

# Junior Secondary and Secondary Level Education Comments on the New Curricula

by Mofazzal Hossain

NEW and modified curricula at the junior secondary and secondary stages have been introduced since January 1996. The curricula have been devised and finalised by a Task Force headed by the Education Secretary, Md Irshadul Huque under a project financed by the Asian Development Bank. The activities of the project included:

a) development of curricula of Secondary and Higher Secondary levels;

b) textbook writing/ composition and their publication.

Considering the importance of the curricula for such a basic level, a wider committee with representation from other important disciplines/areas could be formed instead of making a strictly bureaucratic and tightly controlled committee under the Education Secretary. In that case, more diversified points coming out from such a committee would have facilitated to formulate curricula suitable for strengthening the base of the students for building their career according to their aptitude and potential.

Article 17(1) of the Bangladesh Constitution provides guideline on the framework of the education system. The article is specially important for formulating education policies at the lower level. As per this article, the State is to adopt effective measures for the purpose of establishing a uniform, mass-oriented and universal system of education. The Task Force, in violation of this basic and fundamental guideline of the Constitution, designed and formulated a multidimensional parallel system of education at the primary level.

The new curricula has bifurcated the education system at the junior secondary level into general education and madrasa education sub-systems. At the secondary level, three parallel sub-systems have been introduced — general, vocational and madrasa.

There are 9 compulsory subjects of 1000 marks at the junior secondary level under the general education sub-system. Besides, 100 marks have been allotted for one optional paper to be chosen from Arabic/Sanskrit/Pali. The compulsory papers are: (1) Bangla, (2) English, (3) Mathematics, (4) Religious Studies, (5) Social Science, (6) General Science, (7) Agriculture/Home Economics, (8) Arts & Crafts and (9) Health & Physical Education.

Subjects like history, geography and hygiene have not been given proper importance

in the curricula of junior secondary and also of the secondary level. This could not be done as the curricula has been overburdened by the inclusion of subjects like agriculture, home economics, other languages at these levels.

Turning to the curricula of the secondary level, one finds that the system has been divided into three parallel sub-systems, viz. general, vocational and madrasa. The general sub-system has again been divided into science, humanities and commerce groups. At the secondary level 1000 marks have been allotted for compulsory and elective subjects and 100 marks for one optional subject. Marks earmarked for different categories are — (a) General compulsory — 500 marks; 200 in Bangla, 200 in English and 100 in Mathematics; (b) Other compulsory — 300 marks; Religious Studies — 100, Agriculture/Home Economics — 100 and Social Science/General Science — 100; (c) Elective subjects: 2 subjects for 200 marks and (d) one optional for 100 marks.

Social Science has been made compulsory for science students and General Science is compulsory of humanities and commerce students.

Specialisation has been allowed in two elective and one optional subjects at the secondary level. Science, humanities and commerce students will choose subjects from the respective groups. Each discipline will choose two subjects from group A and one subject from group B. Science students will take 2 subjects of 200 marks from (a) Physics,

(b) Chemistry and (c) Biology. He or she will opt for one subject of 100 marks from a list of several science and non-science subjects like (a) Elective Mathematics, (b) Physics, (c) Chemistry, (d) Biology, (e) Geography, (f) Computer Studies, (g) Vocational Education, (h) Basic Trade, (i) Accounting, (j) Arabic/Sanskrit/Pali, (k) Physical Education & Sports.

From the above allocation of subjects it may be found that the allocation does not provide adequate opportunities for science education. To give an example, if a student takes Physics and Chemistry from Section A, he or she can take either Elective Mathematics or Biology or any other subject from Section B. Thus the present curriculum does not provide scope for taking all the basic science subjects i.e. Physics, Chemistry, Biology and Elective Mathematics together. As a result, his or her base for the higher secondary level will be too weak for taking all the four subjects mentioned above. If the curricula is not suitably modified with appropriate orientation towards science, it will surely have adverse effect on science education in this country. It may be noted that Elective Mathematics consolidates the background of a student who at the graduate level wants to choose technology-oriented subjects. Biology, on the other hand, opens opportunity of many other disciplines besides medicine.

The modified curricula have similarly seriously limited the scope of the students of humanities and business education group also. The stereotyped curricula for these two groups may have counter-productive effect against opening the talents of the future generation.

