The Baily Star

Founder-Editor: Late S. M. Ali

Pilgrims' Pathetic End

Dhaka, Sunday, April 12, 1998

We are shocked at what happened in Meena. Although the usually tight-lipped Saudi authorities have put the number at little over hundred it is now widely believed some 150 pilgrims including three Bangladeshis were killed in Thursday's stampede.

Possibility of sudden death is something we all have to live with, more so in a huge congregation like Hajj where so many people from all over the world gather to seek divine blessings, yet it is difficult to console oneself at such a great extent of irreparable loss of human lives.

Sadder still, this has become a pattern. Almost every year we hear news of mass accident in Saudi Arabia during Hajj. This is embarrassingly puzzling for the hosts as well as for the rest of the world. Because apparently there is no short coming on the part of the hosts in the arrangement for this annual pilgrimage. May be that is a fallacy; may be that is where a reality-check is needed. Because report has it that a bridge railing gave way when thousands of devotees turned up for the devil stoning ritual and the panic stricken farrago of devotees started running in all directions. While some were trampled to death, some fell down from the bridge and died.

Over the years there has been great rise in the number of pilgrims. We are sure the fiercely proud Saudis would be the first to recognise any bracing that their infrastructure may be in need of as regards this great human assembly but perhaps the pilgrims too-- both who have survived this disaster and those who will come to Makkah on this holy occasion in future-- would do well not to live down the memory of this accident, so they are mentally better equipped to make light of herd instinct with reason and intelligence in a crisis situation like this. We sympathise with those who have lost their near and dear ones.

Peace Comes to Ulster

It could well be an epoch-making event but for the fact that it related to two religious communities in the small British province of Ulster or Northern Ireland. It will not naturally mean much to the world outside of the British isles - in practical terms. But as a treaty ending unremitting violent conflict between two communities on the one hand and between the Ulster Catholics and the United Kingdom on the other, the document signed in Stormont late Friday afternoon will be a model for all nations striving to get the better of similar problems. Stuck up at an almost no-solution point, the Ulster question constituted one of the knottiest of problems that kept nagging at the post-colonical world. And then, here is as a very rare pleasant surprise in the whole arena of politics and diplomacy ceasing all belligerence and arrived at through talks.

The Stormont Accord which gives Ulster a parliament and government and referendums each for the state of Ireland and the British Northern Ireland to endorse and make necessary changes in the arrangement so long in use, comes as an ideal solution for the ticklish question of the communal minority and majority. Conflicts between Catholics and Protestants should not, in the world on the threshold of a new millennium, be a bigger nuisance than those posed by ethnic intolerance. But the Ulster question was no more amenable to peaceful solution than the Kurdi question or the Tamil-Sinhala impasse. Pakistan went for a genocide to force a solution to something that was not even communal and ceased to be in shape.

Prime Minister Tony Blair saw in the accord a triumph of courage. Courage to concede and courage to face peace renouncing recourses to arms. Yes, many of world's worst woes germinated in a lack of courage to move towards peace and understanding. Sheikh Hasina has rightly congratulated the British people and their government for achieving 'great success in settling the long-drown Northern Ireland problem.' But the American statesman George Mitchell, who chaired the negotiations and brokered the accord, was more circumspect in also congratulating all others besides — the Irish government, the Sinn Fein and the Unionists.

And he was beside himself acknowledging he has been, during the negotiations, among some of the very finest people. The world never knew before this that such quality and understanding characterised the four parties to the bloody fray. The accord drew out the best in all. All accords of such moment do the same.

We rejoice over the dawning of peace in Northern Ireland and hail the historic accord that would make it possible and practicable.

Indonesia's Third Rescue Plan

Indonesia and the IMF have signed their third bail-out plan to rescue the economy of the fourth most populous nation in the world. However critics remain unconvinced about its effectiveness, and feel it will go the same way as did the two previous agreements. There have been compromises on both sides. The government of Indonesia conceded that it will not permit the continuation of monopoly privileges and would not bail out or subsidise companies in debt. On its part, the IMF agreed that government would continue to subsidise rice and soyabeans, while fuel and power prices would be raised

gradually. We commend IMF for its concessions on subsidies. As has already been seen the Indonesian masses could not have absorbed the shock of a sudden rise in the price of food which would have led to serious social unrest. The principal question here is: will President Suharto allow the breaking down of the monopolies and privileges of the big companies the most delinquent of which are owned by his close family members? His three decades of achievements today stand threatened only because of his nepotism towards his children and family members. Will he allow the dismantling of the economic empire that they have built

under his active support? Of all the countries affected in the recent currency crisis, Indonesia is the worst off simply because of its widespread corruption and political uncertainties. While President Suharto has ruled quite effectively and somewhat successfully over the last three decades, where he has failed his nation most miserably is not providing for a peaceful transition of power and creating a genuinely elec-

tive political system. He may have to pay heavily for that mistake.

