The Baily Star

Founder-Editor: Late S. M. Ali

Dhaka, Saturday, September 23, 1995

OIC Summit?

Organisation of Islamic Conference (OIC) which is known more for its bite-less summits than anything else, will organise another - this time at the behest of Bangladesh. The idea is to organise it while all the OIC leaders are likely to find themselves together at the special commemorative session of the UN, to mark its 50th anniversary.

The OIC Secretary-General was unable to tell us whether or not the two-third member ship has endorsed the idea of the emergency summit, without which it cannot be held. He was only able to say that our proposal has "received a wide response". It only means that there is still gap between the cup and the lip. and that further negotiations and lobbying will have to be conducted before this matter is settled.

Even if everything falls into place, the summit is a month off. Given the speed with the situation on the ground is developing. after the NATO airstrikes, it appears that the October summit will deal principally with a situation already decided. The redrawing of the Bosnian map, which appears to be the game plan now, will have mostly occurred on the ground. Whatever additional strength the Bangladesh-proposed summit could have brought to the Bosnian Muslims, will apparently arrive too late.

Following the dictum "Better late than never" the summit will be of some definite purpose, no doubt. We just hope that it will be more realistic, more practical and more credible than other OIC summits on Bosnia, have so far been. The OIC Secretary-General should return from Bangladesh with a very clear understanding that we expected much more from OIC on the Bosnian issue. The Muslim countries did far less than it should have and, we dare say, could have done, for the devastated Muslims of Bosnia. A serious and honest soul-searching must occur among the OIC members, so that we do not act so shamefully in the future.

DU Jubilee

As expected the Dhaka University (DU) platinum jubilee was a truncated affair, with many student (now political) leaders of their time not participating because of the current political situation. The question that we would like to ask is: why was the first of the four commemorative events organised by DUCSU (Dhaka University Central Students Union) and not by the university itself? Since the occasion was the platinum jubilee of the university, and not of DUCSU, would it not have been natural for the University as a whole to have organised the first of such events, with DUCSU, DUTA and other bodies having their functions later? Since we all know that DUCSU has become an extremely politically sensitive body, its programmes should have been kept for a later date. With DUCSU's, the platinum jubilee celebrations had a bad start. The DUCSU event invited former Vice-Chancellors and former leaders of the student body. Not a single extraordinary intellectual from amongst litterateurs, scientists, artists, etc — was invited to speak on the occasion.

Recently Mohsin Hall students' reunion was held, where also only former student leaders were invited to speak. No student, bringing glory to the university through his or her studies, was given any special recognition.

For the same thing to occur during the 75th anniversary of the university is indeed extremely regrettable. We seem to honour more the students who do politics than those who bring laurels to the university by securing first places, by being honoured in foreign universities, or by their circulative and creative works.

When such is the nature of commemorative events, and the mind-set of university leadership, is it any wonder that there is more politics in our universities than studies?

An Impending Doom

Last week a very big group of top earth scientists placed a report on the environmental and climatic global outlook for the first century of the new millennium. The level of the world ocean would by 2100 AD gain up to 26 inches because of the beating of the biosphere. That would mean large littoral areas of Bangladesh and Egypt and about the whole of the Maldives would be lost to the seas, said the report compiled by about 2,500 scientists.

The news has nothing new in it. The globe has been steadily warming up during the present century, thanks to billions of internal combustion machines releasing a carbon dioxide at an unprecedented rate. Increase in earth crust temperature by even a fraction of a degree Celsius would lead to increased melting of the polar ice-caps leading to a gain in the world ocean level. Bangladesh is more like a platform floating on the seas with little or negligible elevation with the above scenario taking place. Large parts of Bangladesh would simply vanish like most of Maldives. All this is old hat to informed people, not to speak of specialists. But this knowledge of the impending doom hasn't been able to shake Bangladesh's political and other leaderships into a very urgent wakefulness. Why?

A contrary news of our seashore region almost popping out of water because of siltation activity of our great rivers, had made us for sometime to look away from the warming process and its inevitable consequences. Now the scientists' report to Boutros Ghali clearly sets 2100 AD as the time by which this increase in world ocean level would take place. It is as if knocking at our doors: what would we do to take it on and minimise the losses as

much as we can? The first thing will be to take the matter with due seriousness and instill a sense of concern into our individual and national consciousness. And then Bangladesh must commit itself to fight the causes of global warming by campaigning to compel the developed nations to reform their prodigal ways with energy use. Third, a vigorous national debate on the ways to cope with such an eventuality should be begun forthwith.

