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## Why Bangladesh lags behind in Scientific & Technological development

Ahmed S. Islam  
islam@utexas.cc. utexas.edu  
Texas, USA

Dear SCB readers:  
A question was posed in this forum as to why Bangladesh lags behind in the scientific and technological development compared to many other countries in the Asian subcontinent. I would try to give some information which may help the readers to have an idea on this issue. If the present government takes a cue from what had happened in the past, Bangladesh may be able to emerge out of this unfortunate situation and before long would compete with other Asian countries in their contribution to science and technology and at the same time helping substantially to the progress of the country in its economic emancipation.

During Ershad's time the Department of Education has three divisions one of which was the Division of Science and Technology. This division was raised to the department during the last regime under the Ministry of Science & Technology. When this division was created in late seventies, it was headed by a Joint Secretary; thereafter by an Additional Secretary sometimes promoted to the rank of Secretary during his holding of the office. However, this Ministry never got the recognition as being one of the most important one; it witnessed as many as 23 or 24 secretaries (AT AN AVERAGE ONE PER YEAR) since Bangladesh came into being with a small budget. Sometimes secretaries not in the good books of the government used to be selected for this post. The same principle held good while choosing a minister for this ministry.

During Ershad's time 80 to 90 per cent of budget of the research institutes were spent to provide salary to the employees of the research institutions and only 10 to 15 per cent to meet other expenses i.e. to run the laboratories, their expansion, purchase of scientific books and journals.

Thanks to the fruits of democracy: budget for research activities in BCSIR, AEC etc. increased a good deal during the last five years with concommitment to reasonably good quality research work in most of the institutes. This was also true for the universities where funds for research activities increased resulting in passing out of more PhDs. However, compared to what is happening in the contemporary world, the money spent in research institutes is only an insignificant amount.

In order to expand scientific and technological activities my appeal to the present

government will be the following:

1. Please make the Ministry of Science & Technology as strong as it could be headed by a seniormost Minister with department such as Department of Biotechnology as in India.

2. The staff members in that Ministry after their recruitment should be trained in different scientific disciplines in relation to R&D and without exception should be able to use "INTERNET" email to retrieve information in different fields of science and technology. Everyone working there must be able to use computers including spreadsheets, data entry besides wordprocessing.

3. The "Science Library" which was abolished during Ershad's time be revived with a division on "informatics".

4. The Status of UNESCO office may be raised to the status of a regional office. In other words, BNUC should be headed by a secretary so that full advantages of UNESCO can be reaped.

5. Steps should be taken for Bangladesh to become the member of all International Scientific Organizations which offer training, fellowships etc. International Centre for Genetic Engineering and Biotechnology (ICGEB). In spite of Bangladesh's being selected as a member of ICGEB, it has not been ratified by the "Treaty Section" of the legal office of UNO at New York because S&T Ministry is slow to take follow-up actions.

6. Special funds should be allocated for Bangladesh's scientists to represent the country in international meetings. In this context, the activities of Bangladesh Association for Advancement of Science, Bangladesh Academy of Sciences and all monodiscipline Associations should be supported and they should be taken into confidence in the formulation of scientific policies of the country. Steps should be taken immediately to speed up the construction of "Science Bhaban" in Dhaka on a priority basis.

Finally I would like to end up my posting by narrating a story recounted by the Nobel Laureate Professor Abdus Salam in one of his addresses to the Scientists in Dhaka.

Lamenting over the fate of scientific progress in Muslim countries Professor Salam said that some Korean politicians approached him in his Trieste office of the Institute of Theoretical Physics with the request whether Professor Salam could advise them as to how their country could produce Nobel Laureates.

No wonder South Korea is making such a tremendous progress in the field of science and technology.

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 Bangalees, 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.

## Pouting melissa trumps the cyberporn censors

Arlene Getz  
apgetz@aol.com

Boston, US

Melissa Wolf pouts provocatively as she promises to introduce me to busty beauties and sexy porn stars.