Regional Trade Agreements and the WTO

by Dr AR Chowdhury

A question that has baffled policy makers around the world is whether these RTAs are beneficial institutions that complement WTO objectives, or do they act as serious impediments to globalism?

eements have multiplied dramatically over the last thirty years. They have proliferated to the point where virtually all members of the World Trade Organisation plement WTO objectives, or do (WTO) belong to some form of they act as serious impediments regional trade agreements (RTAs). These RTAs, sanctioned to globalism? Are there incentives for RTAs to keep expandby Article XXIV of the General Agreement on Trade and Tariff ing with more members so as to (GATT) are mostly in the form move towards multilateral free trade eventually, or will there of a customs union, a free trade be incentives instead to keep agreement, or an interim agreement leading to one or the new members out? The desirability of these arrangements other. By the end of 1997, more than fifty per cent of world in themselves and vis-a-vis trade is estimated to take place multilateral free trade has been within RTAs. the source of debate among many policy makers.

These trading arrangements

are posing both an important

challenge as well as a unique

opportunity for the WTO. It is a

challenge because RTAs can

lead to high welfare costs for

both the participating as well as

non-participating countries by

diverting trade and investment

It can also generate important

welfare gains for the partici-

pants as well as the rest of the

world by creating regional dy-

namic forces in favour of freer

part of the world trading system

throughout the period under the

General Agreement on Trade

and Tariff (GATT). They were

originally accepted as exception

to the GATT's most favoured na-

tion (MFN) principle. Today,

they are customary arrange-

ments that have grown in sig-

mificance. Most RAT formation

has occurred in two bursts of ac-

tivity: first, during the 1960s

RTAs have been an integral

trade.

Recently, Fereign Minister Abdus Samad Azad called for the formation of an Islamic common market in order to revive the fragile economies of the 19 least developed countries within the Organisation of Islamic Countries (OIC). Bangladesh, along with its regional trading partners in SAARC, formed the South Asian Agreement on Preferential Trading which later became the South Asian Free Trading Arrangement (SAFTA). Currently, there are a large number of similar regional trading arrangements including, among others, ASEAN, European Union, Mercosur, and NAFTA The European Union and Mercosur represent a customs union while the others are examples of free trade agree-

REFERENTIAL trade agr

A question that has baffled policy makers around the world is whether these RTAs are beneficial institutions that com-

ONIA Gandhi has finally

electoral defeat in two

successive polls and the trend of

last voting has pushed the or-

ganisation to the danger of dis-

appearing from the centrestage

of Indian political scene despite

its impressive performance in

some states like the commer-

cially important western Ma-

The once dominant party cut

a sorry figure in some states to

such extent as it draw a blank -

particularly in the most impor-

tant Uttar Pradesh state which

sends 85 members in the 545-

member lower house of parlia-

ment (Lok Shaba). The outcome

of the polls in this state is a big

shock for the organisations as

its earlier leaders mostly came

from Uttar Pradesh and where

it was somewhat invincible for

many years since independence

in 1947. The new Congress pres-

ident has made no bones of this

situation when she told the one

day gathering of the party that

the fact that has come to the

fore must be accepted as a real-

ity. She said the Congress has

alienated itself from different

categories of the voters includ-

ing the minorities and weaker

sections of the society which

has traditionally been the vote-

bank of the party. "Why has this

condition occurred?" she asked

the partymen frankly and said

only a soul-searching is not

enough but drive must begin

immediately to facilitate the re-

turn of the organisation in the

mainstream of politics of the

country. Otherwise, she cau-

tioned, the Congress would con-

tinue to lose its national appeal

and cannot be at the ascen-

another important point —

which only seldom the top lead-

ers of big political organisatous

do. She said inner democracy in the party was also important

since the rank and file must

give vent to their feelings, with-

out fear, about the conduct of

the organisation. She has

promised greater democratic

behaviour within the party dur-

ing her leadership although its

remains to be seen whether she

really means it or restricts it to

Undoubtedly, Sonia Gandhi

just a ritualistic comment

Mrs Gandhi also mentioned

dancy of national affairs.

harastra and Rajshatan.

and 1970s when the growth was concentrated exclusively in Europe, and then again since 1990 when the growth has been more widespread.

