

FOCUS

DHAKA city has recently been experiencing a so-called improved police patrol routine. The policemen patrol the city on their new shining motor cycles with their special uniform and their bright lights flashing behind them. They are the special team of the police commissioner, the Speed Enforcement Police (much like the LAPD on the ever popular TV show "Chips"). Other cadre of police such as the ones that patrol the streets in their pickup trucks in the evenings are rarely seen these days. They are, however, in full control of their power. A power often misused.

There have been more and more reports of abused power that have been causing a growing anger among citizens. People are supposed to feel safe and secure with the increasing amount of police on the streets, but this does not seem to be happening. According to newspaper statistics, there is one policeman to every four thousand five hundred people in Dhaka city. Does this quoted figure sound in any way, adequate? According to a sub inspector at the Tejgaon thana there is one policeman for every thirteen hundred people. He admitted, however that they were swamped, very often putting in twelve hour shifts!

People are growing increasingly weary of police harassment. Young women who are mobile or on the streets, are especially vulnerable.

A Daily Star colleague was stopped just the other day on the way to Osmani Auditorium between the Press Club and the secretariat on a baby taxi, by the traffic police's authoritative whistle. All the other baby taxis sped on, and no action was taken against them, but because her baby taxi driver stopped, she was picked on. "What about the others who went by?" she asked the policeman. He didn't even bother to reply. He simply told her that she wasn't "his enemy". So, if she wasn't his enemy, then why was she stopped? Perhaps it had more to do with the fact that she was a single woman on a baby taxi and, less to do with traffic laws.

Police harassment takes on more serious proportions in the following story. A few weeks ago, three young adults, a girl and two boys (in their late teens and early twenties) were in their car parked at the end of a road in a residential area. A pick-up truck filled with policemen approached the car in a frantic manner. The police jumped out of the truck and surrounded the car ordering the three friends out. They didn't answer any of the friend's queries. According to law, before being arrested or taken to the thana, the accused have to be told of the charges held against them. These three weren't given this basic right. They asked them to produce documents for the car, and everything was intact. But still no effort was made to answer any of the barrage of questions the friends had, and they had plenty. The police confiscated the documents of the car, forcing the three to follow them.

On arrival at the thana the car keys were snatched away. They were told to sit down and wait. The entire place was swarming with alleged offenders. There were

Making a Nuisance of the Nuisance Law

by Schrezad Latif and Nayanika Haider



An improved police patrol routine — will they do the job better? — Star photo

young girls, who could not have been more than fifteen or sixteen, who had apparently been picked up on their way home from work at the garment factory not too far from the thana. They had been shoved into a little room where they sat on sacks of rice, packed in like sardines, making it difficult to tell just how many of them there were. Behind them were the uncountable numbers of drug dealers, pimps and the usual assortment of gundas. The police wanted confirmation from the parents or guardians that the three of them were mere friends and nothing else. This apparently was of utmost importance, in fact a requirement, because of the presence of the young woman. The three people insisted that one parent be called for this confirmation but the police hesitated. Confirmation wasn't really what they

were looking for. There is no law that states a person taken to thana is allowed even one phone call. According to Tejgaon Thana's sub-inspector, phone calls are sometimes made, but only by the duty officer himself.

An hour of waiting went by, filled with harassment and lewd insinuations for the three, especially the young woman who by this time was petrified. At some point, a higher official strolled in, seeming to be under the influence of intoxication. He had to be supported on either side by two other policemen. The amount of money that exchanged hands from alleged criminal to policeman was an interesting point to add, with the police accepting anything from five hundred taka to one taka.