A few points on the special subjects like Agriculture and Home Economics included in the curriculum as compulsory are elaborated here. Agriculture is a special subject requiring science background. As a physical science agriculture bears marks for practical examination for which practical classes are mandatory. In such a situation, the Education Ministry has passed orders to the Education Boards to add marks for practical examination in agriculture for students when there are many institutions where practical classes cannot be held and practical examinations cannot be taken due to the lack of teaching aid and other physical facilities. Now the question arises: how a subject which is not taught in the class properly be included as a compulsory subject?

One compulsory subject alternative to Agriculture is Home Economics. Though it has not been specifically mentioned as to the option of the subjects, it is obvious that the option is on sex basis. In fact this has been made compulsory by the educational institutions from that point of view. This discriminatory syllabus has been imposed at a time when the slogan for elimination of all types of discrimination against women and demand for equal opportunities with their male counterpart are gaining momentum.

Before concluding the discussion, a few points on vocational and madrasa education are mentioned here. The purposes of vocational and madrasa education are different from that of the general education. While vocational education aims at training people for employment, self or otherwise, madrasa education aims at specialisation of religious education on Islam. Vocational education requires special and diversified training schools/institutes as per regional opportunities and requirements. Thus its need, purpose and approach being different from those of the general education, parallel curricula do not appear suitable and justified. Similarly madrasa education has different purpose and objective and quite different from the nature and purpose of general education. It falls short of fulfilling the requirements of modern and scientific education commensurate with the needs of the country.



## AIDS Education at the Workplace

by Maurice Bloem

**"Unlike devastating epidemics in the past which affected the old, the very young and the weak, AIDS is predominantly a disease of the strongest, most economically productive members of society. In order to minimize disruption and avoid irrational fear and prejudice it is the responsibility of all of us managers, employers and co-workers to address this issue."**

programmes for employees are approaches which have had significant impact in several countries. It was anticipated that introducing such programmes could contribute greatly to slowing down the spread of HIV/AIDS. Staff education should be the first step in controlling spread of the virus and misinformation about it and reducing prejudice against persons with HIV/AIDS.

"Unlike devastating epidemics in the past which affected the old, the very young and the weak, AIDS is predominantly a disease of the strongest, most economically productive members of society. In order to minimize disruption and avoid irrational fear and prejudice it is the responsibility of all of us managers, employers and co-workers to address this issue. It makes sound business sense to ensure that effective, humanitarian policies are implemented in

the workplace well in advance of significant problems arising." This is one paragraph of the introduction in a booklet on AIDS education at the workplace, produced by the Hong Kong Institute of Personnel Management, the Hong Kong General Chamber of Commerce and the Hong Kong AIDS Foundation and endorsed by the Employers' Federation of Hong Kong.

Supanya Lamsam of the Thailand Business Coalition on AIDS, pointed out that staff education is not an end in itself, but should be an ongoing process and an integral part of the organisation's policy. The key principles of such a policy are the rights of all employees (to work in a safe environment with effective protective measures, not to be compulsorily tested and a fair treatment in all circumstances) and the rights for those infected with HIV (freedom from discrimination, continuation of em-

ployment while still fit to work, access to normal treatment and benefits and confidentiality).

Steven Datz, a trainer of the Thailand Business Coalition on AIDS, explained that the relatively low costs of such a training. And then, as soon as AIDS is really affecting the company and the country, the costs will be beyond imagination. A simple prediction of the costs for Bangladesh, using the rate of spread predicted by a moderate WHO model, will show that if an average of only Taka 50,000 per person is lost, the cost to the nation in the next 20 years will be at least Taka 35.15 billion. Practice has shown that the costs of AIDS can be substantially reduced by effective AIDS prevention of which AIDS education at the workplace is a very essential part.

Although companies are willing to preserve money for this issue, many fear of being stigmatised. They are afraid if it becomes public, they are doing AIDS education, they will be seen as an organisation with HIV positives.