Foreign Aid: Where it Comes, Where it Goes

Aid needs to be reprioritized with special focus on human development. The developed

countries which, allegedly, siphon off a large chunk in terms of transfer of resources should

nomic development of see that their aid money is not being spent on military spending. . . Less Developed Countries (LDCs) is well documented in economic literature. As it crucial for the establishment and maintenance of power goes to argue, foreign aid is channelled to help fill the stations, roads and embanktwo gaps that LDCs tend to ments. Airports, transport confront at the nascent stage and communication system of their development. These were developed through are, for example, foreign availability of aid. And lastly, in health and family planning exchange, and saving sectors, foreign aid helped investment gaps. Aid makes eradicate small pox, provide scarce foreign exchange immunization to children and available to a country to import basic necessities and raise contraceptive prevaindustrial raw materials and lence rate-etc.

HE critical role of

also makes funds available to

gear up investment activities

in the face of shortage of

cific areas where the positive

impacts of aid could, possi-

bly, be identified. It can be

shown, on an empirical

plane, that the Green

Revolution that swept many

LDCs owes much to foreign

aid in terms of funding plant

genetics, institutions (na-

tional and international) and

upgradation of technical

manpower in recipient

countries. Notwithstanding

the question of the distribu-

tion of such gains, aid im-

parted a dramatic effect on

aggregate food production

and employment in rural ar-

eas. In infrastructure build-

ing, foreign aid had the same

kind of positive impacts. The

loans and technical assis-

tance from donors appeared

There are atleast four spe-

domestic savings

foreign aid in the eco-

While the positive gains from foreign aid were highlighted in the Human Development Report 1994, there were many areas, according to the same report. where foreign aid had either negative impacts on recipient countries or yielded less than expected results. On balance it could, perhaps, emerge that aid was directed more to suit donors' need than reciptents and can therefore, be hardly called beneficial

At the aggregate level, aid is not, seemingly, targeted at the poor. Had it been so, aid inflow should have been an increasing function of the level of poverty or the number of poor persons in a poor country. It is being grouched that only one-third of the total development assistance is directed to the ten most populous countries of the world where two-thirds of

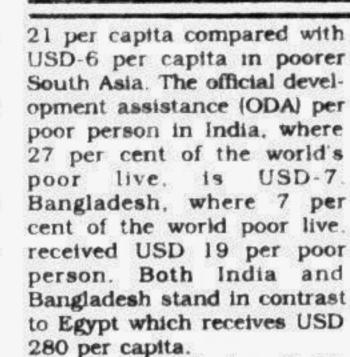
the world's poor are living. According to the available documents on foreign aid. richest 40 per cent of the developing world tend to receive twice as much aid per capita as the poorest 40 per cent. Few facts and figures could be presented to justify the above contention. For example, the richer developing countries of the M-E get USD

show growing concerns over military spending by poor countries but in practice does little to fill the hole by cutting military aid. Even in the most recent years, allegedly, high military spenders received two and a half times as much per capita as the low military spenders.

Just note the startling statistics. According to one

Beneath the Surface

by Abdul Bayes



In the distribution of aid. strategic interest of the donors seem to have outweighed the socio-eco nomic needs of the poor countries. Donors appear to

UN report, El Salvador received 16 times more US aid per poor person than did Bangladesh - a country with one-fifth of El Salvador's GNP per capita Israel receives 100 times more than Bangladesh although Israel's per capita GNP is USD

An ambivalence with re

gard to donors' attitude to military spending by the recipient countries should be noted. Their wisdom seems to have barred them from interference in internal affairs of the recipients since it is the onus of the aid receiver to justify or direct the avail

12,000.

able aid. Fine and Fair. But the argument seems strange when one finds that the same donors are forcing the poor aid receiving countries. through loan conditionalities. to eliminate food subsidies devalue currency, privatize public enterprises etc. To drag the argument further, it could be observed that the donors remained silent when developing countries were witnessing serious cuts in social sector spending, with military and other unproductive spending on the rise, to show that they are honestly and rightly pursuing their structural adjustment policies which aim at government's expenditure slash. "Developing countries were thus balancing their budgets by unbalancing human lives not by cutting arms expenditure" (Human Development Report 1994).