Another hour went by and no phone call to the

parents. The duty officer kept insisting that each of the friends be interviewed separately, keeping his eyes on the woman. The two friends with her insisted that they all stay together, because the police had yet to find any charge to hold them under. Finally, the phone call was made and the mother of one of the friends confirmed that the three were indeed friends and she herself had seen them leave her house together. On and off throughout this ordeal, one of the three some had been ushered out of the room and was asked repeatedly, to pay a large sum of money. When the boy asked what his crime had been, the police stuttered and stammered looking for an expensive enough excuse. Another phone call came which heralded their release. However they were released on condition that they write and sign a piece of paper stating they would never go out together as men and women in public in that area and at that time. (eight o'clock in the evening!) They signed the sheet, by this time tired, harassed and desperate to get out of the cesspool.

But what about the poor women in the closet like jail? Who would herald their release? Worse still, what exactly would they have to do to compensate for their alleged crime? What crime?

Incidents such as the one described above are not freak occurrences. They happen often. Is there a law in this country that says that men and women cannot be in cars together, waiting or even just talking? Is it anyone's business what these three were doing sitting in a car? When we visited a thana to confirm this story, the police verified that such a situation should not have happened and that there is in fact no law that states such a thing. Unless of course, the three had been disturbing the peace or involved in illegal acts. Then they could have been charged under the Nuisance Law.

The Nuisance Law one gathers, just from the name of it, is one that has to do with citizens making a nuisance of themselves such as distributing the peace. Police also verified that couples "misbehaving in public" can be picked up. By this we presume they mean showing affection in public, and not just sitting around and talking. Much too often, couples sitting around and talking have been victims of the police pick-trucks.

There is rampant crime in Bangladesh. What about all the cases of murder, rape, child abuse, mutilation and brutality that take place numerous times each day? Are the police doing enough to put a stop to these violations? The police might be a better source of aid to the community if they went around their trucks apprehending miscreants, rapists and truckers who drive drunk at night instead of preying on poor innocents such as garment women or friends/couples out for a drive.

The only ones, it seems, who should be taken in under the nuisance law are quite obviously those making a nuisance of themselves. The question is, who's being the nuisance?

Facts of Astronomy The Double Star

by M Ismail

IN the universe there are many objects which we see in the day time, as our earth and the sun, and at night a brilliant moon. In the dark cloudless night we see a lot more things in the sky. From prehistoric times, man wondered about those tiny lights in the sky and there were popular beliefs, that God has created those as a decoration for man.

They also imagined them as a replica of what they knew in the world such as a lion, a swan, a man, a hero, a demon, a warrior etc. Only very recently we started gathering more and more knowledge about them by using the optical telescope, radio telescope, spectrum analysers, etc.

