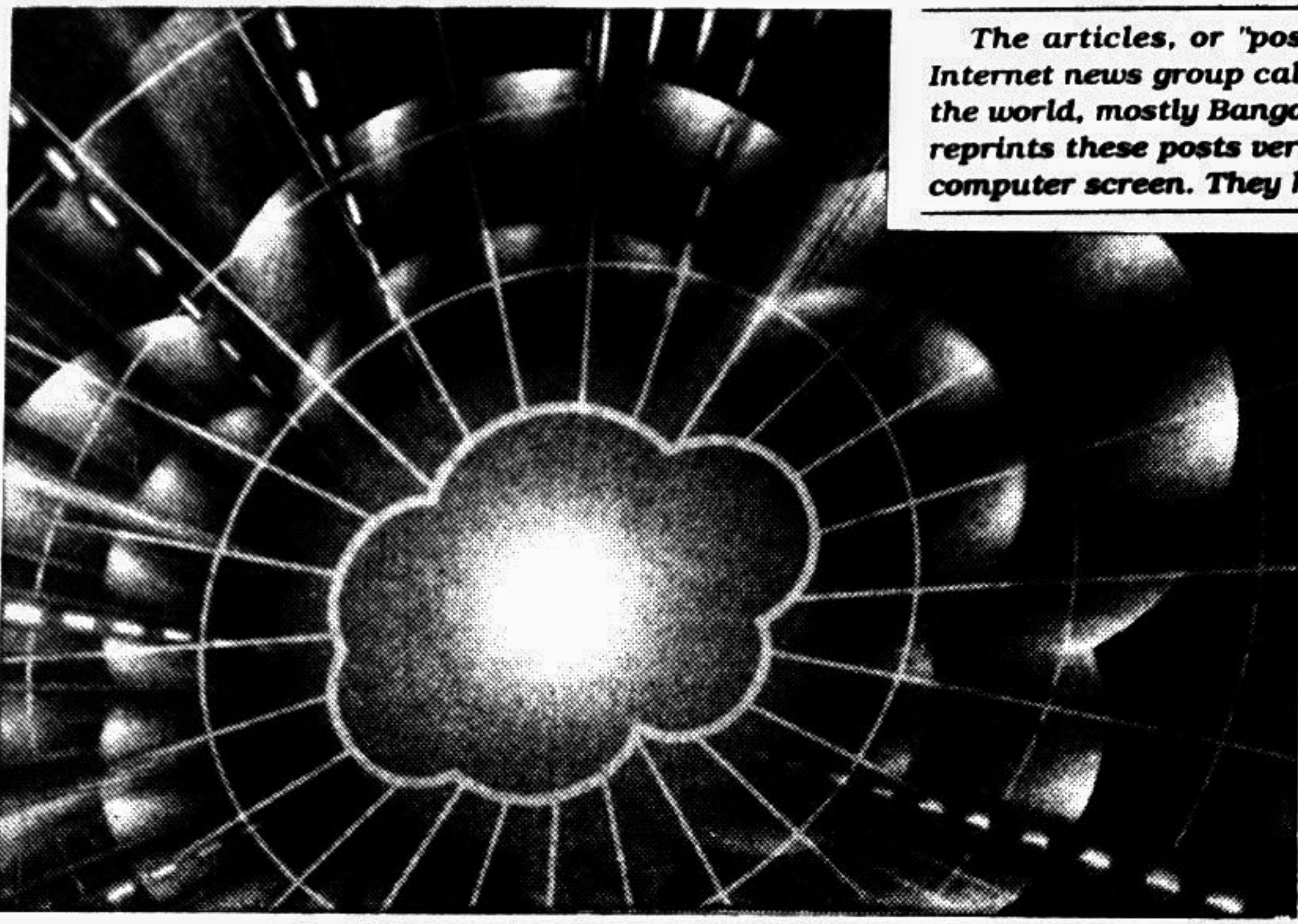


LIVE FROM THE INTERNET

The articles, or "posts" (to use Internet parlance) published in this page come from the Bangladesh Internet news group called "soc.culture.bangladesh," or SCB. In this newsgroup, Internet users from around the world, mostly Bangladeshis, discuss issues relevant to Bangladesh. In "Live from the Internet" the Daily Star reprints these posts verbatim (complete with English language errors) — just as they would appear on your computer screen. They have only been edited for size and relevance to the subject matter.



