

# The Story behind a Scoop; More on the Borlaug Project in Africa; and about Two Do-gooders Many People do Not Like

WE nearly missed the scoop which a colleague called the story of the week, published last Saturday, about the US presidential nominee, Bill Clinton suggesting Muhammad Yunus be awarded a Nobel Prize for his work with the Grameen Bank.

There is quite often a story about how an exclusive report hits the frontpage. This is one worth writing about.

Two days before the story was in *The Daily Star*, we were having a quiet dinner with Khaled Shams, the number two in the Grameen Bank and his wife, Naureen, a singer cum university teacher in Physics. Shams are one of our favourite couples whom we had known from our days in Kuala Lumpur. There is another association of mine with the Shams, which reflects the passage of time in my professional life. Some four decades ago, then a young reporter, I used to interview Naureen's father, the Late Habibullah Bahar, then the Health Minister in the provincial government on the eradication of malaria, a job that he had performed with superb thoroughness. Then, late in seventies, by then an editor in South-east Asia, I discussed problems of Bangladesh with the country's then foreign minister, during his visit to Manila. Prof Muhammad Shamsul Huq, Khaled's distinguished father who, now passed 80, remains as involved in the academic world as in the field of writing.

The dinner on Thursday night was to introduce me and my wife, Nancy, to Tatsuya Watanabe, a young Japanese who had been working in a remote part of rural Bangladesh in a fishery project of the Grameen Bank. He had come to our country on his own, attracted by the reputation of the Grameen Bank and had met all his expenses from his own personal saving in the hope that a foundation in Tokyo might eventually offer a grant to cover his assignment. During the two and a half months, he had spent in this country, Watanabe-san had learnt a great deal about fish in Bangladesh, enough to prepare a paper on the subject. And he had also acquired a smattering knowledge of Bangla.

We agreed to meet again when Nancy would do a story on this young Japanese whose enterprising spirit and concern for development in Bangladesh made a deep impression on both of us.

Just as the dinner ended, Khaled handed over to Nancy some documents in an envelope. "There is an interview of Bill Clinton that you might find useful," he told her in his usual casual manner that, I assume, he had acquired from the slow-moving lifestyle that we shared in Kuala Lumpur.

The following morning, the start of a relatively quiet Friday, it was Nancy who read the Clinton interview first and stumbled into the Governor's suggestion that Yunus should receive a Nobel Prize. If she had other things to



Prof. Muhammad Yunus, the founder of the Grameen Bank (left) and two women working in a project supported by a loan from the bank.

## MY WORLD

S. M. Ali

do, like her weekend chores, we might not have read the interview for days.

My weekly break then turned into a stimulating working day, to get my pieces ready for the *Star* by seven pm.

Khaled was certainly right when he had alerted Nancy that the Clinton interview would be "useful".

Useful? Well, that was undoubtedly an understatement of the year!

HAVING written about the work of Nobel Peace Prize winner Norman Borlaug to create a green revolution for Africa, in the context of an invisible link between his achievement and that of Muhammad Yunus, in my piece last Saturday, I am tempted to provide more information on the Borlaug project, some of which may be most surprising to a section of our readers.

The experiment to tackle the food problem in Africa was launched in mid-eighties under a project called "Global 2000", as I learn from a *Star* reader, Mir Abdus Sattar, in which the moral and political support to Borlaug came from the former US president, Jimmy Carter, but with the funding assistance, running to a couple of millions of dollars, provided by none other than Agha Hasan Abedi, the founder and the former chief executive of the now defunct Bank of Credit and Commerce International

(BCCI). Now, a much condemned man for all the misdeeds committed by his scandal ridden bank, Abedi, currently lying critically ill in Karachi, may never be able to explain what prompted him to pour millions into such a laudable venture in Africa. Just to help out Borlaug, to placate Carter and the US black leader Andy Young who was also involved in the project or to step up his PR exercise with African countries? Perhaps all these reasons — or none. After all, as time goes by, Abedi appears more and more a complex man even to people who worked with him and thought they knew him well.

