

Destitution of Thinking: A Chronic Malady

by Kazi Alauddin Ahmed

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SO, at last the official announcement has been made. Formal launching of anti-government agitation programme was declared by ex-president H M Ershad at the end of a traffic-jamming procession of the Jatiya Party on August 10, 1998. Among the numerous complaints against the Awami League Government at least one sounded verbatim to that dished out by BNP Chairperson and the Secretary General only the other day. It went that the Government's relief work for the flood-affected people was confined to the TV screen only.

It has been customary with our politicians to forget their own doings or mis-doings when they are out of power. To keep their tongues full they are used to utter, rightly or wrongly, the self-same rhetoric that those in power belaboured with when they were in opposition. There is nothing new in it, rather, it is a foregone conclusion that the people of the country have hardly to make any extra effort to know.

We can look back to the 1988 flood scenario. General Ershad was in power. The TV screen was, as usual, replete with many a publicity stunt to tell us how agile the President had been. The suffering millions trapped in water did of course have some succour through relief operations. On the top of that the fateless people had too a musical piece to contain themselves in their miserable plight. The 'dubious' poet instantly had turned into a lyricist. On Azmat Huda Minus's tuning of the lyrical piece the people continued to be ruthlessly haunted by the song. It was indeed a banal attempt to seduce the people in distress. The lengthy presentation on the TV screen synchronized with scenes depicting the lanky general, gum-booted, wading through the flood-waters or talking to women on makeshift platform, in fright and despair. Instead of evoking sympathies, most relevant at those

trying moments, it made an entirely jocular presentation.

The truth in this year's flood intervention has been that Sheikh Hasina failed to have a 'musical' launching.

The leader of the truncated Jatiya Party, almost continuously losing allegiance of many leaders including the veteran Mijanur Rahman Chowdhury, appears to have been seized by a state of mental obsolescence. The chain of events in the party has surfaced many internal discord within. Its parliamentarians are openly divided, the ex-Secretary General Anwar Hossain Manzu playing the role of a silent mentor for those who do not see eye to eye with Ershad's half-hearted anti-government stance. Mizan Chowdhury's unceremonious dismissal from the position of senior Vice-Chairman has given a new dimension to the rift within. Incidentally, it may be recalled that the current discomfiture within the party had started when Zafar-Muazzem duo parted with Ershad, said to be on grounds of disagreements on policy matters.

Ershad does not appear to remember that it was during his time the local government framework was approved and inducted by him for Chittagong Hill Tracts. The Peace Treaty signed by the Awami League Government has many inputs of his LG framework. Again turning to his arch-enemy (?) Begum Zia he says the Peace Treaty is anti-constitutional. The BNP Chairperson added that the treaty would give away a substantial area of our territory from Feni to Chittagong Hill Tracts, to India, etc. Concurrently she had a massive ride through an assumed alien (!) territory without interception. Still then, the actual implementation of the peace accord, being a tricky and lengthy process and currently being mired out, shall continue to be under close scrutiny.

Turning to Ershad again, his

remarks on the law and order situation in the country are very much in tune with the entire population irrespective of political affiliation. But his views on the Judiciary vis-a-vis, the decentralization of the High Court into six Divisional Benches away from Dhaka at his own instance and during his Presidency have been received badly by the leading lawyers of the country. They have taken Ershad's remarks as contempt of court for having outraged the constitutional provisions of the VIIIth amendment, besides, his particularising Justice Shahabuddin Ahmed for leading the Supreme Court Appellate Division's verdict reversing Ershad's awful transgression into the judicial system. It is however, palpable where the shoe pinches. He finds it very difficult to forget that it was Justice Shahabuddin Ahmed, as the Head of the Caretaker Government in 1990-1991 who sent him to jail at the behest of the then Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia.

Only very recently the ex-president had been publicly expressing his dislike for hartal, which, he thought, could do nothing but to compound miseries of the common man and to affect national economy adversely. Evidently his works were pointed to BNP which too, during their time in power, used to hate hartal and were now enjoying it frequently. Curiously enough, the JP chief followed suit with BNP on July 30, 1998, calling a half-day hartal as against BNP's full day to register protest against killing of Rubel. Here too, he had his 'identity problem' which he sought to protect by slicing the period to be distinctive.