Education should be the first step, policy development is another, but the ultimate goal should be a follow-up and an intervention programme. "But that is up to the company," according to Datz. Companies should deal with matters like that there are no medical grounds for discriminatory AIDS policies. HIV-positive persons are usually able and need to continue in gainful employment; it makes no sense to screen out infected persons and a rational AIDS policy makes good business sense, helps to avoid unnecessary disruption and enhances a company's image as caring, socially responsible employer.

has been introduced by some NGOs. Employees are all provided with basic facts about the disease, to dispel common misconceptions and misinformation about HIV/AIDS, and help staff understand the steps they can take to protect themselves and their loved ones from the disease.

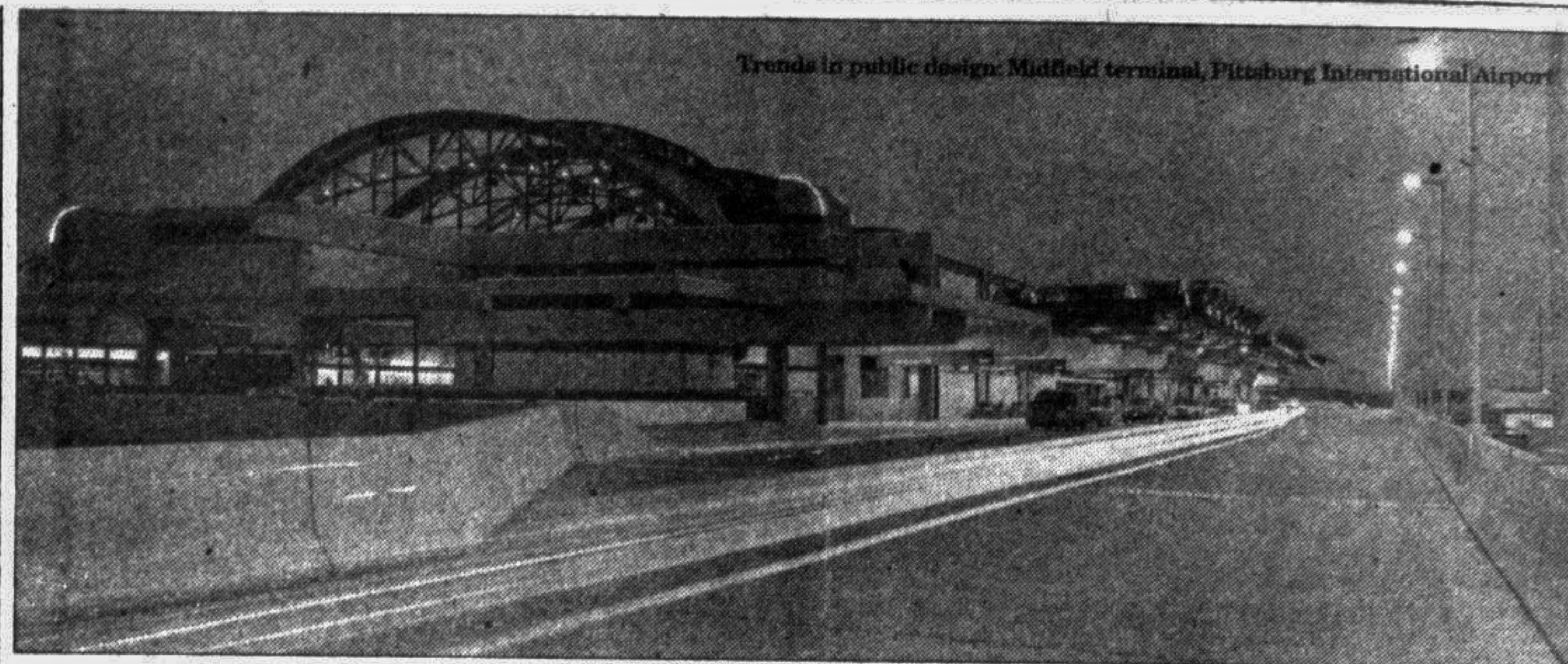
People in the audience of the workshop in Chiang Mai were worried about the costs of such an intervention, but Datz explained about the relatively low costs of such a training. And then, as soon as AIDS is really affecting the company and the country, the costs will be beyond imagination. A simple prediction of the costs for Bangladesh, using the rate of spread predicted by a moderate WHO model, will show that if an average of only Taka 50,000 per person is lost, the cost to the nation in the next 20 years will be at least Taka 35.15 billion. Practice has shown that the costs of AIDS can be substantially reduced by effective AIDS prevention of which AIDS education at the workplace is a very essential part.

