Apathy towards the Golden Egg

Synthetic materials have long been threatening our economic mainstay - jute - with as much as extinction. This fear has been standard in school and college texts and every literate man is aware of it. But jute has nevertheless ticked along dulling our fears into a sense of indifference. Some spurious developments in the moneychurning business, such as manpower export and resultant home remittances from abroad and the cheap-labour selling garments boom, have helped obliterate our view as to how golden a crop was our golden fibre and how it had seen us through when all of our fantastic wealth builders - such as textiles and fragrant rice, ivory, gold and silver work - had been ruined by colonialism.

Which is why we were jolted into realisation of the synthetic threat by the text-book apprehensions just jumping out of the pages in the shape of hard-fact news : 50 looms of the Raipur Qaumi Jute Mills in Serajganj have been closed down leading to retrenchment of about 5,000 workers - and stocks of jute product are piling up beyond the crore-Taka value with little prospect of their finding a good market. The main reason for this horrible situation in the land of jute has been attributed to the wide use of synthetic substitutes of jute - both internally and internationally.

If at all jute has to be cultivated and processed and manufactured as a worthwhile economic activity — the first thing that the government must ensure is a healthy and big enough domestic market for jute products which would automatically use up the bulk of raw jute domestically. It is very easy for the government to do that. One, as a matter of unfailing policy, it must meet all of its fabric requirements with textiles made of mixture of jute. Two, it must impose a strict ban on the production of polythene and all other polymer-based sheet of spread, covering and packaging - which is spelling destruction not only to jute but to agriculture in general.

Government is the biggest buyer of textiles and other materials derivable from jute. If government is keen enough, it can set a trend of loving jute. Synthetic would cease to be a threat to jute if only the government is serious enough about the matter. The superiority of jute bagging has bound almost eternally the rice exporting countries to jute. There are other areas where jute is not quite substitutable. Then why should we see the grower famish and die, the jute worker jobless and the nation's economy literally pawned to the worst usurers in the world?

Why is government so apathetic to this golden duck that has always laid solid sure golden eggs without fail? That's a question worth a prize to be valued in 'orbuds' of Taka.

Putting the Endless Quarry to Better Use

It's decidedly a man's world. Women are discriminated against in a thousand forms for the simple reason of being born as such. They were as if banned from excelling at anything and even from having a soul. The modern world is different from the world past substantially because there has been a change in the society's attitude towards women. But opportunities remain so unequal and a fair competition so distant a possibility that life in brasstack terms continues to be a bounteous trove whose latch yields only to the twisting of a male hand. Still largely kept out of endeavouring to fulfil oneself in all the avenues and possibilities of life such as the male is congenitally privy to, the woman is an inexhaustible quarry exploited to the detriment of a just and wholesome society. If the donkey has been the proverbial beast of burden, the woman has been the butt of all of the male weaknesses - his lust and langour, domineering and dependence, both emotional and physical.

The situation of women in the Bengali society - unlike, say among the Garos - has not been any different although there are remnants here and there of women power holding sway not aeons of years ago. Women, exploited as they are without an exception - and persecuted without let-up work more hours, move more weight, walk more kilometres, suffer more indignity and get no payment for any or all of their forced exertions. That the problem is being seen in such a light is directly the product of modern times. And as in the advanced nations, the growing awareness of the unjust and unhealthful gender gap is exciting some people to go for effecting changes in the workaday inequalities between the two. Along this line of recent developments the foremost has been the work of some of the NGOs.

As a result old skills in very traditional crafts have been revived and newer skills taught and instilled in a very broad stratum of our women. But this skilled womanpower — crossing the first hurdle to becoming self-supporting, independent individuals contributing effectively to the good of their families in particular and of the society in general - are facing more formidable ones created by the realities of a man's world. In matters of leadership, organisation and financing the women entrepreneurs are finding it very hard to pop up even by inches. In their new and advanced situation they are again been reduced to an endless quarry for exploitation - whether in roadbuilding work or in the garment factories.

The Micro-Industries Development Assistance Society - MIDAS - has recently held a very timely forum to bring the above developments and problems to focus. They have drawn up a very useful set of recommendations one of which stresses the need for giving technical education to women entrepreneurs particularly in the area of marketing. We welcome the efforts of the society and hope that such enlightened activity would soon help us find innovators and leaders of industry among our women who have so gloriously sustained our society along the vicissitudes of time spanning tens of millennia.