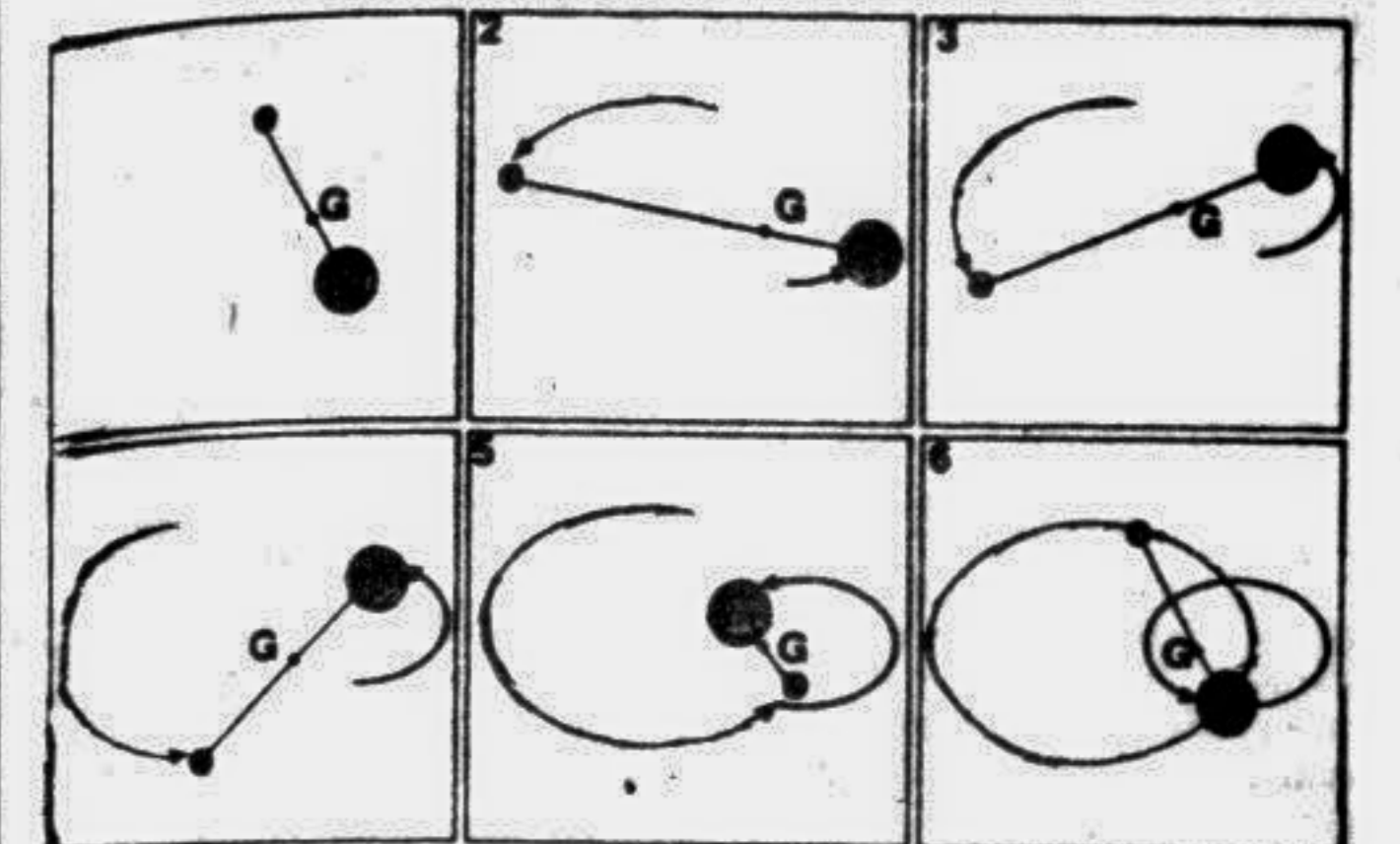
The tiny lights those we see in the sky are in fact not tiny but mostly huge objects. They are the stars, some of them are much bigger and brighter than our sun, group of millions of stars forming galaxy, a large number of galaxies in the cluster, Nova, Supernova, Nebula Quasars, Pulsars, Black hole and many other celestial body. But there is another interesting object in the sky which is a double star.

We know a star is a celestial body consisting of a large, self luminous mass of hot gas held together by its own gravity. Our sun is a typical single star. A double star is a star which appears as a single point of light but

and another moves towards us and hence the spectral lines split into two and can be inferred as a double star. Since the double stars move in close proximity, the dust of one star enter in the atmosphere of the other resulting generation of radio waves. This phenomena is more prominent in the double stars of close proximity like Algol — a star of B8 class in the constellation Perseus on the northern hemisphere than those double stars lying in long distance from each other.

In the process of formation of a star the possibility of formation of double star is more common than the formation of individual star. Star is born by the process of accumulation of dust in the nebula. The formation of star occurs not individually but in a cluster of stars and in the cluster when they form in close proximity they are 'captured' by the gravitational pull of the other, this is why the double star is more common than individual stars.

The distance between its components of a double star may vary from millions of miles apart from each other to very close distance. In case of very close distance the influence of each other is so great that the shape of star is changed. Usually a star is spherical but when a double star is very close to each other, the shape becomes nonspherical. As the double



actually a 'pair of stars' associated together and revolve about their common center of mass which can be resolved in two when studied by telescope.