Melissa and her seductive body language are not under plastic wrap on the "adult" section of my local news-stand, but on my computer screen, via the Internet, the worldwide computer network.

The accompanying text tells me that if I am interested I can see others like her in more revealing poses.

All she promises, without leaving my keyboard.

I find her charms irresistible, so I click off the site. Had I wanted, however, I could have continued touring the darker side of the Internet in

A US court has ruled that attempts to ban sexually explicit material from the Internet contravene constitutional free speech guarantees. But the controversy over cyberspace censorship, reports Arlene Getz in her latest Internet column for Gemini News Service, is far from over.

search of a growing range of sexually explicit photographs or electronic bulletin boards discussing a range of erotica.

Such material is not easy for casual users to find and often requires credit card payments from those wanting to see revealing pictures.

Nevertheless, the increasing availability of pornography in cyberspace is the subject of a growing battle between free speech advocates and anti-pornography activists.

As a system of computer links originally designed by the United States military to withstand a nuclear attack, there are immense practical problems facing any would-be-censors.

In addition, anybody who can read messages on the Internet can also transmit, leading to a rash of cyberporn posted by users ranging from commercial companies to stu-

dents engaging in pranks.

The global nature of the network poses another difficulty.

Pornography in one society is offensive in another, rendering it difficult to enforce common definitions of indecency.

One of the main on-line services in the US, CompuServe, encountered these problems of decentralisation last December, when German anti-pornography police forced the closure of more than 200 sexually explicit Internet discussion groups and picture databases.

Fines of up to \$250,000 could have been imposed.

"The Internet may fairly be regarded as a never-ending worldwide conversation," wrote Judge Stewart Dalzell in his opinion on the case. "As the most participatory form of mass speech yet developed, the Internet deserves the highest protection from government intrusion."

Dalzell added that the law would have a dire effect on the Internet by forcing many databases and newsgroups to close because they could not protect themselves against prosecution by verifying the ages of those joining their electronic conversations.

Professional pornographers would have the money to hire staff to enforce measures like adult access codes or use of credit card numbers — both suggested as ways of keeping children away from questionable material. But non-profit organisations providing public service information on topics such as AIDS or prisoner rape would not have these resources.

The latest development came in the form of a legal ruling ordering the suspension of a US law banning "indecent" materials on the Internet. A three-judge panel ruled

### Disclaimer

The Internet is a global medium of communication and expression. It is free from all sorts of censorship and restrictions. It is truly a PEOPLE'S FORUM.

The opinions expressed in these columns are the author's own as they appear to all receivers of the Internet. We reproduce them authentically to permit our readers to know what Bangladeshi abroad are feeling and saying.

The Daily Star is not responsible for the opinions expressed in these columns.

— Editor

in June that the Communications Decency Act — aimed at making it illegal to transmit "indecent" or "patently offensive" material on the Internet — contravened free speech provisions of the US constitution.

The Act was designed to protect children from cybersmuts by outlawing the sending of indecent material to a minor or displaying it on the Internet — contravened free speech provisions of the US constitution.

There may be another private university at Dhaka soon and I may be involved in it.

Naeem Mohaiemen  
naeem@ix.netcom.com  
USA:

For the folks who are involved in setting up another private university, some questions. I know that folks are saying as private universities get better, there will be pressure on DU to get better. But I wonder if instead, result will be:

— More good professors deserting DU (many pros are already teaching at both places).

— As middle class/wealthy strata have a escape route for their children, in fact pressure to fix DU will lessen, not increase?

It might be instructive for the organizers of this 2nd university to read up on history of private schools in this country in 70s. As neighborhoods became more integrated, white flight from cities created suburban public schools which today are some of the best in the nation. Meanwhile the black and latino underclass are stuck in inner city schools which today are 100 times worse than they were in 60s.

Dalzell added that the law would have a dire effect on the Internet by forcing many databases and newsgroups to close because they could not protect themselves against prosecution by verifying the ages of those joining their electronic conversations.