Human Rights No Longer a Private Matter

NTERNATIONAL indignation is chipping away at the sacrosanct concept of absolute national sovereignty, a shield for some of the world's most flagrant human rights abuses.

Debates at the United Nations General Assembly, Security Council and legal affairs committee have been marked by calls for the UN to play a more active international role in domestic human rights issues. The Austrian foreign affairs minister has even suggested a "white helmet" investigating force, the human rights parallel of the blue-helmetted UN peacekeepers.

Opponents of any such shift cite the UN Charter as evidence that the international body has no role in domestic human rights affairs. Article '2 of the Charter states: "Nothing contained in the present Charter shall authorize the United Nations to intervene in matters which are essentially within the domestic jurisdiction of any state or shall require the members to submit such matter to settlement under the present Charter..."

Some governments among them China, Myanmar (formerly Burma) and India are resisting calls for greater UN involvement in human rights issues as an intrusion into their internal affairs.

But UN Secretary-General Javier Perez de Cuellar has set the tone for new thinking in his annual report to the 46th UN General Assembly: "It is now increasingly felt," he said, "that the principle of noninterference with the essential domestic jurisdiction of states cannot be regarded as a protective barrier behind which human rights could be massively or systematically violated with impunity."

Because the protection of human rights "has now become

HERE is growing awareness of the fact that well functioning telecommunications is an essential prerequisite for socioeconomic development. The telecommunication sectors of most western European countries are being restructured along the lines of the "Green Paper on the development of the common market for telecommunications services and equipment" issued by the Commission of the European Community in 1987 to respond better to the ever increasing demand for more and more sophisticated telecommunication services.

The Central and Eastern European countries in transition suffer, generally speaking from very poor telecommunication services. For example, whereas the average telephone density in the OECD countries is around 40 main lines/inhabitant, the Central and Eastern European countries have an average telephone density of only some 10 main lines/inhabitant. The investment required to achieve today's OECD countries' average telephone density in Central and Eastern Europe in the year 2000 has been estimated to US\$ 60 billion -US\$ 120 billion.

To attract such huge amounts the countries concerned must create a more favourable investment climate, which will require changes in current telecommunication policies and restructuring of the sector and the development of new financial strategies. To meet the challenging needs of telecommunications development in a competitive market economy, they must also improve productivity and efficiency of the organizations concerned. This will require considerable efforts in development of human resources which often could be done cost-effectively through regional or international cooper-

The European Telecommunication Development Conference (EU-RDC) will take place in Prague from today,

Ted Morello writes from the United Nations, New York

The days may be ending when human rights abuses were considered an internal matter, beyond the reach of international bodies. At its recent summit in Zimbabwe, the Commonwealth delved more than ever before into the human rights records of its members. And there are now rumblings at the United Nations that the age-old protocol of turning a blind eye to so-called "internal affairs" of member states, may be fading.

one of the keystones in the Secretary-General emphasised arch of peace," Perez de Cuellar suggested a more aggressive enforcement role for the UN. As the "last resort." he said, it might be necessary beyond what was regarded as permissible under traditional international law.

University in France, the non-intervention may be over-

the point: "We are clearly witnessing what is probably an irresistible shift in public attitude toward the belief that defence of the oppressed in to establish a UN presence the name of morality should prevail over frontiers and legal documents."

Chapter 7 of the UN in a speech at Bourdeaux Charter says the principle of



ridden by "any threat to peace, breach of peace or act of aggression." That was the provision invoked by the United States-led coalition to legalise its military action against Iraq after the invasion of Kuwait.

Now the narrow interpretation of Chapter 7 is being challenged. Austrian Foreign Minister Alois Mock told the Assembly that the Conference for Security and Cooperation in Europe' (CSCE) had already established the principle that safeguarding human rights and fundamental freedoms "cannot be rejected as interference in internal affairs of another

He said the UN should have the authority to react quickly to serious human rights abuses and to prevent their escalation: "I propose that the (UN) Commission on Human Rights adopt an emergency procedure based on a permanent register of experts who could be called the White Helmets and would be at the disposal of the commission.

