suit US' international diplomacy. Burma and Afghanistan also cannot settle down to peaceful living. The latter (as a corridor) has now been occupied by the United States. The US is interested in a naval base in the Bay of Bengal (the Russians came earlier into the Andamans). Since India has switched camp, China's Himalayan diplomacy is being watched with interest by analysts.

The Europe and the West are declining economically and the US is being beaten militarily by guerrilla warriors of the Muslim world. The prevailing situation is weakening Japan and N Korea too, due to their economies' integration with that of

the US. Singapore is in the slow lane, and Russia cannot make its presence felt as a super power (internally, its economy is gloomy, but not much news is coming out) anymore.

The US struck when the iron was hot, and occupied Iraq, the most powerful Muslim country defying the US (after having used Saddam for ten year against oil-rich Iran). Iraq is also the oldest civilisation of the world and it has second largest oil reserve in the world. The CIS is full of natural energy resources. Hence, Iran is once again the target of the powerful West who wish to use it as a second corridor to move into the land locked CISs lying up the north.

India being a vast territory with a billion population, is not subject to the same political sagueros as the small states around her. But question remains whether she is playing the right role as a big brother in South Asia. If India plays its cards right, South Asians can comfortably close ranks to emerge as the next super power of the

world. A Mawaz Dhaka

Diarrhoea outbreak not so dire

This is for your kind information that some parts of the news about the outbreak of diarrhoea (published on 4-11-2003 in page 8 of The Daily Star) has attracted the notice of the undersigned. The supply of cholera saline to different hospitals of Gaibandha district is adequate. The undersigned is misquoted in the news as saying "This is too scanty to the need."

Fact is, we are getting regular supply of IV Saline and anti diarrhoea drugs from the DG (Health) and Divisional Director (Health), Rajshahi. We supply the same to the district and Upazilla hospitals regularly. There is no scarcity of IV saline and anti-diarrhoea drugs in this district at present. All concerned, including the media, should play a positive roll

create awareness among the people. Dr. Md Abdul Kuddus Civils Surgeon, Gaibandha

Rubbed beyond recognition

I am no cynic. In fact, I have always been a big cricket fan all my life. Although I played a little of it, my interest for the game knows no bounds. I remember that in the early 60s, in my whole area, there were only two radios (in the heart of Dhaka city). I used to stand outside one such house whose owner was gracious enough to keep his window open to let us listen to the commentary. I stayed glued for hours forgetting everything else.

Anyway, my joys knew no bounds when Bangladesh started representing itself in world cricket, although it has never been a pleasant experience. The granting of test status was always debatable and done under dubious circumstances. But I was always felt proud and thought that, at least in one game, Bangladeshis would be

rubbing their shoulders with the top nations. Alas! What a rubbing it has been? Indeed we have been rubbed beyond recognition.

Now, with a heavy heart, I renounce all my allegiance to Bangladesh cricket and let us face it that we are not capable of doing any better. Hence, the only logical thing to do is to bury it. I urge upon the authorities to stop all international cricket matches and save millions of dollars of this poor nation where some people are virtually starving. We just can't afford any more of this cruel joke rubbing the nation. We have had humiliation aplenty. Let's call a spade a spade and close this chapter; send the coach home and continue with whatever domestic cricket we can play. At least no Andrew Miller is going to make constant fun of us. **Ahmad Kamal**
Abu Dhabi, UAE