**If Sasakawa is generous in supporting a good cause, he certainly wants recognition for his contribution. It is said, WHO put up a small bust of the Japanese philanthropist in its lobby at its headquarters in return for a donation from Sasakawa... In contrast, Abedi wanted nothing in return from PFA for his help to this media organisation.**

Incidentally, the financial gap in the Borlaug project created by the exit of Abedi has been partly filled by another controversial philanthropist, Ryoichi Sasakawa of Japan. The con-

troversy about Sasakawa is all about the source of his enormous wealth. It is said to be gambling, in one form or another, and this makes a number of organisations, within Japan and outside, most reluctant to accept any donation from him. If Sasakawa is generous in supporting what he may regard as a good cause, he certainly wants recognition for his contribution. It is said that when the World Health Organisation (WHO) accepted a sizable donation from this Japanese philanthropist, the UN agency was persuaded to put up a small bust in metal of Sasakawa in the lobby of its headquarters in Geneva.

Other UN agencies, all facing one form of financial crisis or another, would be delighted to accept help from this "gamble king" if only his donation could be listed as "contribution from an anonymous donor".

Sasakawa posed a dilemma for me too back in late seventies.

Then serving the Manila-based Press Foundation of Asia (PFA) as its Executive Director, I came under a mild pressure from some non-Japanese directors of our board to accept a donation from the philanthropist to ease the organisation's financial crisis. In return, all we had to do was to set up some kind of an award for journalists in Asia, named after Sasakawa. However, the proposal was strongly resisted by PFA's Japanese directors, one of whom had said somewhat angrily that he would never be able to show his face to his country's media if we accepted any financial support from "this controversial character".

It was quite a different matter for me to accept a contribution from Abedi. For one thing, BCCI was then going strong, especially with its media-oriented Third World Foundation, and its image was in a good shape.

During a visit to London in 1978, I called on Abedi to interest him in the work of PFA which, I told him plainly, was caught in a cash flow crisis. However, instead of seeking a donation, I offered him a bulk subscription of PFA's high-priced weekly publication, *Data Asia*, for distribution among all the branches of his bank. He readily agreed and asked one of his officers to work out the details. So, every year, *Data Asia* earned \$25,000 from the sale of the publication to BCCI. The arrangement continued for four years, including two years after I had left PFA to join UNESCO, thus helping the organisation to earn an additional revenue of \$100,000.

In return, Abedi asked for nothing from PFA or me personally, not even a bank account in BCCI or an article on his organisation through our feature service, *Depthnews*.

Many people will laugh their heads off if I describe the incident as an example of Abedi's selfishness. It must be something else, which probably worries Jimmy Carter now as much as it puzzles me. I am certainly in good company.

# History of a Historic Gun

Amina Hassan writes from Islamabad

LAHORE, as a cliché goes, is a historic city of Pakistan. Witness to many epic events and historic turns, crowning glories and crumbling fortunes, yet its streets and parks, alleys and mohallas are increasingly being stripped of the remnants of the past.

Old houses and 'havelis' in the city are slowly being encroached upon by newly built houses. Carved wooden doors, statues from the days of Raj have been removed to museums, and historical monuments, facing the ravages of time and the neglect of man, are fast becoming dilapidated.

Yet in the middle of the city, amid the rush and noise of a humdrum existence, providing a relief from the overbearing sense of conformity, stands Kim's Gun.

Presently perched on a platform outside the National College of Arts, flanked by Aofred Woolner's statue and facing the Lahore museum, it was originally named Zamana. Now it is colloquially known as 'Bhangian wali top' after the Bhangis (a sect of Gujarars) of Amritsar or 'Kim's Gun'. This was after the novel Kipling wrote in 1901, whose main character Kim grows up playing around the gun. Foreigners are still lured to Lahore as the city of Kim's Gun.

The gun cast in 1757 (235 years ago), still looks solid and strong, more decorative and beautiful than lethal.

Though it was used in many battles, dragged from one city to another several times, it has been lying in the open for more than a century. However its metal bore shines like new, and the incredibly strong wood used for its wheels is quite intact.

Fourteen feet, four and a half inches in length, Kim's Gun is one of the largest existing specimens of casting in Indo-Pak sub-continent. Its bore, with an aperture of nine and half inches is made from

an alloy of copper and brass.

The gun has a fascinating history, with accounts of battles and bloodshed, feuds and quarrels, bravery and betrayals. It was cast at Lahore in 1757. A period in the history of the sub-continent when Muslims after the demise of Aurangzeb had been rapidly losing all power, prestige and authority. Rise of militant Hindu and Sikh groups and foreign invaders had weakened Muslim rule.