Sometimes there are three or more number of stars associate together to appear as a single source which is called Multiple Star. In the month of July or August when we look at the north of the equator in the constellation Lara we find a star called Vega which is actually a double star. The double star is more common in the sky than a single or individual star. Obviously our sun is a single star but most of the stars are double or multiple stars and nearly two-third of the stars in the sky are double or multiple stars. Though they are very massive in size, sometimes even larger than our sun, since they are at a very long distance from our earth they appear to be single star.

The component of a double star or multiple star lies in close distance (in astronomical comparison) and move around each other. Most of the double star are not visible to the naked eye and even a large telescope can not identify them as double star. To identify and study a double star we have to use the technique called Spectroscopy. Using this sophisticated technique we study the light of a star which gives spectral lines indicating its chemical composition, distance from the earth, speed, direction of rotation or movement etc.

The double stars rotate around each other, one moves away from us

star are very common in the sky it is possible to observe double star by big telescope or by radio astronomy.

Viewing a double star by naked eye is not possible. There are very few double stars which can be visible by small or amateur telescope. One of them is the star Albarion in the constellation Cygnus (or Swan). The star is on the bottom of the cross of the constellation, on the opposite side of the brightest star on that constellation. The location of constellation is on the midway between north and east in the northern sky. It is another interesting feature of contrasting colours. One of them is much brighter than the other and the colour of the brighter one is yellow and the fainter one is blue. This double star may be visible by telescope of magnification of only 10.

The sun is an individual star and it has its own solar system containing planets, natural satellite, asteroid belt, comets, and other interstellar objects. In a double star it is very unlikely to have a system like this because the variation of the light, heat, gravitational pull towards the common centre at particular time is too great to support such a planetary system.

That means if Sun was a double star it was not possible to have earth, no atmosphere, no living organism and of course no human beings! Though it is of great interest to come to know about a double star but we are lucky not to be part of it.

Bottom-up Approach to Ensure Economic Growth

by Md Shafiqul Haque Choudhury

WE are very familiar with the term "trickle down approach" in economic development. This, however, is also considered as capitalistic way of development. To follow such approach is nothing but serving vested interest of the so-called credit-worthy people. For throughout the world general principle in economic field is that the rich are credit-worthy.

Professor Rehman Sobhan, Executive Director of Policy Dialogue raised a crucial picture of credit situation in a recent meeting, that the Bangladeshi credit scenario was quite contrasting to the situation prevailing in other countries. He mentioned that majority of the rich borrowers failed to prove themselves as credit worthy. Several times, the so-called rich led the Bangladesh banking sector at the verge of collapse due to default of credit.

But a reverse phenomenon now prevails in Bangladesh, that is the poor are credit worthy and very disciplined in credit repayment which is nearly 100 per cent. He mentioned the successful achievement of Grameen Bank, BRAC and ASA on lending and recovering at an excellent rate among the poor. He also mentioned the very innovative approach of ASA credit where cost-effectiveness was claimed within the shortest possible time.

In that meeting Major General (Rtd) Anzad, a prominent private sector businessman, mentioned the role of businessmen in rural development through profitability. His expression was that people are generally doing entrepreneurial type of work for serving the poor as well as for profit. If there is no profit motive, 'thousand flowers will not blossom' and then what will happen when there is a lack of thriving non-profit sector like the NGOs. Hence, a thriving profit sector should be the ultimate solution of the problem.

In the same meeting, Bill Derringer — a participant from IDE gave an outlet of his organisation — how it is making the poor commercially viable. They are selling treadle pumps for wealth creation among the poor with cost-covered approach. He also explained the need for wealth creation among poor through cost-effective manner, from his long banking experience. He expressed his confidence in ASA which is playing a

pioneering role in cost-effective poverty alleviation at a large extent.

As many of us know the role of Grameen, ASA, BRAC and other NGOs in poverty alleviation, their approach to economic development is directed towards the poor: The poor are becoming well off and their purchasing power is increasing gradually.