The concern of the donors about human development is also not reflected in their aid disbursement -- both in terms of quality and quantity. it is reported that only 7 per cent of the total bilateral aid kitty is earmarked for such priority areas as basic education, primary health care, family planing, water supply and sanitation etc. However. Scandinavian donors seem

human development is concerned and this could be in evidence from the fact that Denmark targets one-fourth of its bilateral aid to those areas followed by Norway (18 per cent) and Netherlands (15 per cent). However, suffice it to say here that these small amount available through aid also constrains the spending capacity in social sectors. Again, whatever amount finds ways to recipient countries, the priority, allegedly, as urban-bias leaving the rural areas bypassed. In the coming years, aid needs to reprioritized with special focus on be human development. The developed countries which, allegedly, siphon off a large chunk in terms of transfer of resources should see that their aid money is not being spent on military spending but instead, devoted to socio-economic uplift of the common people. If donors can force their aid receivers to orchester policy changes with respect to subsidy, devaluation, privatization and above all, to free market economy, there is no reason why they cannot do the same to see that their money is being spent on the purchase of butter and not guns. And at home, a rise in the amount of total aid disbursement and a reprioritization can cause aid to aid humanity.

more committed as far as

Admission Tests: Points to Ponder

HE recent government decision about the admission tests of the tertiary-level has sparked off mixed feelings. It came as a shock to many and relief to other's: shock, because of the very abruptness (if not the arbitrariness) of the decision; relief, because of the welcoming sign of the government's waking up to the procrastination problem which has been plaguing the universities for quite a long

A high-powered body. headed by the education secretary and peopled by the vice-chancellors of the universities, reportedly resolved to dissolve the existing entrance examinations in favour of the public examinations namely SSC and HSC. After bulldozing the college admission tests, the government probably finds it timelyenough to streamline the gateway to universities. And evidently, at one fell swoop, the government deems to straighten up things!

The hastiness of the deci-

sion, however, leads to a notorious hunch — a possibility of a revenge motif. Especially after the recent embarrassment of the government involving twenty 'meritorious' students' admission, one cannot simply waive such thought. These 'high scoring' group of 20 (G-20) preferred attending the award-giving ceremony of the Prime Minister to sitting for the highly competitive admission test of the Dhaka University. After all, they had the assurance of the honourable Secretary and faith on the capability of the v.c. But their naivety resulted in a loss of one academic year as the vice-chancellor of the Dhaka University failed to make his colleagues and students understand about the 'gravity' of the situation. Even his exercise of the Special Power Act fell into deaf ears in the face of resistance by teachers and students. This futile effort can well shape a passion for retribution.

Quite laudably, the conscientious members of the

by Shamsad Mortuza

Dhaka University resisted the vested interest to override the admission rules, provided by the University Act of 1973. The act has clearly given the universities the necessary provision to select their freshmen students. Each department of the university has its prerequisites about selection. The Architecture Department, thus, asks about projection or perspectives: English Department about Chaucer: Bangla about Kalidsh and Pharmacy Department about

Paracetamol and so on. Pitiably, these demands of the tertiary-level are not addressed at the secondary level. So, right after the Higher Secondary exam. a student rushes for a guide book or for a place in a coaching centre. And the mushrooming coaching centres - which by now has become a phenomenon — step in with the promise of admission, a ticket to heaven.

the pharmaceutical name of

The coaching centres can on the lacunae of the state prescribed syllabus. They keep a very high profile; giving full page colour adverisements in national dailies; distributing computers among successful students, and not to mention alluring the ill-paid university college teachers, albeit a micro-sec-

tion of them. Apart from the coaching centres, the student leaders have further complicated the admission process. These Machiavellians, by hook or by crook, squeeze money out of the pocket of the applicants. They black-market admission forms, rob money in the name of admission and what not. In the Jahangirnagar University, a couple of years back, on the last day of admission from merit list, an applicant was held hostage by some student activists to make room for a candidate coming from the waiting list. And there is, of course, the problem of delay in admission. These factors, altogether have propelled a wind against the admission test. But one should not chop off one's head to remove headache. Problems in the admission tests should be sorted out. By no means, the present admission tests should totally yield to the public examinations, especially when the SSC and HSC scores are very much vulnerable to corruption. True, there is corruption among the university staff but it is quite insignificant vis-a-vis the corruption, that has well struck its roots in Bangladesh.