History of the Internet

At last the Internet

by Edwin Diamond and Stephen Bates

THE ARPANet construction contract was awarded to Bolt Beranek & Newman (BBN), a research firm based in Cambridge, Massachusetts, which had close ties to MIT. BBN shipped the new communications software in August 1969 to UCLA and then to SRI in October. At a November demonstration the two California machines exchanged data. The first long-distance packet-switched network was in operation. By the end of the year, all four nodes were online.

At this point, the striking figure of Vinton Cerf, the computer scientist The New York Times called the father of the Internet, begins to take a leading role in the narrative. Born in 1943 in New Haven, Connecticut, Cerf turned his back on Yale University to do his undergraduate work in mathematics at Stanford University and to get his master's and doctorate in computer science from UCLA. In 1969, Cerf was a graduate student working at UCLA's Network Measurement Centre, observing how the new four-node ARPANet was functioning — and what it would take to make it malfunction. "There were many times when we would crash the network trying to stress it," Cerf recalled.

Soon he was collaborating with Robert Kahn, an MIT math professor on leave to work at BBN. Cerf and Kahn developed a set of software "protocols" to enable different types of computers to exchange packets, despite varying packet sizes and computer clock speeds. The result, TCP/IP was released in 1973 (by which time Cerf was teaching at Stanford). TCP — Transmission Control Protocol — converts messages into packet streams and reassembles them. IP — Internet Protocol — transports the packets across different nodes, even different types of networks. Just as TCP/IP stands for a whole "suite of protocols," not just those two, so were there several fathers of the Internet; Cerf credits many people, "thousands by now," for helping create the computer-network communications system we have come to know.

In 1977, having left Stanford for ARPA (then called DARPA, the D for "Defense" added in 1972), Cerf worked on a different sort of interconnectivity. From a van cruising along a San Francisco Bay Area freeway, a computer sent messages that travelled, by packet radio, satellite, and landlines, a total of 94,000 miles (150,400 km). "We didn't lose a bit!" Cerf later recalled. The project demonstrated that computers could communicate to and from the battlefield. No longer was ARPA funding pure computer science research; now DARPA insisted on what Cerf termed "militarily interesting" projects like this one. Even so, Cerf's C3 innovation arrived as the Cold War was flagging — reminiscent of how ENIAC had been delivered at the end of World War II.

Cerf has suffered severely impaired hearing since birth and has worn a hearing aid since he was 14. It is serendipitous but fitting, then, that his TCP/IP made possible the text-based Net communications systems so popular today, including electronic mail (e-mail), discussion lists, file indexing and hy-

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Oxfam initiative

Before their community underwent its historic change, Bahanur and the other village women had no economic or social rights. Beatings by their husbands were commonplace.... Women did not own any possessions. Essentially, women were viewed as non-entities.

—Denise Wright, Australia

Denise Wright
dwright@metz.une.edu.au
Australia

There has been some discussion on the net concerning Bangladesh women, marriage age etc. The following may be of interest.

Oxfam America, the international development and disaster relief organization, has released a video entitled Community. Community is a 24-minute documentary filmed in the Sathkira district of rural southwestern Bangladesh. It portrays the dramatic social and economic transformation of a community through local development initiatives, which includes micro-credit and gender training.