Indeed Rubel's death in police custody has rocked the whole nation. In spite of the initial attempt by some quarters to give it a political hue, his father's firm rejection of such a heinous attempt turned the table upside down for the

crooked contrivers. And despite Government's quickest ever intervention in the matter its political opponents did not fail to expose their destitute mental upkeep. As usual the so-called militant followers went on rampage in the city streets damaging a number of public and private vehicles. The departed soul of the bright youngman mercilessly beaten to death on July 23, 1998, must have been reeling in high heavens at such insidious aggression on his totally non-political image. Would it ever vindicate the diabolical murder in harness?

Notwithstanding the measures already taken by the Government to bring the culprits to books and the Judicial Enquiry apart, the manner in which the Criminal Investigation Department (CID) has been doing its assigned part of the job continues to provoke consternation of the whole nation. Particularly, the series of stories coming in a vernacular daily about the alleged principal accused Akram Hossain will deserve much to be said. CID investigators do not appear to have realized that any wishful exploitation of their homogeneity with the men from DB would further soil the already emaciated countenance of the entire police department. The serious attitude of the Home Minister in respect of Akram's irregular lodging in PG Hospital prison cell is expected to present a redeeming feature.

The indispensable decision for the Government is to get the case tried by a sitting Judge of the High Court composing a single-man Tribunal. To form such a tribunal our legal experts can advise the President on the possibility of doing it by an ordinance — the enactment may perhaps be done by the next session of Jatiya Sangsad to meet the constitutional obligation. Let no one play with the sanctity of justice. Let its ends be met on topmost priority basis.

Yunus and Economics, Once Again

by Mahfuzur Rahman

Hashemi takes exception to my description of much of Yunus' speech as the "verbiage of an evangelist" that makes his discussion difficult to follow. That term also reflected my frustration with the sweeping nature of Muhammad Yunus' condemnation of traditional economics and his presentation of what I consider wishful thinking as an alternative paradigm. Nothing has happened since then to make me change my mind.

I never thought that I would take up the matter again and so soon. As far as this subject matter goes, I promise myself that this second article will be absolutely my last (at least for a long while). And I intend to be very brief. Readers of this article might find it useful to read the first article as well.

It all started with a speech of Muhammad Yunus castigating text-book economics as a handmaiden of blood-thirsty profit-seekers and his startling discovery that the "angel of poverty" are planted firmly in the pages of economic textbooks. (Excerpt published in the DS, April 2, 1998).

In a rejoinder published in the DS (April 17, 1998) I attempted to show what text-book economics does or does not do in the Yunus context, pointed to the enormous economic wellbeing brought about by a system, warts and all, that gave rise to modern economics, offered a critique of Muhammad Yunus' emphasis on self-employment as a major vehicle of economic development, and outlined the utopian nature of his ideas. I ended by suggesting that there may not be much wrong with the economist's mind-set that Yunus so abhors.

This was followed in quick succession by a series of articles in the DS, some of which were written mainly in defence of text-book economics and were in various degrees critical of Muhammad Yunus' ideas, though some of them were quite receptive of his sentiments.

In August the DS, jointly with the Centre for Alternatives and the British Council, organized a roundtable billed as a discussion on "Economics of Muhammad Yunus: An Alternative Paradigm in the Making". The August 27 issue of DS contained a summary of the discussion and the main papers presented, including a key-note paper by Syed M. Hashemi, Muhammad Yunus' deputy at Grameen, along with excerpts of a conversation with Muhammad Yunus, with the interesting title of "Yunusonomics: A Paradigm in the Making". The Hashemi paper was, significantly, entitled "Professor Yunus Versus Neo Classical Theology".

I had earlier seen, by courtesy of a friend in the US, a more elaborate version of essentially the same paper entitled "Professor Yunus Versus Neo Classical Theology: The Quest for a Surrogate Paradigm", in which he brackets me with Kabir U Ahmad, whose critique of Muhammad Yunus followed mine in the DS, and takes issue with us both. For the present purpose I have taken into account this version of the Hashemi paper along with the papers and discussions that appeared in the August 27 DS.

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ing nature of Muhammad Yunus' condemnation of traditional economics and his presentation of what I consider wishful thinking as an alternative paradigm. Nothing has happened since then to make me change my mind.

Hashemi, however, tries to turn the table on the likes of me and suggests that "it is neo-classical economics, that Mr. Mahfuzur Rahman, Kabir U Ahmad and the retinue of neo-classical followers consider so scientific that it is actually logically inconsistent and therefore based on faith". This is as good a starting point as any for a brief discussion of the issues involved.