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On September 18, 1995, a professor from a university in India who was participating at the conference in Chiang Mai, heard that he was fired, because of his HIV positive status. The university got the news about the professor's HIV status from Indian journalists who were also present at the conference. Through proper information and education, we have to make sure that similar discriminatory actions will not take place in Bangladesh.

The writer is presently working for the Christian Commission for Development in Bangladesh (CCDB).



## LETTER FROM HARVARD

### Downsizing in America

#### REFLECTIONS

by Dr Omar Rahman



THE other day while reading about corporate layoffs in the *New York Times*, I got a call from H.H. head hunter, an old college acquaintance of mine.

"What's up H.H.? What brings you to Cambridge?"

"Oh, I am giving a talk at the Harvard Club on 'Strategic positioning in changing markets,' sponsored by HBS (Harvard Business School)."

Having had long experience in decoding H.H.'s business speak, I said, "So you are talking about what to do when you are fired."

H.H. winced and said, "O.R. I see that you are as blunt as ever. I prefer to have my clients see unemployment as a 'growth experience,' a rebirth, a time to get in touch with their inner being" — (I should add that H.H. is a fabulously successful corporate consultant who advises companies on downsizing and restructuring. He is also a devotee of various eastern spiritual systems) — the fallout from a couple of years he spent in Berkeley California, discovering himself.

"I am a little puzzled, H.H. Aren't your clients the ones who usually do the firing instead of being the ones fired. I remember a few years ago in another landmark speech entitled 'How to get rid of deadwood,' you extolled the virtues of 'revitalising' companies, by getting rid of most of their employees. And didn't you have a best selling book entitled *The Zen of Corporate Raiders* where you so cogently justified the paying of millions of dollars of compensation to CEOs who cannibalise companies and sell off all their assets in the name of efficiency?"

"O.R. you are missing the point. It's one thing to get rid of those blue-collar workers, the ants on the assembly line,

consciously. 'Ah! yes, those were' the halcyon days of 1980s where 'Greed was good,' and making money was a religious experience. I remember my last book *The Holistic Company — How to Feel Good about Letting Go*. In that I stressed the importance of involving the employee in his or her layoff (what I called the 'restructuring') decision. It was my contention that handled properly, and explained fully, the employee was bound to understand, that he/she was making a noble sacrifice for the good of the shareholders. They may even welcome the opportunity to do their bit for the future prosperity of America. I mean that is what makes America great — lots of individuals sacrificing their own narrow individual aspirations and goals — for the betterment of the American economy, and the stock market."

"But don't your old arguments still hold? Aren't these people who are getting laid off after long years of faithful service to their corporations, just being ungrateful? After all they are the deadwood, the slugs, and jetsam that the CEOs have a religious right to get rid of, in the name of efficiency and CEO compensation."

"O.R. you are missing the point. It's one thing to get rid of those blue-collar workers, the ants on the assembly line,

the secretaries and office assistants, those drones who contribute so little to corporate profits. But here we are talking about the best and the brightest, Ivy league college graduates and even the shuddered MBAs from some of the finest schools of the land. Do you know?" — H.H.'s voice went down to a hushed whisper — "a third of my old HBS classmates have actually been 'downsized.' What is this world coming to — if it can happen to 'US' it can happen to anyone."

"Welcome to the real world, my friend — we all live with the sword of unemployment hanging over our heads — it's just that so long, it was your peers and clients who were wielding that sword, and now some of them are under its cutting edge."

"My point exactly, that's the topic of my speech and my new book. I have called it *Work in America, the End of Loyalty*. This is aimed at constructively channeling the insecurity that haunts the still employed. Here my basic message is that you have to start off with the premise that as an employee you are just a commodity, a pawn on a chessboard, a victim of corporate forces beyond your control. You always have to be one step ahead, market yourself aggressively, and be ready to jump ship as soon as you get a better offer. For my

more senior clients, I suggest the standard "pre-nuptial, golden parachute agreement". Make it too expensive for them to divorce you and you and the company will live happily ever after. The threat of suing the company also does wonders. I urge my readers not to take being fired lying down — they must roar like a wounded lion and hit back — threatening to release juicy tidbits of corporate misdeeds to the press always helps. The imagery here is of the 'primal scream', a return to our 'hunter roots'."