Mock proposed that the White Helmets be used as

 Upon learning of gross and massive human rights violations, the Bureau of the Commission on Human Rights would send a team of White Helmets as quickly as possible to investigate within the country where the alleged violations had taken place.

• The team would report to the Bureau, listing conclusions and recommendations.

* The report and comments of the government concerned would be placed on the agenda of the next session of the human rights commi-

ssion, which would decide on follow-up action. Mock said: "The question of human rights and fundamental freedoms has become essentially international. To express concern in the area of human rights constitutes an important and legitimate element of international dialogue."

Netherlands Foreign Minister Hans van der Brock made similar comments before the Security Council: 'The days when countries could credibly claim that their human rights record was a strictly internal affair are definitely over. The history of the United Nations has confirmed the legitimacy of the contrary view. The world cannot sit idly

by when one of the member states of the United Nations terrorizes its own people." The Dutch foreign minister said the UN had already setting a precedent by providing safe haven and a corps of UN civil guards to protect Iraqi Kurds fleeing the forces of Saddam

He also recalled how the **Economic Community of West** African States mustered a peacekeeping force during the civil war in Liberia. Van der Brock went on to recommend that the UN World Conference on Human Rights scheduled for Berlin next year should concentrate on 'extending the

scope of mechanisms for reviewing compliance" with

human rights agreements. Foreign Minister Jorge Carlos Fonseca of Cape Verde said: "What is more alarming is that the United Nations witnesses all these crimes but is incapable of taking measures to save lives and protect the defenseless."

Czechoslovakian deputy prime minister Jiri Dienstbier joined the debate: "It is not possible to argue principles of sovereignty and non-interference when the matter at issue is that of preventing ruthless, intentional and mass violations of human rights and free-

Dienstbier went so far as to say UN forces could be used in a preemptive way against "obvious preparations for aggressive acts."

But there is also a powerful counterforce against any attempt to bring UN pressure to bear on rights issues. Indian Foreign Minister Madhavsingh Solanki warned the Assembly , that 'any outside intervention in a (UN) member country on humanitarian grounds constitutes an abridgement of national sovereignty and is, therefore, fraught with serious implications." The New Delhi government has been severely criticised by international human rights organisations for its suppression of the secessionist movement in its border province of Kashmir.

China's foreign minister Qian Qichen accused some countries of perpetuating the Cold War by using allegations of human rights violations as an excuse for "interfering in the affairs which are basically within the jurisdiction of the - GEMINI NEWS

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Well-functioning Telecommunications Essential Prerequisite for Development

19-November to 23 November. It is expected that this conference will contribute to a coordinated harmonious development of telecommunications for the whole region and to finding ways of accelerating the development in the countries in Central and Eastern Europe in transition.

Thus the restructuring of the telecommunication sectors of these countries as well as the development and harmonization of their networks will be discussed. "Investment considerations" is another point on the agenda and the conference will also attempt to develop strategies for international cooperation and better define the roles of the various organizations and development

partners involved. The Central and Eastern European (C&E) countries, as well as Cyprus, Greece, Portugal, Turkey and recently, Sweden participate in a UNDP/ITU project called "European Regional Telecommunication Development' (EUROTELDEV).

This is one of the existing mechanisms for cooperation in the C&E European region and the conference will explore ways of developing this cooperative network further.

A Task Force composed of representatives of the E&C European countries, of the Commission of European Economic Community (ECE), the European Free Trade Association (EFTA), the World Bank and the Bank of Reconstruction and Development (BERD) has been established by the ITU to assist in the preparation of the Conference. Representatives of potential development partners in industrialized countries in other regions of the world are invited to participate in this Task Force as ob-

The European Regional Telecommunication Development Conference (EU-RDC), begins in Prague today, Nov 19, to continue up to Nov 23.

Participation: The Conferences are open to all parties concerned, including the private sector, in order to ensure transparency and complementarity. Thus, the Development Conferences are to be attended by high-level representatives of governments, of the private sector as well as of bilateral and multilateral financing and developing agencies. In regional Development Conferences, the ITU members from other regions than the one concerned participate as observers, free of charge whereas private sector representatives pay participation fees.