The change of traditional attitudes against women and the successful economic development projects in Community are documented in part through the story of Habibur and Bahanur, hus-

band and wife. Before their community underwent its historic change, Bahanur and the other village women had no economic or social rights. Beatings by their husbands were commonplace. Women did not eat until all members of the family had had their meal. Women could not go out publicly unless accompanied by a male. Women did not own any possessions. Essentially, women were viewed as non-entities.

Uttaran, a Bangladesh non-governmental development organization funded by Oxfam America, began working with the women of the Sathkira district by providing them credit for starting small-scale businesses and offering training in women's issues. Uttaran expanded the opportunities it offered to also include men, emphasizing that social and economic growth depends on the participation of all members of the com-

munity. Over time, many of the oppressive traditional attitudes against women began to fade, replaced by the realities and successes of the community's income-generating work.

Community is the second of a two-part video series, following Shelter. Shelter depicts how loss of life and livelihood from cyclones in Bangladesh has dramatically decreased after a project to build cyclone shelters, plant trees and conduct disaster training was initiated. This project has been spearheaded by the Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee (BRAC). BRAC's work has been extremely successful because of the disaster preparedness program, less than 200 people died in a devastating cyclone in 1994, whereas a similar cyclone killed three million people in 1970.

The Human Laboratory

Who cares if a Third World woman dies?

Dari Meade
dmeade@lo.org
USA:

There was a good documentary on the CBC program called The Human Laboratory. It was about the testing of unproven birth control methods using women in Third World countries without the women's knowledge. They talked about the implantation of women in Bangladesh with Norplant even once they knew it caused fatigue and blindness.

White supremacist anti-immigration groups like the American group FAIR (Federation of Americans for Immigration Reform) were funding these dangerous birth control methods in Third World countries as a war on people-of-color. They were doing it with help of CIA and international family planning organizations.

It looks like the white supremacists want to rob what is often the only source of power for women-of-color in the Third World: reproductive choice.

Shabbir A. Bashir
S.Bashir@kcl.ac.uk
UK:

The following report has been adapted from a recent

It looks like the white supremacists want to rob what is often the only source of power for women-of-color in the Third World: reproductive choice.

—Dari Meade, USA

BBC television documentary program in the UK - "Horizon" - for posting on SCB. The episode was titled "The Human Laboratory". The factual content of the documentary has been kept intact, but the sentences have been rephrased and edited so as not to impinge on the BBC or anyone else's copyrights. The sole purpose of posting this on SCB is to bring this matter to a wider circulation - particularly those with interest in the plight of Bangladesh and her people.

The report

Recently Norplant was released in the west - it seemed to be every woman's dream - hassle free sex, no daily pill and extremely reliable protection. This method of contraception involves six implants surgically inserted under the skin of the arm which stay there for five years and release a hormone inhibiting ovulation. It is claimed to be the most widely studied contraceptive to arrive on the market by the developers.

But some women have had problems. Patsy Smith had Norplant inserted after she had her second child. "Few months after having Norplant inserted, I started getting horrible headaches. I started to notice things were blurry ...", complained Ms Smith. Her eyesight deteriorated over the next year and she was taken to hospital when the symptoms became unbearable. She is now awaiting "pseudo tumor cerebrae" - a condition where increased fluid pressure crushes the optic nerve and causes permanent damage. She is already permanently blind in one eye and partially blind in the other.

40 out of 100 of who used Norplant had similar symptoms and out of these, 8 had the same condition as Ms Smith. Eye sight disorders, strokes, persistent bleeding and problems with removal (of the implant) are only some of the complaints. Many women have no such side effects but thousands are now taking legal action in the west.

For 20 years, Norplant was studied in the west but mostly in developing countries. After its standard clinical trials had been completed, pre-introductory clinical trials were held to assess the Norplant's safety, efficacy and acceptability in

local conditions.

The BBC (Horizon) went to Bangladesh to investigate one such trial. In the mid 80's stories had begun to emerge from women's health campaigns. Farida Akhtar, the Executive Director of 'UBINIG' heard of women in the slums of Dhaka with Norplant in their arms who were desperate to get it removed. It started with the slum women, very secretly. They did not tell anybody - there was no announcement.