"Wait a minute H.H. in two successive books, you have put forth two diametrically opposing messages. For those who do the firing you have this inner growth, holistic notion, and for those who are fired, you are invoking images of war, and rebellion."

"Isn't that a masterful stroke O.R. You see, I call it the 'ying and the yang' of Corporations — the inherent tension between the powerful and the powerless, and how easily you can switch from one to the other. Boy, I never realised my youthful forays into eastern spiritualism would come in so handy. My publicist loves it. He has already lined up interviews with me on *Good Morning America* and *Geraldo Rivera*, where I am being billed as the new business guru — a sort of 'Deepak Chopra' of the business world."

"Well H.H. I see you haven't lost the art of the hustle."

"O.R. I suggest you get in touch with your inner self. I detect a tone of cynicism there. You've got to think positive. I'll send you a copy of my books. Got to go now! I am autographing my new book at the Harvard Book Store. Ciao!"

## Comets and Space

by M Ismail

A new comet in the sky has generated tremendous interest among the professional and amateur astronomers, star gazers and many others. The comet is so bright that even the amateur photographers are able to take photographs; it is the brightest seen over the last 20 years. The comet was discovered on 30th January this year by a Japanese astronomer Mr Hayakutake and is named after him. This is visible with naked eye in the partial to complete dark and cloudless sky of Bangladesh on the left of the polestar in the north sky for one and a half months. It is moving towards west and will disappear for next 10 to 20 thousand years. It will come as close as 15 million kilometers of earth. In the recent past Halley's comet made its last periodical visit close to earth in 1986 but its closest approach to earth was four times more in distance than Hayakutake and repeats its visit every 76 years. Earlier Kohoutek's comet was discovered in March 7, 1973 when it was at a distance of 600 million kilometers from sun and then approached within 15 million kilometers of sun and was supposed to be the brightest comet of this century.

Comets are members of the family of the sun like planets and their satellites but have very distinct difference characterised by their more eccentric orbit and greater range of inclination to ecliptic. They are the outermost members of the solar system making occasional visit to the inner planets. They consist of ice debris and survive only far from the sun. Comets are being studied from ancient times as their visit was not unknown since 22nd century BC. Their sudden and unexpected appearance was a source of puzzle and alarm and often taken as sign of imminent danger of war, famine, or natural disaster though some ancient astronomers, such as Seneca, recognised the astronomical nature of comets.