In harping on neo-classical economics the acolyte has gone one better than the mentor. While Muhammad Yunus castigates text-book economics, Hashemi singles out neo-classical economics, calling it an irrelevance to which he consigns most economists, especially those who do not talk about poverty and the poor in every breath. This is hardly the place for a debate on what neo-classical economics is really like or whether it is fair to tar all mainstream economists with the neo-classical brush. Students of economics need only note in passing that the legitimate abstractions and simplifications of reality that economics makes are, to Hashemi, only a matter of "faith", which suggests a ludicrous refusal to understand the nature and significance of economics as a science.

Far more important is, however, the possibility that the attack on text-book, or neo-classical, economics is in part a red herring and is designed to underestimate the potentialities of the modern economic system, that Muhammad Yunus in effect castigates, in reducing poverty. As some participants in the roundtable were quick to point out, instead of elaborating on the proposed paradigm, Hashemi only renews his attack on neo-classical economics.

Hashemi's reply to such criticism was that Muhammad Yunus did not claim to have found a new paradigm, that he was only calling for one. That he has not found a new paradigm is certainly true. But Muhammad Yunus does give one the impression that he is about to find it or at least that he has a pretty good idea about how to do it. He has a "vision" of Muhammad Yunus' and "Yunusonomics" only reinforce the impression.

However attractive it might be to popular mind to call for a new economics that "has the human being at its centre", it is a dangerous illusion that such economics is in the offing. The phrase "paradigm shift" should not be taken lightly. In the present context, it suggests the total abandonment of economics as we know it. It requires that all the components of the "new" system — these presumably are: focus on the poor, micro-credit, self-employment, enhanced social consciousness and so on — are fully in place and that if

they come into conflict with self-interest-driven activities, it is the latter that must give way. It is an illusion to expect these conditions to be met in practice in any society. Any facile notion that a new paradigm is on the horizon will only deflect attention from the need for national resolve to take difficult decisions that are essential for rapid economic growth and development in Bangladesh.

Muhammad Yunus glories in the power of imagination. There is nothing wrong with imagination and indeed few great things have come about without it. But imagination can also run wild and the professor appears unable to realize this when he speaks at the fifteenth anniversary of the Engineers' Institute he said, "I think the power of imagination is the greatest power of man and only this has made man superior to other animals" (DS, June 29, 1998).

I should have thought that there are other equally important traits that separate humans from other species. How about the power of rational thinking, for example? This reminds me of the old story of a man who imagined that he could permanently straighten the curly tail of a dog and spent a lifetime trying to accomplish that feat, of course without success. Lesson: it is sometimes necessary to curb imagination.

Hashemi asks what makes me uncomfortable with Professor Yunus' ideas. The answer should by now be fairly clear. He also asks rhetorically, "it remains to be seen whether Kabir U Ahmad and Mahfuzur Rahman will remain with the mindset of the old and cling on to neo-classical theology, or struggle with us for a new paradigm that can intellectually assist in ushering in a poverty-free world". Speaking for myself and ignoring the un-called-for charge of being a retinue of neo-classical economics, this simply will not do. It takes for granted that nothing short of a paradigmatic shift can free the world of poverty.

Professor Yunus and associates make much of the mind-set supposedly created by text-book economics that is thought to be responsible for our inability to fight poverty. As I see it, there is nothing wrong with the "mind-set" of a mainstream economist, which is capable of being critical of the failings of economics and the economic system.

There is a well-known saying in America, a practical advice of an unsophisticated man: If it ain't broke, don't fix it. There is much wisdom in the saying. There may be much that is unsatisfactory both in economics and the system that it seeks to portray and study, but there is little reason for call to bury (Hashemi's term) the discipline and abandon the system. It is always healthy to be critical of any system we get used to over time. The world should not corrupt the world. But one should take extreme

care in examining the defects of the system before deciding to jettison it, especially if the alternative is not all too clear.

Like democracy, the economic system that the present age inherited may deserve only two cheers, but all other known systems appear to deserve none at all. We all remember Field Marshal Ayub Khan's novel idea that what the country needed was "basic democracy", as western democracy did not suit the genius of the people. History judged differently.