"We found that family planning workers came to (the women) and (warned) them that they must not talk about this to any outsider woman and they were afraid to talk to us. It took (us) sometime to get their trust to be open - they were so afraid that you could see it in their face(s) - they were really afraid!" said Ms Akhtar.

Another trial had been dropped earlier because of public outcry over the way Norplant was being promoted as a safe drug when it was still under test. While Farida Akhtar was investigating this trial, her offices were raided by (the then) military government officials.

Ms Akhtar and her team

all in the drug trial (was that) potentially serious side effects appeared to like blindness have been ignored. According to the BBC, in 1993 the report of this first phase of the trial concluded, "Norplant is a highly effective, safe and acceptable method among Bangladeshi women." It stated less than 3% of the women reported significant medical problems - no mention of eyesight disorders or women being refused removal.

Reflecting on the quality of the research, Ms Haque said, "I think the Norplant trials were bad signs - because they were not really recording the side effects. They were scolding women when they wanted to report side effects. Their requests for removal were disregarded. So how can they tell us that it was an acceptable method for women, and that it has been scientifically tested out? How can I even accept that this has been the work of scientists?"

"If you look at the trial, it looks as though these women are no better than a guinea-pig, and a guinea-pig perhaps is more expensive in the west. That's why our women are cheaper here, so they are easily controlled and they can be easily tested" said Ms Akhtar.

These trials were developed with funds from the US Agency for International Development (USAID). Dr. Nils Daulaire, the Chief Health Policy Adviser of USAID said, "We have very strict rules at AIDS in terms of any experimentation that's done. There are certain standards in terms of human subjects that have to be met - and informed consent is a critical part of that. I've not been made aware of a serious lapses in terms of any of the AIDS trials. If there are cases where women were not accorded the opportunity to have Norplant removed, that would be a very serious breach. If this was done with USAID funds, we would take that extremely seriously."

The Horizon reporter then confronted him: "Well, it has been done with USAID funds, it appears and we have interviewed many women who had problems getting it removed. How can this be with a clinical trial that you are running with American tax payers money?" Dr. Daulaire replied, "Well I can't answer that specific clinical trial because it's one that I'm not personally familiar with. I can't tell you that how it can be. I can tell you if it is, there will be severe consequences. The organisations that would be responsible for monitoring and overseeing these would have to clarify

Eye sight disorders, strokes, persistent bleeding and problems with removal (of the implant) are only some of the complaints. Many women have no such side effects but thousands are now taking legal action in the west.

Ofcourse I feel very angry. I went to several other doctors and offered them money to take those things out, but they all refused.

There have been many (cases) where these women have sold their cow or their goat which was the only asset they had for treatment, otherwise her family can't survive. Their economic condition was torn - their family happiness was totally gone.

By now the news of the Norplant testing had become widespread. Nasrin Haque of Naripokkho said, "Participation in a clinical trial requires that the person who is participating understands it is a trial, that the drugs they are testing out is still in experimental stages. This was categorically missing."

Perhaps more worrying of

The Daily Star reader's Asking

Ifat Parveen, Reader, The Daily Star.
Would you accept a one party parliament election which is apparently in the offing?

R.Begum
rb9@ukc.ac.uk
UK:
You have nothing to do if other parties refuse to take part.

Wasi
wasi@mit.edu
USA:

This question doesn't have a simple answer. If elections are fair, then I will accept it. Elections are supposed to give the people a chance to choose and if the opposition doesn't join a fair election, then it is their loss. But the bigger question is whether the elections can be fair.