It was in these circumstances that Shah Wali Ullah invited Ahmad Shah Abdali from Afghanistan and combining his powers with the local Nawabs sought to defeat the Marhats who were charging towards Delhi. It was Ahmad Shah Abdali, the Afghan Chief who ordered the making of Zamana, the Gun.

It was actually cast under the direction of Shah Wali Khan who was the Prime Minister of Abdali. But the man who cast and built it was Shah Nazir.

The first battle in which the gun was used was the battle of Panipat in 1761 in which Muslims under the command of Ahmad Shah Abdali defeated the Marhats.

After the battle it was brought to Lahore and left with the Afghan Governor. But the next year he was murdered and Harri Singh Bhangi captured the gun and it lay unmounted in the Lahore Fort for two years.

In 1764, when Lahna and Gujjar Singh captured Lahore, the gun became their possession. The same year it was offered as a share of the spoils to Charhat Singh by the captors of Lahore. He now dragged it to his fort at Gujjaranwalla with the help of 2000 troops.

But as fate would have it, the two brothers, over come by greed and jealousy, now quarrelled for its possession. The resulting fight claimed the lives of two sons of the former and one of the latter. The gun drew blood even when not in a battle.

Gujjar Singh Bhangi now came to the aid of Mohammad Khan but, betraying his ally, he carried the gun to his headquarters at Gujrat.

In 1772, Chhatras recovered it and removed it to Rasul Nagar. But the next year, Jhandia Singh Bhangi captured it and carried it all the way to the Bhangi Fort in Amritsar. And hence the name 'Bhangian wali top'. Bhangi here being a sub-cast of Gujjars and not the scheduled cast, as is generally believed.

It remained at the Bhangit Fort till 1802, when Ranjit Singh captured Amritsar and the gun.

Next, the gun built by Muslims, was used by Sikhs under Ranjit Singh in his battles and campaigns all over Punjab, particularly at Wazirabad, Daska, Kasur and Multan.

It was during the siege of Multan in the course of those campaigns that the gun was damaged. Unfit for use, it was then removed to Lahore. From 1818 to 1870, it lay outside Delhi Gate Lahore. In 1870, it was installed at the present site, in the middle of a city changed and altered by the passage of years.

—APP

## Down the Memory Lane Conciliation is the Name of the Game

by Dr Habibuz Zaman

chronic gastric ulcer. He appeared thin and perhaps somewhat under-weight for his age and height. He was a presentable person of fair complexion. He was soft-spoken and gave his version of the story without mincing words.

Mr Alam had been receiving medical treatment for his gastric ulcer for a couple of weeks as an indoor patient. Occasionally, he had given himself the freedom of using the telephone in the ward, which was placed on the working table of the ward nurses. After spending several days in the ward, he had felt free to use the telephone without seeking permission. On one such occasion, the duty nurse had taken exception when Mr Alam had used the phone for a prolonged period. The journalist had been taken by surprise at this unexpected challenge from a nurse. He had therefore responded in not a friendly manner. Thus a verbal altercation had begun. This had gradually increased in intensity over the next few days and quite a bit of bad blood had been made between the hospital staff and the journalist.

In the verbal battle the doctors had naturally taken the sides with the nurses. As a result, our journalist-friend had been refused further use of the phone. Mr Alam was not only offended, but also had started feeling somewhat insecure. He had written a letter to his wife, and asked one of the cleaners to deliver it to his residence. However, matters had come to such a pass that the letter had been intercepted.

I believe it was at this point that the journalist had mentioned about the incident to his professional colleagues, who had come to visit him. It had seemed rather strange to me that Mr Alam had not felt free to leave the hospital by himself with the help of his colleagues, who had been reporting the incident and making such unfavourable comments in the newspapers.

In any case, the journalist had left a favourable impression on me. He was acceptable to me as a gentleman. He did not seem to be one, who was out to create trouble. Certainly I did not find him to be a proud and haughty character. He had talked to me quite normally without undue heat. I got determined to bring to an

end this unfortunate matter in the most expeditious manner, acceptable to the doctors, hospital staff and the journalists.

In the course of the day, I had an occasion to address the entire teaching staff and many of the hospital doctors. Assembled in two to three rows around the large horse-shoe shaped table in the rather spacious conference hall of the Chittagong Medical College, the doctors numbered over 150. After making a few pleasant remarks, I had bluntly told my colleagues that a hospital is not a prison and no patient is a prisoner. Patients were free to leave the hospital premises at their own will. If doctors felt that it involved a risk for a patient, they could insist that the patient signed a declaration to the effect that he or she was leaving the hospital against medical advice and at his or her own risk (DORB). Beyond taking this one caution, it was unnecessary for doctors to feel responsible, obliged or duty-bound to exert further pressure on any patient to remain confined to the hospital, against one's will.