The recent spurt in regional trade agreements can be attributed to the need of many smaller countries to complement internal efficiency gains from trade with external market access.

Trade creation occurs when a lowered trade barrier between member countries leads one country to import goods that otherwise would be produced at home or not produced at all Trade creation generates efficiency gains for the member countries by encouraging goods to be produced wherever costs are lowest within the RTA.

Trade diversion, on the other hand, occurs when the preferential treatment causes a country to replace imports from the outside world with imports from a partner country. Trade diversion reduces global welfare when goods that could be bought from the outside world at a low cost are instead purchased from a regional source at a higher cost.

The potential for trade diversion depends upon the size of the external trade barriers maintained by the member-nations. If a country has moderate tariffs and other trade barriers, then relatively few importers

will find an incentive to shift their imports from outside countries to member countries once preferential access is granted. However, if a country has high tariffs and other trade barriers, then the preference given to member countries will provide a substantial incentive for importers to look within the RTA rather than to the outside world. For this reason, WTO is showing more tolerance for RTAs formed among countries with liberal trade policies than

those formed among countries

with restrictive trade regimes.

There are some differences in the potential for trade diversion under the two main forms of RTAs. In a custom union, the members maintain common external tariffs as such the potential for trade diversion depend on the size of the tariffs. On the other hand, in a freetrade area, trade diversion arises especially from the administration of rules of origin. Each country maintains its own external tariff. If these barriers vary among the member-countries, there is always the incentive to import a good through the country with the lowest barriers.

In order to minimise the possibility of trade diversion due to the rules of origin, the WTO is encouraging partner countries to harmonise their external tariff levels and other

trade barriers. Once the levels of protection are the same for countries in a free trade area. the rules of origin become superfluous. Until that is done, parties to an FTA should not use rules of origin to protect regional intermediate goods producers.

Liberalisation of private investment flow is a necessary complement of trade liberali sation. Since 1975, foreign di rect investment has increased twelve-fold while the value of merchandise trade has multiplied nine times. Negotiators for Bangladesh must address the growing complementarity between trade and investment decisions in today's world. Recent trade agreements such as ASEAN, NAFTA, and Mercusor

have recognised this. An RTA leads to investment creation if individuals and firms in a member country decide to invest in their partner country when they otherwise would have invested at home, or not at all. Investment diversion occurs if investment in a member-country displaces investment in the rest of the world. This can happen when a member-country maintains restrictive barriers to investment from non-member countries while granting preferential treatment to investment from partners in the RTA.

Recent economic analysis

have shown that RTAs may impact the extent and speed of unilateral trade liberalisation by members of the WTO. If, for example, members of an RTA become more willing to conduct unilateral trade reforms or grant concession in the context of a multilateral negotiation, then RTAs can be seen as contributing towards a more liberal trading system.

On the other hand, if countries that join an RTA develop a 'fortress mentality'. they may see a strengthened regional market as an excuse for creating barriers to external competition. This would be a further cause for global concern.

Thus the regional trading agreements have both tradecreating as well as trade-diverting effects. From a static perspective, RTAs are more likely to increase world efficiency if their primary effect is to create new investment and trade rather than to divert existing investment and trade. The probability of this happening depend upon existing trading pattern among the RTA members and the way in which the agreement is structured. The WTO — whose major objective is to encourage trade cooperation and eliminate the negative effects on non-members of RTAs

 have a keen interest in making sure that RTAs are structured so as to minimise their potential for trade and investment diversion. Given that multilateralism is a slow and inefficient way of getting to multilateral free trade, RTAs offer a faster and more predictable way of getting there.

Congress and Sonia after Elections

When viewed in larger perspective, it appears that she did contribute for the organisation on the eve of polls and the impact could have been wider if she had involved herself actively with party campaign earlier.