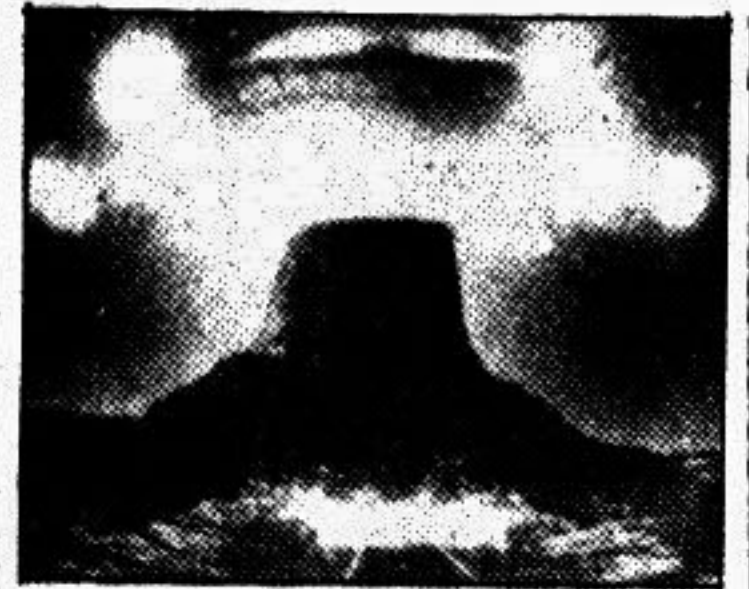
More replies coming:

Khokan Chandra Paul
khokan@fmsun3.ec.tkanazawa-u.ac.jp
Kanazawa University, JAPAN.

(Re: War criminals of 1971)
All types of war criminals should be brought on trial according to existing law. But for the war criminals of 1971 my view is different. They were freed unconditionally by the then government.

It is not benevolent attempt to stage an outcry for their trial after such colossal gap, especially for a country where major part of population is starving.

(Re: Student politics)
Student politics for a third world country is necessary but not essential and this politics must be confined for the rights of students without involving to any political party.



What we can learn from Nigers coup

Rinku Anisuzzaman
anisuzzaman.1@osu.edu
USA:

The recent coup in the west african country of NIGER should be a wake up call for Bangladesh. The military overthrew the first democratically elected president after the army chief of staff became tired of a parliamentary crisis in which the president was engaged in a bitter political fight with his opposition. The Niger army chief of staff decided a coup was required to put Niger back on track towards solving its problems. Note the similarities between Bangladeshes current political climate, and the political climate in Niger just before the army coup. This coup took place just the other day. Bangladesh should get its political house in order quick or we too might join Niger in having the army step in to restore "order", and by the way, the USA and France have suspended all aid to this poor west African country. I wonder if they would do the same in the case of a army coup in Bangladesh.

Bangladesh UN soldiers-WHY????