In the universities, in par-

ticular, there is a check and

balance. And that is why we have seen the retaking of an exam after alleged question leakage. But, think of the cadet colleges. Most of their products get high scores in the SSCs and HSCs (which they give sitting at their own schools with familiar atmosphere prevailing). But their performance at the tertiary level is far from satisfactory. The disparity between urban and rural colleges is another nagging problem which will raise question against the proposed change in the admission process. The rural students hardly have any access to the latest development in the educational arena. They are less equipped than their urban counterparts. On the other hand, the rural students have the blessings of their teachers and influential guardians which effect their results. And that is why, on the eve of SSC or HSC examinations, we notice the exodus of the examinees towards the remote village centres where the proctoring Magistrates have a meek role and the police remain as non-chalant as ever Consequently, we have thou sands of educated manpower who cannot write a single correct Bangla or English application even after receiving the highest degree from the

universities. If the public examinations are to be rated highly in tune with the government's deci-

sion, one should first think of having a centralised exam. Or else, the discrepancy between different boards, between urban and rural students will remain. The intermediate syllabus should be up-dated in accordance with the requirements of the Honours and Pass Degree courses. Strict measures should be taken against the vested quarters creatures involved in polluting the admission tests.

Besides, the universities can run their own foundation courses to familiarize the students with basic grammar skills, library usage, correspondence, computers, etc. This they can do will the very fund received from selling admission forms. Even if a university fails to start its Honours classes immediately after the publication of intermediate results, the uni versity should arrange admission of the applicants as early as possible, without keeping the admission seekers in uncertainty and un-

necessary traumas. Our government likes to figure out its success in terms of figures. The pass percentage at the SSC and HSC has shot up to nearly 70 per cent in recent years. With the introduction of the question-bank, 800 plus has become an ordinary score for most examinees which some 10 years back was a utopia. The hastily taken decision about the question-bank has backfired and the government is trying to abandon the

idea before it is too late. Same can be predicted about the recent decision about the admission tests. It is indeed a prematured deci sion. The graduate level colleges and universities need the admission tests, with necessary changes and precautions to course. There is of course, room for amendment. But total ban on admission test might lead to a disaster - an academic plague for which we are not immuned.

The writer is a lecturer in Jahangirnagar English.

BUSCOPE by Voyager

Our Politicians Should Grow Up

F Democracy was the proverbial monkey it would be sliding up and down the greasy pole of current events in Bangladesh and losing more than it gained. If politics is "the Art of the Possible" its practitioners in Bangladesh have turned it into" - "the Art of the Improbable". If politicians are players in the game of politics they have been sent off the field by their own captains. If the list could go on my point.

unnecessary impasse created and we should apportion ing for those of us who stand back from active politics. In fact were it not painful it would be amusing to stand back and watch as the poet Igbal said, "Bazeecha-e-Atfal hai duniya mere agay, Hota hai shab-o-roz tamasha mere

show growth and development in spite of the relucoff because of the political to grow up!

stranglehold that has had us in its grip for the last year or so. Can we continue to afford the luxury of personal quests for power and blatant self interest at the cost of national development? Should we as responsible citizens allow street agitation to hold us hostage for ends which are relevant only to the political party leadership?

In the final analysis what does it matter which party is in power - all we want or and on but I am sure you get ' need is law and order and minimum interference from The ridiculous and quite the government to allow us to get on with the serious busiby all the political parties, ness of survival. The international imperatives which blame equally, is reminiscent dictate the flow of aid and of children squabbling over a the regional realities which favourite toy. The reality that affect our economic destiny the toy is Bangladesh and its can really not be changed by 120 million people is sober- any government - democratically elected or not. So why are we allowing this disruption of life to continue?