MATTERS ##

Zaglul Ahmed Chowdhury

AROUND US

taken over the stewardship Of the oldest political organisation of India in the aftermath of the recent general has taken a big challenge about elections. The one-day national revitalising the organisation convention of the party a few that spearheaded Indian indedays ago in New Delhi has pendence and afterwards ruled for most part of the fifty years confirmed her earlier of free India. For the 51-yearappointment by the 18-member old lady, who was born in a working committee as the new president of the party, replacing small city in Italy and because veteran but lacklustre Sitaram of sheer turn of events has be-Kesri. The working committee come the chief of India's most almost dramatically removed well-known organisation, the Mr Kesri from the helm of the task is not only gigantic but a 112-year-old organisation soon matter of survival in many after the general elections that saw Congress's number one political foe - the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) — coming to power in collusion with its allies. The Congress suffered

Sonia Manio, the daughter of an Italian builder, was at the Cambridge and met the then Indian prime minister late Indira Gandhi's son at the university cafeteria in 1966 which blossomed into a romantic affair that ended in the happy marriage in 1968. Her husband -Indira's eldest son Rajiv Gandhi - was not a political person and

purview of politics. But it is once again sheer coincidences that has brought her to the position where she finds herself today. II., I she not met kany and had in the band not killed premacarciv wime at the zemali of a nonlical career, Suma would have remained what could have been normal for a

the couple remained outside the

foreign woman. Also the developments that surrounded the Congress for the last two years contributed con siderably for her coming into politics. Although Rajiv died several years ago. Sonia did not show any interest for politics to the extent that she had also discouraged a political career for her husband till circum stances made it near inevitable True, late prime minister Rajiv Gandhi, his mother Indira Gandhi and her father Pundit Jawaharlal Nehru between themselves ruled 35 years of 50 years of independent India and all of them maintained strong command over the Congress as long as they were in charge of the party and government. It was so much so that their dom inance ended only when they died and the curtain was rung down on their colourful career controversy notwithstanding among the critics of "political

dynasty". Mr Nehru, the first prime minister remained at the top of the government for an uninter rupted 17 years till his death in 1964. Lal Bahadur Sastri became the prime minister but Nehru's daughter took over as the head of the government within two years as Mr Sastri died in Taskhent after signing an agreement with arch-rival Pakistan, brokered by Soviet Union's prime minister Alexi Kosygin to ease tension. Indira remained in the centrestage of power and politics till her death. However, she lost power but almost quickly regained it Rajiv Gandhi stepped into the shoe of her mother following

her assassination to become the prime minister but this possibly would not have happened if his younger brother Sanjay. who was virtually groomed by Indira Gandhi as family's political heir, not died in a stunt plane crash when he was already a dominant figure of Congress politics. Rajiv began convincingly but the journey was marred at later stage leading to his party's loss of power. However, he had appeared set to stage a comeback when was killed before the 1991 national elections during campaign in southern Tamil Nadu state by suspected woman suicide bomber of Tamil origin from

neighbouring Sri Lanka. Rajiv

was believed to be their target

for many reasons. Sonia stayed aloof from politics after husband's death despite calls from the partymen to take over the party leadership. She had no experience in politics and was known to be lukewarm to even Rajiv's throwing of hat into the political ring at ter his younger brother Sanjay's untimely death. Rajiv dragged his feet to fill the vacuum caused by brother's death but finally gave in mainly for mother's insistence although Sonia was known to be not in layour of his political life. She remained a reclusive woman at ter husband's assassination and turned rather a blind eye to Congress politics even though some party leaders like Arjun Singh, Madhav Rao Scindia and others maintained contacts with her. She did show some unofficial interest in Congress matters at later stage but had made it abundantly known that

she did not want to be in the

thick of the game.

Mr P V Narasimha Rao's five years as both Congress president and prime minister had a lot to do with Sonia's coming into political life. His leader ship caused commotions in the organisation and resulted in several senior leaders like Mi Singh and Mr Schindia parting ways. There were also controversies on Mr Rao's policy on sensitive matters like his role when the "Babri mosque" in Ayodhya was demolished. The Congress lost power in 1996 polls and party secured 140 seats — lowest in its history. Not surprisingly, Mr Rao was removed from party chief's po sition and Mr Sitaram Kesri came in. Many Congress leaders including Mr Arjun Singh, ND Tiwari and Mr Schindia re

turned to the party tak but Mr Kesri failed to provide the much-needed dynamism to the organisation. The alarming bell was more pronounced when forecasts were made by almost all before the latest polls that the Congress may end up with

less than 100 seats. Sonia Gandhi had taken the membership of Congress not too long ago and this time pressure built on her to play an active role to salvage the organisation from rot. The concern and anxiety of partymen were understandable. The "Nehru family" still makes tremendous impact on a large segment of Indian people and the name "Gandhi" also evokes deep emotion although Indian father figure late M K Gandhi has nothing to do with the "present-day Gandhi's" as far as the surname is concerned. Nehru's daughter Indira took this family title from husband Feroz Gandhi.