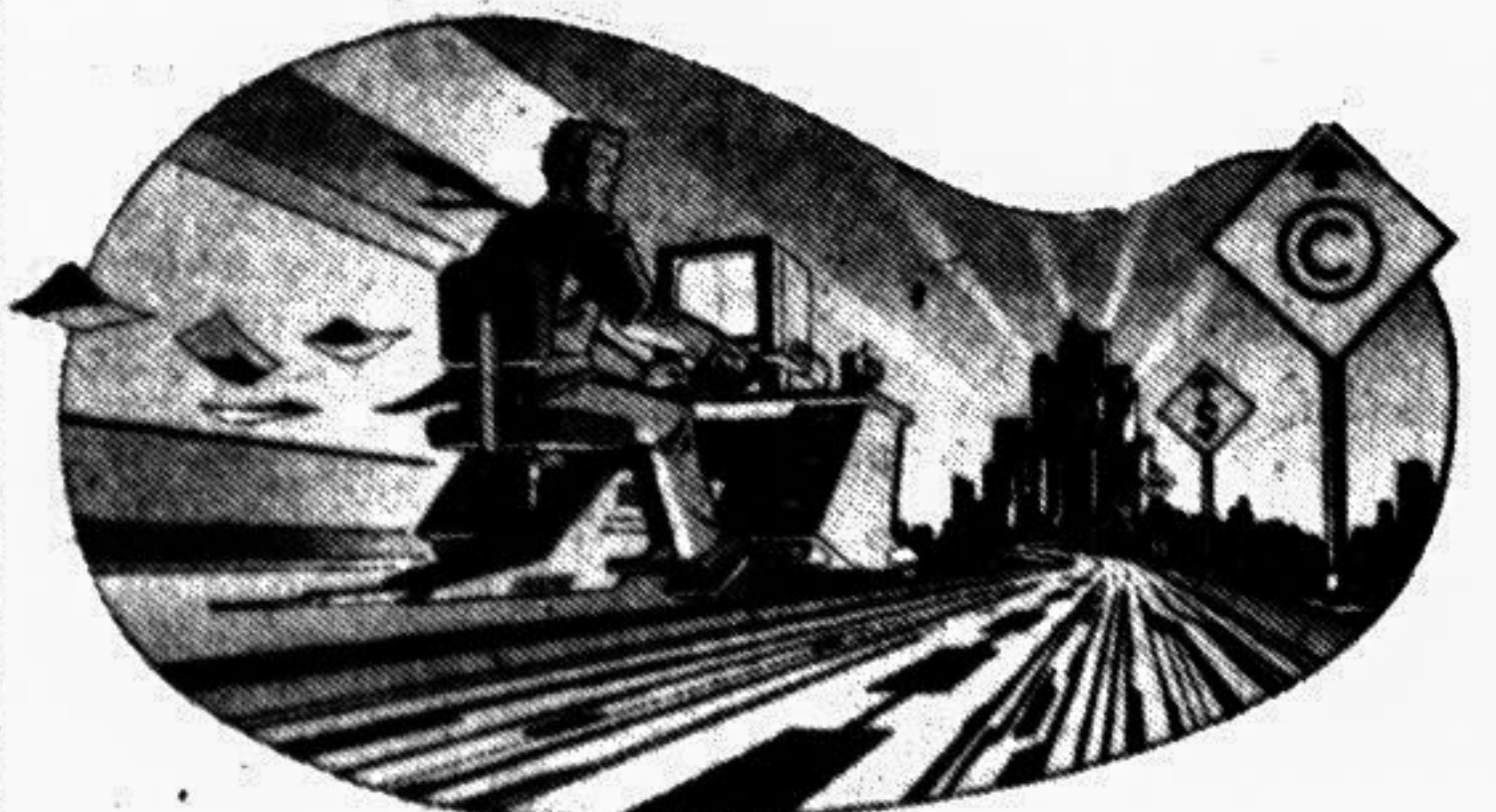
Petri Hanhineva
donna@paju.oulu.fi
Finland:

To my knowledge Bangladesh is one of the poorest countries in the world. Although, this country sends soldiers all around the world, but these operations are very expensive. How can they afford this??

"Mr. T"
t@com. USA:
Because UN pays them.

Rafat Mahmud Sadiq
sadiq@gn.ecn.purdue.edu
USA:

It's good politics - sending soldiers to Saudi resulted in their cancelling some of our debt. Secondly, in UN peace-keeping operations, the UN picks up the tab (or at least most of it).



The newsgroup, "soc.culture.bangladesh", has been provided courtesy of Agni Systems Limited.

You can also take part in this page by sending us your views / questions / comments / inquiries (anything that you want). The Daily Star will then send your responses into the Internet newsgroup free of charge where they will be read and commented on by participants from around the world. Letters should be no more than 100 words in length and titled.

Please send or fax your Internet posts to: M.Shamimuzzaman, Page incharge, "Live from the Internet", Daily Star, House 11, Road 3, Dhanmondi R/A, Dhaka-1205. (GPO Box no:3257) Fax: 863035.

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USA:
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