At the end of the meeting, I had informally talked to a number of the senior-most colleagues and detected a disinclination on their part to bend, although they all wished a speedy resolution of this unfortunate impasse. I reckoned there was little chance of success in efforts to get the doctors, the patient and a group of journalists together to settle the matter. I started thinking of how else the same object would be attained. In this, I am happy to recall, I had felt free to consult with and take the help of my classmate and a good friend, who had been practising in Chittagong for over 20 years. I knew that he was highly respected both in the community and also amongst the doctors. I requested him to arrange a meeting for me with Mr Nurul Islam, the Editor of 'The People's Daily', the then leading English language newspaper of Chittagong. This was arranged for about 11.00 pm that evening.

Prof Zoha, the Principal of the Medical College had very kindly thrown a dinner party at his official residence which was attended by quite a large number of doctors. I begged leave of my host around 10.30

in the evening and went straight to meet Mr Nurul Islam. I had a brief but very fruitful meeting. I told him that I had no doubt that a serious breach of trust and good conduct had been committed in intercepting a message from a patient to his next of kin. I begged an unqualified apology for this. I requested him to use his good offices and to bring to an end this sad episode and to restrain his colleagues from writing any further against the medical profession and the hospital staff.

Mr Nurul Islam was kind enough to respond most favourably. He assured me that he would do everything in his power to bring to an end this unfortunate state of affairs. He had suggested that perhaps it would help matters if a short and appropriate press note could be issued on behalf of the Ministry of Health. I had requested Mr Islam to extend his helping hand and his good offices, even if such a press note could not be issued. I assured him that I would certainly convey his wishes to the Minister for Health.

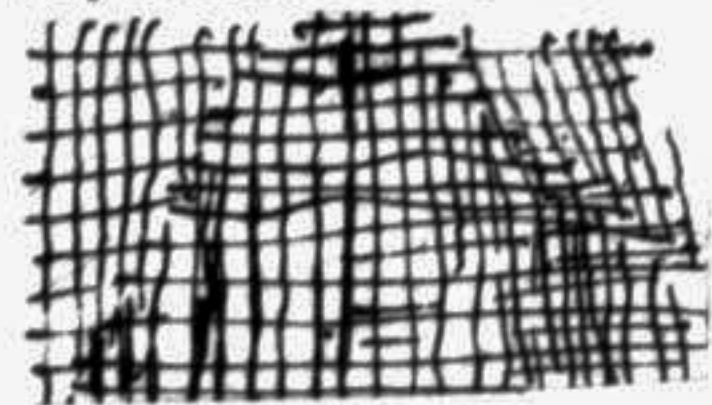
On return to Dhaka next morning, the matter was duly reported to the Health Secretary and also to the Health Minister. Mr Malek Ukil had kindly thanked me for my efforts.

However, he had remained silent over issuing a press note. In return, I have appreciated his wisdom. He might have felt that enough was enough; gentle behaviour on the part of all concerned could have averted this unfortunate episode, which had called for his intervention. It did not deserve any further publicity and documentation by the government.

Nevertheless, I am happy to say that the promise, made by Mr Nurul Islam, was honoured by his journalist colleagues.

The newspapers did not carry any further adverse comments about the Chittagong event within my knowledge. Out of sheer determination to create goodwill, I had done what I thought was necessary. It was fortunate that my approach for reconciliation had worked.

The full credit for this happy ending goes to Mr Nurul Islam. He was able to carry his professional colleagues with him. Indeed, he was sincere in keeping his words! Mr Nurul Islam, the Editor of 'The People's Daily' of Chittagong, passed away several years ago. May his soul rest in peace!



## Colourful Raj Ceremonials Survive in India

Prakash Chandra writes from New Delhi

FROM time to time India, now a Republic, goes back to the British Raj.

Of course, the British rulers are not there. But the ceremonies and rituals are all Anglo-Saxon in content and flavour.

When Parliament is opened by the President he drives in a coach and six. Then he reads out his address in the Lower House on the pattern of the Queen's speech in the British House of Commons in London.