Background: The Plentpotentiary Conference of the ITU (Nice, 1989), decided to create the Telecommunication Development Bureau (BDT) on equal footing with the other permanent organs of the Union (CCITT, CCIR and IFRB). The Constitution stipulates that the BDT shall "work through Regional and World Telecommunication Development Conferences" which are to be organized by the ITU at a rate of one Regional Development Conference for each region and one World Development Conserence between two consecutive Plenipotentiary Conferences.

These conferences will have

a dual role to play-1) To serve as fora for discussions and considerations of topics, programmes and projects relevant to telecommunication development and hence, contribute to a coordinate harmonized development of telecommunications: Thus,

most of the games of the last

they should be used for exchange of experience and information on telecommunication development programmes with a view to ensuring that these programmes are effectively coordinated and avoiding duplication of efforts and dis-

persion of resources. To this end they should provide opportunities for financial agencies and other multilateral and bilateral development partners to inform about their programmes as well as of conditions and procedures applicable for submission of requests for assistance. They should also set goals for world and re-

gional telecommunication de-

velopment and provide a framework for consideration of relevant matters, such as, policy, regulatory, organizational, operational and financing is-2) To provide guidance to

the BDT and supervise its activities: For this purpose, the periodic world and regional development conferences are to define the scope of the activities and the programme of work of the BDT, to examine its report and to evaluate its work over a given period. The BDT is to provide the necessary support for the preparation, organization and followup of these conferences.

As the ITU is now requested to have a catalytic and coordinating role in technical cooperation the conferences should also provide information that helps other multilateral and bilateral development

partners channelling resources to where they are most needed in a coordinated way. The conferences may create

"Development Study Groups" to study specific issues and/or to produce guidelines and manuals or other tools in fields of relevance to telecommunications development in the concerned region or worldwide. In future, it is essential that the Development Conferences' decisions and recommendations, as well as the follow-up of these, are based on the work of such "Development Study Groups" These Study Groups should have specific terms of refererices and should be created for a limited period of time. Task forces of "Development Working Groups" could also be set up on specific questions to complement the work of the Study Groups with the assistance of the ITU and other development partners.

The African Telecommunication Development Conference (Harare, December 1990) was the first conference of this kind organized by the ITU. - ITU Feature.

OPINION

Who is a Terrorist?

T 7 HO is a terrorist? is the question which has been hagging my mind since when some student activists used the Dhaka University Teachers' Club in their latest round of infighting about a month ago. One night they held their batch-mates as hostages in the Teachers' Club and none of them would leave the premise before mid-night. A day or two after they came around evening, took position in the Teachers' Club and quietly asked the teachers to go out. The teachers had no alternative but to comply as the student activists had arms.

new coinage of the word 'terrorist' has been in circulation in connection with the campus. But, what about the trainers of these terrorists? The other morning I was reading a novel on Abraham

After these incidents the

Lincoln written by Gore Vidal. Therein I came across the American slang "plugnglies" who were all the time planning to waylay and assassinate the president-elect Abraham Lincoln.

We all know that Abraham Lincoln was the torch-bearer of democracy. But the young American nation which declared its independence from England had a problem similar to ours - as it had a lot of guntoting citizens those days. And Washington during Abraham Lincoln's time was very similar to our present day Dhaka with a lot of gun-toting young plugnglies roaming round with all kinds of queer notions and aberrations of heroism.

I have been watching the DU brand of heroics with great interest. In their latest round which I remember was on Sunday, October 27, the death toll, according to some reports, was more than five.

Two days earlier to October 27th, the Inspector-General of Police had openly admitted to a group of peace activists at United Nations

Information Centre at Dhanmondi that the police force of Bangladesh can do nothing to curb campus violence and requested his audience, mostly housewives and young boys, to inform the police in secret about any illegal arms. This is ridiculous. Then why have a police force at all? To pay tax to maintain uniformed "silent spectators"? On that fearsome Sunday while the battle was raging I saw a whole plateon of blue-uniformed "silent spectators" standing in front of the VC's house while Mirza Ghalib was bleeding to death, not to speak of that unfortunate tea selling boy who was also gunned down. I am damned sick of our brand of 'plugnglies' and 'old fossils' of the DU who allow these terrible situations in which the young Bangladesh nation is held at ransom by a

On the historic Biplob Dibosh, Nov 7, when the whole nation remains confused as to who were the revolutionaries - as an inquisitive peace activist I ventured into the famous Madhu's Canteen and heard perhaps the most sensible approach to the campus situation in context of Bangladesh and its movements towards achieving democracy.