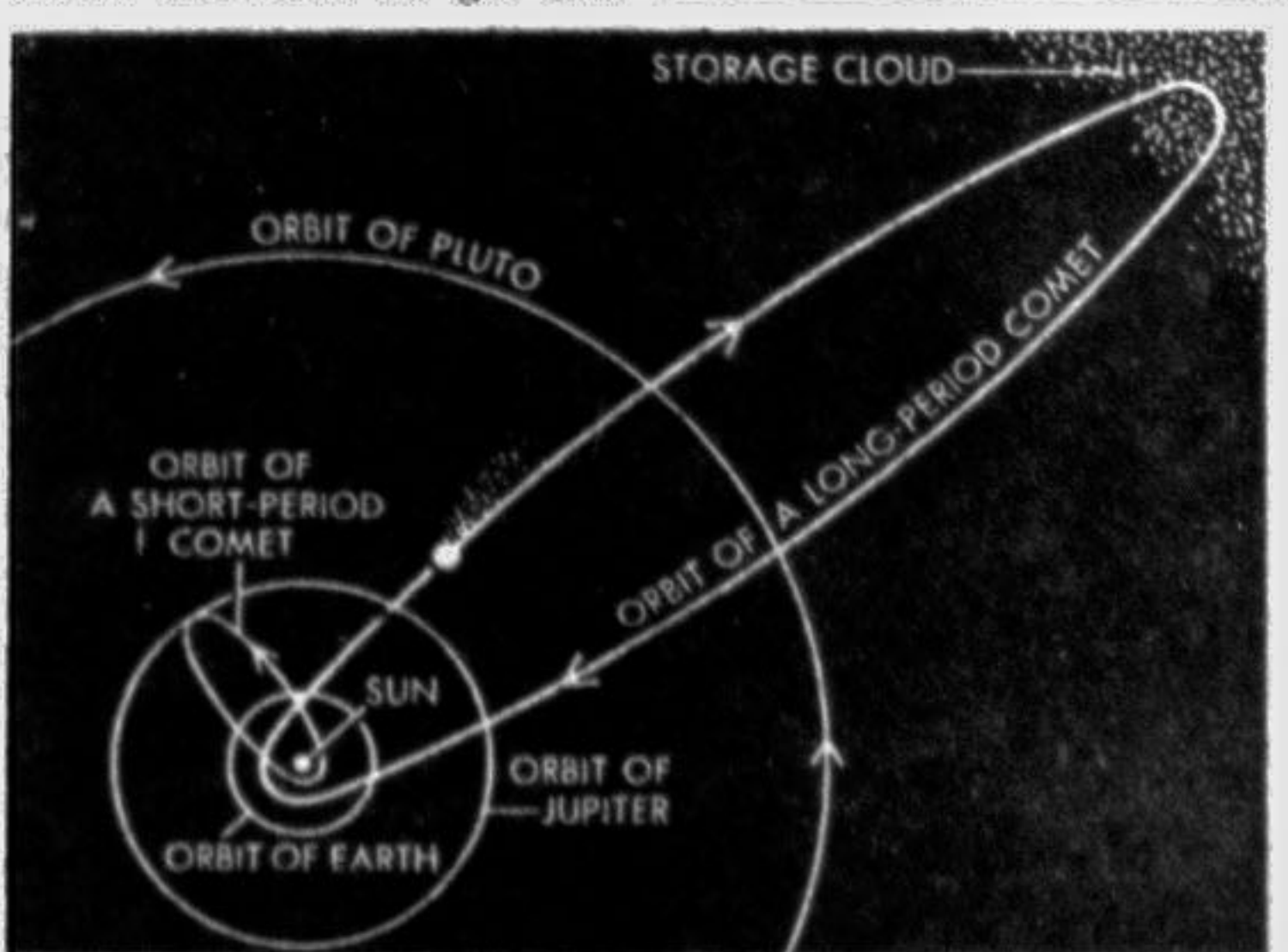
In modern times Danish astronomer Tycho-Brahe (1546-1601) demonstrated that the great comet of 1577 was appreciably more distant than the moon and inferred that they must be regarded as heavenly bodies. Later studies established that they are travelling round the sun in elongated ellipses or in parabolas and visible for only a small portion of their orbit in the neighborhood of the sun. In recent times, serious studies were made by sophisticated instruments and spacecrafts are employed for more detailed study of comets. Japan launched its two spacecraft in January 7, 1985 to investigate Halley's Comet which passed it from a distance of 125,000 miles. Vega 1 spacecraft of Russia flew

dust chase the comet itself as it recedes from the sun. Thus the tails can be 150 million miles long with dramatic light display.

Some of the comets pass through the solar system once and are lost beyond the solar system, but some of the comets' orbit is gravitationally modified by close encounter with any of the giant outer planets, changing their orbit to closed elliptical one and repeatedly returning to the inner solar system. Some of the comets are visible at night by close observation but some become so brilliant that they may even be visible in daytime such as, comet Ikeya-Seki was bright enough to be visible in daytime of October, 1965 with unaided eye.

Since the present Comet Hayakutake was unknown to us before 30th January, 1996 no arrangement was possible for study by sending investigative spacecraft but hope is there of extensive study by ground-based instruments of different observatories across the world. Most importantly, recently rescued Hubble Telescope recommissioned in the space above earth would hopefully give us more interesting data to enrich our knowledge about the formation and evolution of the solar system.

As the nucleus comes within the orbit of the outer planets of the solar system the volatile contents (elements) gradually warm up. By the time the nucleus enters the region of inner planets, these volatile elements start boiling. As these materials boil off the nucleus, they form a 'head' called coma that can measure tens of thousands of kilometers across. The coma grows as the comet gets closer to the sun. A stream of charged particles coming from the sun pushes the cloud behind, like a flag in the wind, forming its 'tail'. Gases and ions are blown directly back from the nucleus while dust particles are pushed more slowly. As the nucleus continues its journey, the dust particles are left behind in a curved arc. Both the gas and



TOM and JERRY