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This change would result in an Internet that mirrors broadcasting and print, where economic power has become relatively coterminous with influence," the judge wrote.

The decision blocking enforcement of the Act is far from the final word on the subject. Conservative American activists are hoping the law will be upheld by the US Supreme Court.

They vow that even if the nation's highest court does not overturn the ruling, they will try to use existing obscenity laws to remove pornography from the Internet.

I think none of us care any more if DU goes to pot or not.

Is this a good thing?

I know that NSU has a few scholarships. But so do places like Deerfield and Spence in this country. Is the fate of the underclass here any better for those token scholarships?

## WHAT'S IN A NAME

Nashid Fermin  
b93nf@student.tdb.uu.se  
Sweden:  
HELLO,

Does anybody here have any idea about how much a 'name' costs? It seems like companies cannot use any name for a new product and specially if that name coincides with a person's surname. The person bearing that name (product name) has to give permission and that permission can cost a juicy amount.

Now to be more specific. Kao Corporate (Japanese company) wants to launch a product in Sweden with a friend's surname. The company's agent here has sent a letter informing my friend that his permission is necessary to launch this product. It seems like Kao is a pretty big company (I checked the company's website) so I'd like to know how much do you think my friend should ask for his immaterial possession (i.e. his name)?

Would be glad to know how much a name costs?

## Poverty = inhumanity

Rinu Ansuzaman  
ansuzaman.1@postbox.acs.ohio-state.edu: USA:

Every country in the world has poor people, we all know this. Unless various governments admit to the poverty and think about practical solutions to tackle this problem, no progress shall be made. The next question is, what for example can the govt of Bangladesh do to fight poverty? The poverty in Bangladesh seems so overwhelming...it's a deep poverty, the poorest of the poor. Horrible conditions, horrible living conditions...we should be investing in the betterment of our poor, instead of spreading money on new tanks and buildings. A simplistic attitude I admit, but we've got to start somewhere.

I hope my post did not ruin a similar experiment :-)

## Free Astrological Reading

Jean Luc Margot  
jlm17@crux5.cit.cornell.edu  
Cornell University, USA:

Hello,

A very interesting experiment about astrology is described in a recent book by Carl Sagan. The book also discusses a number of other topics which will be of interest to this audience.

The reference is Sagan, Carl (1995) The demon-haunted world: science as a candle in the dark, Random House, New-York.

And here is the excerpt:

"A scientist places an ad in a Paris newspaper offering a free horoscope. He receives about 150 replies, each, as requested, detailing a place and time of birth. Every respondent is given permission and that permission can cost a juicy amount.

Now to be more specific. Kao Corporate (Japanese company) wants to launch a product in Sweden with a friend's surname. The company's agent here has sent a letter informing my friend that his permission is necessary to launch this product. It seems like Kao is a pretty big company (I checked the company's website) so I'd like to know how much do you think my friend should ask for his immaterial possession (i.e. his name)?

Would be glad to know how much a name costs?

## The Daily Star Entertainment Guide



Wednesday 17th July

All programmes are local time. We recommend programmes printed in bold. There may be changes in the programme times.

BTV

3:00 Opening Announcement Al Quran Programme Summary 3:10 Recitation from the Geeta 3:15 Re-broadcast of Selected Programme 4:00 News in Bangla 4:15 Sports Programme 5:45 Tagore Songs 5:00 News in Bangla 5:25 Agami 6:00 News in Bangla 6:05 Unmesh 7:00 The News 7:05 Open University 7:25 Writer Tale Tale 8:00 News in Bangla 8:30 Album 9:00 Min Series: Return To Eden 10:00 News in English 10:30 Shasthathata: Health Programme Based on Child & Mother 10:35 Kathamala 11:30 News in Bangla 11:35 Thursday's programme 11:40 Close down

BBC

6:00am BBC Newsroom Inc. World Business Report: Asia Today/24

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