As the voters who will ultimately decide the fate of the political parties if and when an election is held let us appeal to them to show some good sense. They must The economy continues to agree to at least meet to discuss their differences and search seriously for a formula tance of the political parties to resolve the situation. This to accede to good sense and extreme and inflexible posirealize that the long term fu- tion that all sides have ture of Democracy in the adopted cannot be called country may be jeopardized politics. The concerns exby their course of action. This pressed by both points of is in itself an indication of view have some justification. the boom we could enjoy What cannot be justified is to given even a modicum of sta- bring the country to a halt for bility and order. So many gains which will not materischemes, plans and initia- ally affect the common man. tives have been stalled or put it is time for our politicians

Scar on Society

Sir, It is one thing when mastaans, criminals and other such known crooks commit some offence and quite another when the people on whom we depend for our safety and security are the perpetrators of the crime themselves. Yes indeed, I am referring to the brutal, obdurate and the arrogant manner in which the poor housemaid from Dhanmondi was raped and later killed by none other than some wayward policemen in Dinajpur. We feel like a child whose parents instead of protecting him actually torture him. To whom should the child go? Probably to some other sensible member of the family. But when members of the law enforcing agency commit a crime, we can expect the government to take care of the matter. But instead of doing so, the people at the helm of affairs attempted to malign the poor girl so that the whole issue would be forgotten. The way the general people of Dinajpur flared up bears testimony to the fact

that indeed criminals, in the unusual form of policemen, had resorted to not only killing young Yasmeen but also tried to conceal the facts. It is not surprising that an offender, be a civilian or a policeman, would try to prove innocent by concocting a story packed with lies. What is, however, disappointing is that the government press releases in most unexpected and shameless manner tried to defend the offenders. This hurts us endlessly. This is neither a political nor a feminist issue. What harm is there for the authority to come up with the true story. as the fault of a few policemen cannot be the entire government's shortcoming? Admitting the truth and mete out exemplary punishment according to the law of the land would only raise the credibility of the administra-

I am not writing in favour or against hartal but against something that has ripped my heart into pieces recently. This is regarding the news about a person who was made naked in broad daylight

on the first day of hartal (I commend The Daily Star for their picture and story and for not making the picture identifiable). It is impossible to believe that this is anything else other than the sickness of an otherwise healthy group of youngsters. What most youngsters do not understand is that these employees are under pressure to go to their offices. No one likes to come to office walking several miles unless he is bound to. Yet I realize that picketers are not supposed to understand these reasons and allow someone to go to work during the hartal hours. But does that entail the punishment that he was meted out? The humiliated person

must have been mortified by being stripped in the public while the living members of Yasmeen's family may be living with the nightmare but I, like many others, am ashamed to live in a society that is losing the slightest respect for other individuals. How did the relatives and acquaintances react when they saw the pictures of the said

gentleman in newspapers? Is Yasmeen's family going to accept the tragedy because they are very poor and the offenders are policemen? Does this mean we are living in a lawless society? Once again these are not political issues but moral ones. Where are we heading to? What is next? Forgive me for not knowing the answers to these ques-

Let Dhaka, or for that matter entire Bangladesh, not burn like Dinajpur burnt. If others feel like I do please make your voice heard - loud and clear.

Mahmudul Hug Khan University of Dhaka

* * * * * * Sir. This is simply outrageous and barbaric to say the least, to read the daily newspapers and to see the photograph of an elderly gentleman being stripped of his ciothes on his way to office. by some picketers.

As reported in the newspapers, at least one person on his way to office, was attacked by picketers on 16th September and was stripped of his clothes. I do not un-

derstand what motivated these students to do such a heinous act to a person of their father's age without any provocation whatsoever.

It can be presumed that these so-called students are tutored to do such heinous acts by their political guardians. I do not understand why people are not raising their voice against these political leaders who are the main proponents for creating this sort of anarchy in the society. I am equally frustrated with the government who can not give freedom and protection to its citizens. I was wondering, can we call ourselves a civilized nation?

Razee Chowdhury Dhanmondi, Dhaka

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Sir, The just concluded 1 marathon 72-hour countrywide hartal called by the mainstream opposition political parties has not only paralysed the nation but also has crossed all limits, where the pro-hartal activists went on stripping a gentleman of his clothes. This is one hell of a thing which the public

never have dreamt of. For a certain group of people. snatching the very basic rights of a human being falls within their practise, and therefore, such sights mean

nothing to them. In healthy and normal circumstances, disrobing people is indeed an act of madness, disgrace and vulgarity ever committed to a person. Have the leaders of the opposition political parties gone bizzare? Will they be accountable for the intolerable insult inflicted to the gentleman for the sake of greed for power?

The public have so far been extremely tolerant and bore enough of the meaningless and unending hartals and other destructive politics which is only incurring immense damages to the country and its people. We don't know what is in store for us to see in future, but one thing is clear that the shameful incident has caused a great concern and seriously undermined the support to the opposition cause, if any

A Citizen

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