Analysing the situation Mr A K. M. Badruddin Milon, convenor, DU branch of Chhatra Oikkya Forum stated: "In the nation's critical moments it is the students who always play a leading role like that in the Language Movement of 1952, Mass Upsurge of 1969. Liberation Struggle of 1971 and the Mass Upsurge of October 1990. From these it has been proved that the students are the vanguards of the people's struggle to achieve a truly democratic society. It is the students who always shed their blood for the rights of the people. That is why foreign powers work out blue-prints to alienate students from the

people and in cases become

successful for the time being. Only one out of 1000 students is a 'muscleman' carrying arms.

"These foreign powers cleverly manipulate some students to create anarchy and violence to malign the student community as a whole and make them unpopular with the masses. The main intention is to ban student politics, the result of which will be that the foreign powers will be able to dominate the national politics of Bangladesh. Recently the AL chief Sheikh Hasina announced suspension of Chhatra League students politics on DU campus. This appears to be a strategic retreat.

"During Sunday's fighting it was the activists of the BNP's student wing who were critically injured and some even died. In the next stage of infighting between the student activists the probability is that the student wing of AL will have to pay dearly for Sunday's adventurism and may be that is why the AL chief has decided to withdraw Chhatra League activists from the DU campus for the time being.

To really free the campus from violence there is a positive need of the bourgeois political parties of Bangladesh to re-shuffle and become democratic and people-oriented."

From Madhu's Canteen I walked back to my residence with a sceling of elation. The young blood of Bangladesh can think out better solutions to the crisis in our educational institutions than the "old fossils" who go for cheap press conferences and publicity stunts, without solving any problem in reality.

And I am reminded of Fools rush in where angles fcar to tread." Sarcastically: If no study and examination of real worth, then why don't the "old fossils" close down the DU and cultivate rice? Our people need rice and fish, not guns and bullets.

Bilguis Afzal Fuller Road, Dhaka,

Civic problems

Sir, Some areas under Sutrapur Police Station deserve very urgent attention of the concerned authorities.

Hatkhola road is in pretty bad shape for a considerable period of time. The link road between Rajani Chowdhury Road and Shashi-Bhushan Chatterjee Lane connecting Jame-Mosque at holding No. 29 R.C. Road is half-lit, one tube light remains constantly missing. Moreover the transformer providing electric connection to the homes at the above holding number is heavily overloaded due to large construction project undertaken by the Masjid Committee recently. The committee has already completed sixteen commercial flats besides five old flats adjacent to the Jame-Mosque. This does not include the students dormitory and the installations and facilities of the mosque itself. The committee has a plan to build sixteen more commercial flats bringing the total number of commercial flats to 37.

While there is no denying the benefit that will accrue to the philanthropic project sheltering poor and orphan students whose number is estimated at over a hundred, one may like to assess the pressure the above undertaking would bring on the civic facilities which are already over taxed. The sewerage, conservancy, municipal and power supply situation being what it is for the past decade or so with no modernization and expansion in sight, we foresee a bleak prospect for this part of the old city, if improvement is not undertaken immediately. Attention of PDB, DESA,

WASA, DCC, R&H is drawn to the above situation for implementation of effective solu-Pro Bono Publico.

BTV and World Cup Cricket

Sir, BTV earned the appreciation of football fans of Bangladesh, by telecasting live

World Cup Football finals. After, football, cricket is the most popular game in Bangladesh. We appeal to the BTV authorities to arrange to telecast live all the games of the World Cup Cricket tournament to be held from 22 February, 1992 in Australia and New Zealand. On the days, when two matches will be played - one in Australia and the other in New Zealand — only the match to be played in Australia may be telecast, involving teams of the sub-continental countries i.e. Pakistan, India and Sri Lanka. We feel sure, lots of spon-

sors will be available to share cost of the operations, if BTV is sincere in taking immediate initiative in this regard. Millions of cricket-lovers of this country, as elsewhere, have a right to see their miniscreen vibrate with their heartthrobs, on the great occasion of the ensuing World Cup Cricket.

M. Nazmul Hoque Dhaka.