Now, the latest of the "Gandhis" is in the helm of Congress. She had accepted appeals to campaign for the organisation and did it across the country even though herself did not seek election. How was the influence of her active politics and campaign in the polls? Certainly, it is debatable. Strictly speaking. it was not that encouraging as the results would show. Congress failed to win a single seat in Uttar Pradesh — the home state of the "Nehru's". More pathetically, it could not win in Nehru's famous "Phulpur", Indira's "Rae Bareily" and not even Rajiv's "Amethei". The sitting Congress member in Amethei Satish Sarma also lost despite Sonia's appeal that he was her nominee. The much-talked "Sonia factor" provided no magic touch. But there is also the other side of the coin. Her campaign suddenly brought life in the otherwise demoralised Congress party which was mired by weak leadership and divisive tendencies. The partymen were united, jumped into the electoral band wagon and party secured 141 seats and 166 with its allies belying that the number would come down to less than 100. When viewed in

larger perspective, it appears that she did contribute for the organisation on the eve of polls and the impact could have been wider if she had involved herself actively with party campaign earlier.

What are the challenges for the Congress? No doubt, a party like the BJP which has risen sharply in political scene in last few years and its dynamic leader Mr A B Vajpayee are the main factors for her. The minority and lower class votes are weaning away from Congress and are being more attracted by the parties in the United Front (UF) like the CPI, CPI(M), Samajwadi Party, Janata Dal etc. The UF is lesser foe for the Congress compared to the ruling BJP and its partners but of course, a political rival. It has to win back these votes which is a Herculean task. Moreover, as a foreigner, she has to adapt with Indian culture and political milieu. Not that she is the only foreigner to head the Congress, two others were in this charge before. But critics will seek to use her Italian connection in issues like "Bofors scandal" when Rajiv was in

Sonia's task is daunting but not impossible. She may act as a stop-gap in the Congress politics till daughter Priyanka or son Rahul steps in as both are now in their twenties.

OPINION

Is Suharto Treated Unjustly?

I read Barrister Harun ur Rashid's article on President Suharto's predicament with much interest. I found it a little amusing that the writer portrays Suharto as a subject of international bullying, IMF President's posture non-withstanding. After all, is he not the last of the dictators that the West so affectionately supported since the beginning of the cold war? His 30-odd years of dictatorship merits anything but

compassion. Whether it was an economic or a financial crisis the recent slide in East and Southeast Asian economies exposed the inherent weakness and instability their growth. As the laggards of Asia, we were constantly preached about their growth strategies: termed first as community approach, then family values, and now crony capitalism. Now these economies are infested by the same anomalies: over capacity in the manufacturing sector and increasing wage rate has lost the competitiveness of their products. Non-performing loans made out to preferred companies, and over-investment in real estates has created immense pressure in the financial sector. Over-inflated currency, pegged to the dollar to facilitate short-term borrowing in dollar has given away in the face speculation from interna-

tional investors. So the slide is not the result of this speculation — it is due to the inherent weakness of these economies. Speculation only pulled the plug. Those economies were already showing signs of hollowness, and governments in these countries were cautioned before. However, it is difficult to pay heed to cautions when international investors were flocking in and everything looked so good. The crisis demonstrated the pitfalls of the globalisation of national

economy. Indonesia agreed to play the game when it wooed the foreign investors. So it is no good now blaming them when they profiteered from the inherent weak-

nesses of the economy. In Indonesia's case, it is difficult to isolate the private sector's troubles from that of the government due to the cozy relationship between them. In most cases, the government

and private sector defaulted to service dollar-denominated loans, the government had to assume the liabilities. Complicated and archaic banking and corporate laws safeguard the corporations in the private sector in such consequences. and IMF and other agencies require that these laws be replaced by straight and transparent ones.

However, such an eventuality would de-couple the cozy business-government relationship, which is the cornerstone of Indonesia's power play. So the government would not make reforms willingly. Indonesia's refusal to accept IM-F's deal has less to do with its ineffectiveness than the brinkmanship played by Suharto. Government made look like as if IMF is the villain, forcing the government to take all these austerity measures. However, the other part of the story is government's take-the-country to the verge of bankruptcy, and seeks bailout from these international forums. However, it is always easy to make one of these abstract international figures culpable.