A more colourful event is the presentation of credentials by Ambassadors to the President of the Republic. And until this ceremony is held the envoy cannot function as a representative of his country.

A presidential aide has described in detail the presentation of credentials as a colourful event which is remembered by every Ambassador as his most important day when he arrives in New Delhi.

Last year, some 27 Ambassadors presented their credentials. Early this year, Ambassadors of Jordan, Myanmar and Thailand presented their papers. There are 95 envoys in Delhi with the Ambassador of Israel to join the diplomatic corps soon.

The viceregal lodge, where the British viceroys lived until 1950 when India elected its President, is a 300-room mansion called Rashtrapati Bhawan. The credential function is held there in the Ashoka Hall in the morning and lasts about an hour.

The Chief of Protocol of the Ministry of External Affairs is the master of ceremonies for the credential event. He escorts the Ambassador from his residence.

Immediately on reaching the beautiful and imposing iron gates, he is shifted to a state coach driven by six horses. Thereafter he is driven in state to the Fore Court, escorted by mounted columns of the President's bodyguards.

On reaching the fore-court, the Ambassador is taken to the saluting base where the National Anthems of the two countries are played by the Army band with the persons watching the ceremony standing "in attention". Thereafter, the Ambassador is requested to inspect the Guard of Honour when he walks on the path laid for him in a real royal fashion.

The Ambassador proceeds to the Ashoka Hall in a procession. The officers of the embassy, Ministry of External Affairs and the President's Secretariat accompany him. At the open staircase, the trumpeters sound the fanfare reminiscent of Mughal grandeur.

At the stroke of ten, the President is conducted to the Ashoka Hall in a procession headed by the ADCs and sowars.

After the President is seated, the Ambassador, accompanied by the Military

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## WRITE TO MITA

Dear Mita,

My daughter got married last year. She is only 20 now and is expecting. I am 42 and finding it very difficult to adjust to the thought of becoming a grandmother. I advised my daughter not to start a family so early but she refused to listen to me. I am a working woman but my daughter expects me to look after the baby while she goes back to her studies. What should I do? My relatives criticize me for my attitude. Please advise.

Dear Shireen,

These questions are bound to emerge as more and more modern educated women try to shake off their traditional roles. There are two issues here: 1) Your daughter's marriage and her desire to have a baby. 2) Your role as mother-in-law and grandmother. For the first you have no choice, she is an adult and these important decisions depend entirely on her and her husband. The second is your role as grandmother. You too have a right to be independent and not to become burdened with looking after babies all over again. Explain that very gently to your daughter. Chances are that when she does have the baby you will forget all the above hesitations and will be only too eager to look after it. Still your wish should be respected by your daughter.

Dear Mita,

I fully agree with your advice given to a woman whose husband has been having relations with other women for long. It is said that Rima of Zingata has disagreed with your advice. She has accused you by saying that your ideas are too western for our society. I ask Rima, how long will the woman in question suffer in her conjugal life? How much patience can she show to preserve relation with her husband? Can't she expect a decent and happy life? Mita, you are quite right in telling the woman that her husband will never change and for this she should leave her husband. The woman can take final decision only when she can prepare herself to live on her own.

Md Delouar Hossain, North Shahjahanpur.

Dear Hossain,

Thank you for the nice letter supporting my advice to the woman in question. Everyone is entitled to his/her own views which are not necessarily wrong.

Dear Mita,

I am a student of class VII. My eyesight is very poor. I have to use spectacles of — 3.00 constantly. But I am fed up with my glasses because these don't suit me. My mother is also worrying about my eye sight.

After thinking a lot I made up my mind to use contact lenses, but some say it is harmful, and it may cause infections in eyes. Now what I need is a good advice from you.

Sana Akbar, Khaja Dewan, Dhaka.

Dear Sana,

The doctor in our team says: There is no medical reason to have eye infection because of contact lenses. The most important thing is to keep the lenses clean by using the solution provided with the lenses. Some people who have allergy might suffer from itching and irritation but this is not due to contact lenses. Be sure to see a good eye doctor.

★★★★

Dear Kamel,

I will not print your letter as instructed by you and will reply by mail. Just want to tell you that you have come a long way in acknowledging your problem and coming to terms with it. Please try to see the positive aspect of your life such as your wife who will stand by you and give confidence and support. The addition to the family will bring joy and happiness coupled with responsibility. All this will help you realise finally all you need is to boost your self esteem.