An estimated, 20 per cent of the below-poverty-line people are covered by Grameen, ASA, BRAC and others. With the increase of purchasing power of the poor the macro-economy is also growing and strengthening. People are roofing their dwellings with CI sheet, clothing themselves and buying utensils, watch, radio and other commodities of utility. Small entrepreneurs are also getting benefitted. The small, medium and bigger enterprises are getting scope of income from economically empowered through micro investment and in this process macro economy has been strengthening which is the essence of bottom-up approach in economic development.

This effective approach would solve the overall economic problem of the country if proper attention is given by the appropriate authorities. It will provide the poor to enjoy the profit directly and will benefit stakeholders of other segments of the economy in secondary and tertiary way. This approach will facilitate semi-egalitarian society where vast majority of the poor are owners of the small schemes or enterprises.

This approach would facilitate rural economy to flourish which will create a balance between the rural and the urban, thus minimizing the rural-urban migration. This will facilitate use of local resources which remain unused for long time or often abused. This approach can generate local self-employment opportunities for other members of the family as well. This is a labour-intensive approach as the small units are commonly run and managed by family labour which is neither paid for nor costly.

Let us provide the simple example of trickle down and bottom-up approach. Say, some Mr X is a big entrepreneur who borrows a large amount of money from the bank and starts a poultry farm approximately with 1,00,000 chickens. To accommodate and raise up these chickens he needs to develop a big infrastruc-

ture and engages few labourers for looking after the farm. The farm turns to be a source of benefit directly to the big entrepreneur and indirectly to only the few employees.

On the other hand 'Y', a poor woman credit partner of ASA (ASA may itself be a case, which is supporting 3,00,000 families with credit) receives small amount of credit indi-

vidually (and huge amount in ASA totality). With the amount, she starts a poultry farm with few chickens, or gets into goat rearing, milk cow rearing, paddy husking whichever is manageable within the household. Such 'credit-partner' neither needs big infrastructure nor extra labourers. The production of the mini poultry farm or goat rearing directly goes to her



Away from hearth— women in economic activity

family's benefit. But the process of production links her to the other segments of economy who are getting secondary and tertiary benefit through exchange of the product from hand to hand.

From these two examples, which one seems more suitable for a country like Bangladesh? The reply, of course, will be in favour of the latter one. And to emphasize on this alternative approach, we think a national consensus is needed.

For years, we heard such sermons that the poor were idle, inactive and not-credit worthy and the rich were credit worthy. The rich borrowed money from bank and not properly refunded and the poor did not get institutional credit facilities. The present economic stagnation is more a result of such practice.

Yet, with the changing situation and environment we see some hope. Even the World Bank and ADB are speaking of economic development not only by increasing GNP but also by simultaneous effort on poverty reduction. They are also prescribing for such bottom-up approach. Of late, the poor are getting collateral-free credit from NGOs such as Grameen Bank, ASA, BRAC and others in a limited way for poverty alleviation. And with their effort and successful implementation of the credit programme the poor are becoming credit-worthy in Bangladesh.

In such a context, we put forth a humble request to the government not to repeat such initiative as has to be implemented by the government itself. The Govt's policy and mechanism in many cases fail to provide

good results in the sectors like industry, business, credit and in several economic and service oriented areas. The seed of failure lies within the structure and nature of ownership. So, the profit and non-profit organizations like NGOs should be assigned for such initiative and implementation. Many more NGOs may be assigned for what may not be a bed of roses at the beginning. But without the massive private and NGO initiative the process of poverty reduction will be delayed. The private initiative will be able to create a nation-wide impact if fund generation from local resources is considered. The consideration of local fund generation will, ultimately, result in non-grant approach. NGOs are requested to be aware of cost-effectiveness before thinking of non-grant approach. Because, the core spirit of non-grant approach is the economic independence of an organisation as well as of a credit partner.