However, another scapegoat the ethnic Chinese business people in Indonesia are not so lucky. They are also a religious minority, and not as untouchable as the invisible IMF. They have been subject to local atrocities, and there are reasons to believe that these incidents were staged by the government to divert blame. There is also the fear of social unrest, a very likely consequence in a country repressed for 30 years. The government brinkmanship with the IMF leverages on this ethnic and social fault-lines. Suharto knows well that the international community would not risk such consequence.

While Indonesia's achieve ment in last 30 years is laudable, a few things can be added to the writer's unconditional praise about Suharto. Let us take a look at what cost the consolidation, stability and growth in Indonesia has been achieved. As many as 500,000 people were killed during Suharto's accession of power. Since then, Indonesia has one of the worst record of civic liberty and human rights. People of East Timor are still fighting against the annexation by Indonesia. All the rights and priv-

ileges are centered in a closeknit oligarchy of the army, politicians, and business people. As far as I know, our former President Ershad once sent a team of his favourite bureaucrats to Indonesia to see and learn how the system works in

Indonesia.

Despite reduction of absolute poverty, income disparity is highest in Indonesia among the Southeast Asians countries. and continues to grow. The scale of corruption and collusion can hardly be explained or justified by 'Cultural Relativism'. A single incident of bribery by a US Vice President cannot be compared with the institutionalisation of corruption in Indonesia. For quite some time Indonesia remains at the top list of corrupt countries along with the like of Nigeria, according to the Harvard Institute of International Development (HIID). Most profitable businesses are controlled by the President's family, or friends, and derive rent from others.

By all means and purposes, Indonesia's predicament is its own making. No doubt that people of Indonesia are suffering, but that is the making of their rulers, not the distant debusinessmen. The Indonesian government does not seem to be as concerned about the people there as some of us; Suharto was going through the fiveyearly ritual of electing himself and conducting the musical chair of his cabinet in the midst of all this crisis. We were not a part of the great East Asian feast in its full height, and we can do without learning from Indonesia how to practice brinkmanship in the face of people's suffering.

Indonesia does not deserve our sympathy simply because it is the largest Muslim country in the world. Its brand of Islam practiced in Timor is not what we look up to as Muslims. The lesson for us is to put market mechanisms in place as wegrow, and let them work, keep government intervention at a minimum, reduce governmentbureaucracy-business collusion, and avoid cronyism at all

Aminul Haque School of Business Georgetown University

Washington, DC, USA

Why is Mohammadpur left alone?

Sir, The road communication from Mohammadpur to Gulistan up to Motifheel was far better than that is now in Mirpur. Formerly there were BRTC service, 50-seat bus services, besides the existing mini-buses. But for unknown reasons, BRTC and 50-seat bus services were totally withdrawn from Mohammadpur. There is still a BRTC Bus depot in Mohammadpur. Rumour has it that due to influence of owners of the coaster services, the other bus services were withdrawn from Mohammadpur which is causing immense suffering to the

residents of the area. Recently some Maxis were introduced from Mohammadpur to Motijheel. But after some days the owner of these Maxis has added additional seats in these Maxis turning these into

some sort of tempos, causing discomfort to the passengers. The behaviour of the drivers and helpers of the Maxis is very

BRTC City services and Premium services have been introduced in all other routes of the city except Mohammadpur. Why not introduce these services in Mohammadpur as

Nazrul Islam Mohammadpur, Dhaka

Knowing our blood groups

Sir, The blood donation programmes have created an enthusiasm amongst the people. The voluntary blood donation is a symbol of love for the humanity. But many of us are scared of donating blood. They show pretext that they don't know their respective blood groups. But they can easily know their blood group by do-

nating blood in several blood donation campaign without any cost

Md Abdur Rahim Shohel Deptt of Mass Communication and Journalism University of Dhaka

Where is the UN now?

Sir, Russians have been helping Iran to build arms for some time now. Recently they're planning on technologically helping them to build a long-range missile that can carry high explosives. Where is the UN now? Why bother digging Iraq and not finding a drop of chemical when the rest of the world is slowly building up their arms depot? Is Iraq nothing but a diver-

sion? guaranteed private sector's Masroor Ahmed Deepak loans. So, when Rupiah fell, Dhaka