In conclusion, it can only be said that the 'trickle up' approach is more effective and a direct strategy in overcoming the economic problems of the poor. Simultaneously, however, the trickle down approach is also needed to strengthen the macro economy. And the combination of the two would facilitate the total national economic growth. But, to maintain a harmonious growth rate, bottom-up approach should be extensive — and there the NGOs — Grameen Bank, BRAC, ASA and such others — are playing a pioneering role.

The writer is Chief Executive, ASA.

BRAZIL'S new President, Fernando Henrique Cardoso, made a special point of seeking out ousted British premier Margaret Thatcher when he was in London for World War Two armistice celebrations recently.

Although once on the political left, and forced into exile for a time when the army ruled Brazil, Cardoso now plans to speed up the privatisation of state-owned companies.

And Thatcher pioneered privatisation in Britain in the 1980s. During their talk, Thatcher was surprised to learn that Brazil's constitution does not allow Cardoso to succeed himself at the end of his four-year term.

One term was the rule in many Latin American countries, where the ban was devised to prevent presidents entrenching themselves in power, as did Somoza in Nicaragua, Stroessner in Paraguay, and Castro in Cuba.

The rule has now been scrapped in Peru, where Alberto Fujimori was recently re-elected President, and in Argentina, where President Carlos Menem managed to alter the constitution to permit himself another five-year term.

Thatcher told Cardoso that if she had not been re-elected she would not have achieved half of what she did. This is an arguable claim at a time when Britain's Conservative Party is contemplating the likelihood of defeat at the next general election largely because of the delayed results of many of Thatcher's policies, which have now split the party.

TINA — "There is no alternative," the tough line adopted by the now departed Mrs T as she pressed the Conservatives into adopting policies dear to her — helped push the party's share of the popular vote to an all-time low in the local elections in May.

Supporters argue that she put the country on the right course by taking on and beating trade unions, and

It's Tough at the Top — and Irresistibly Attractive

Patrick Knight writes from Sao Paulo

starting the process of privatisation. But many people believe that she stayed on too long, taking many good ideas to extremes in the process.

They say that with Britain now more socially divided than for

decades, with the poor steadily getting poorer and the rich getting richer, it might have been better if the country had been spared Thatcher's second and third terms.

The advantage of allowing the re-election of a president or prime minister is that it brings continuity and gives them a chance to persist with successful policies. But it also opens

the door to politicians who abuse power.

Soon after his re-election in May, Argentina's Menem, who during the campaign had insisted that one more term would be enough for him, said that he intends to stand yet again.

He and his cronies will now spend a good deal of time and energy trying to ensure that he is in a position to stand again, and doing all they can to hobble the opposition.

Menem was successful because his policies brought inflation down to double digits from several thousand per cent a year. But the policies have also produced negative side-effects, including soaring unemployment. While Buenos Aires has prospered, the regions are deeply depressed. Thousands of banks and small businesses have been forced to close their doors. It is time for a change, but Menem promises more of the same, and it will probably end badly.

In Peru, too, electors chose to give a second term to Fujimori, mainly because he managed to defeat the Sendero Luminoso (Shining Path) guerrillas, whose attacks brought commercial and social life in Peru almost to a standstill for 15 years, and cost more than 20,000 lives.

But again, victory was achieved at a price. Congress was shut down, the constitution re-written and civil liberties severely curtailed, and now Fujimori has the field to himself. What will he do with virtually no opposition to stop him? Fujimori is now so deeply entrenched in power that it will be extremely difficult to wrinkle him out.

Things are much worse in many African countries, such as Zaire, than if their long-standing presidents had been obliged to step down after only one term rather than being able to hold on to power for decades, bringing their countries to virtual ruin as they cling on to their positions.

However good you are — and Thatcher certainly thought she was very good, as anybody who reads her biography will testify — you eventually go too far.

There needs to be a mechanism to get an entrenched leader out and prevent them hanging on. — GEMINI

Long in the saddle