Hashemi quotes Marx at some length to underline his point. He does not mention that one of the most glowing tributes ever paid to the achievements of the capitalist system is to be found in the *Communist Manifesto*. It is surely tendentious to point, as Hashemi does, to the homeless and the large number of people without medical insurance in America as gross failures of "policy prescriptions emanating from the neo-classical paradigm". Would not he be glad to see Bangladesh change place with America? As I pointed out in my earlier write-up, economics is indeed concerned with reduction of poverty, even though it does not loudly proclaim this. Economic growth does reduce poverty, as any comparison between developing and developed countries would tell you. We in Bangladesh are mostly poor not because of a mind-set created by text-book economics but because, for a complex number of reasons, the system of economy that it discusses is not firmly in place here.

Incidentally, we are told that some participants in the roundtable found economics "going through a crisis period". It is not entirely clear what to make of this. One thing is clear though: in many developing countries the crisis is rather in policy making, often in the inability of political leaders to make economic development their top priority. We need go no farther than our own country for an example. Compared to this, the alleged crisis of economics is of little more than academic interest.

One might as well point out here, finally, that a humane society does not necessarily call for "humane" economics, whatever that might mean. If it did, all western societies would be unacceptably inhumane. The wellspring of a humane society lies primarily in social policy and in the social, political and cultural milieu, and is not to be sought in economic text-books. It is also easy to forget how subordinate economics is to other social disciplines, particularly politics.

Professor Yunus has been lauded for his work in the area of poverty alleviation and I think rightly so. His Grameen experiment has come in for special praise. He should continue to do what he does best and leave economics alone.

The author is an economist with a long career with United Nations. He lives in New York from where he sent this article.

An interview with Shiv Sena chief Bal Thackeray

It's Unfortunate that Hindus are Fighting against Me

MR Bal Thackeray cannot understand why the Congress is demanding the dismissal of the Shiv Sena-BJP Government in Maharashtra over the Srikrishna Commission report. "Why is a rope being identified as a snake? What have we done? The Srikrishna report is biased. Justice Srikrishna was not prepared to accept our version or the evidence and proof we wanted to give. Now false accusations are being made about the law and order situation. Has it gone out of control? Are large scale murders taking place regularly? Are then what is the reason? If some gangsters are killing each other then that only minimises the work of government," he remarks, almost convinced that he is making a profound point.

It was a rainy day and we were sitting in the private drawing room of the Shiv Sena chief at his residence "Matushree" at the Kalamandir housing complex for writers, poets and artists in Bandra east, Mumbai. The Shiv Sena chief is wearing his trademark half-a-dozen holy necklaces and is comfortably dressed in rust-colored raw-silk kurta and a matching wrap-around lungi. Facing him on the wall is a laminated picture of the first militant leader of Maharashtra, Shri Samarth Ramdas Swami. On the coffee-table are two audio-cassettes whose covers proclaim "Garv se kahoh hum Hindu hain" next to a sign which says, "I like people who get the things done." What things, one wonders. Mr Thackeray switches on a large tape-recorder in front of him saying that he will record the conversation because his views are often distorted by the media. I switch on mine. Talking about the role of the Shiv Sena in the Mumbai riots of December 1992 and January 1993, Mr Thackeray seems to borrow the military analogy used by Justice Srikrishna in describing his role in the communal riots as that of a veteran General directing his soldiers to attack Muslims. He says, "After a war do you ask a soldier about what he did? During a war a jawan (soldier) has a responsibility, to behave as a jawan (soldier). Yes." He says that "what we did at that time was retaliation and not attack", and accuses the Srikrishna Commission of not asking basic questions about who started the riots, the role of the Urdu press and of not giving enough importance to the Mumbai bomb blasts of March 1993. Had he read the commission's report carefully, he would have known that the commission has neither gone soft on any community nor fudged the role of the Pakistan-inspired Muslim youth in the bomb blasts of March 1993. Mr Thackeray sees his isolation from political leaders today as the betrayal of Hinduism. "It is unfortunate that the Hindus are fighting against me" he says. Directing his ire at former Prime Minister H. D. Deve Gowda, with whom he thought he had a rapport, he says: "Yeh Deve Gowda,



Unrepentant Thackeray: We behaved like soldiers

this elderly person who used to say that he had great regard and love for me is now asking for my arrest. We dined together at Anitabh Bachchan's cost. So who is he betraying today? Yeh sab namak haram hain saale (they are all betrayers). Shameless people. For their own survival they are killing the nation." "Why should I tolerate this?" he says angrily. "I am going to consolidate the Hindus, of course. Come what may. I have been doing it, and now I will do it with greater vigour. You can't stop me. When the Muslims are proud of calling themselves Muslims, why the hell should I not call myself a Hindu? Why should I not? To hell with your rules and your political parties."

And to hell with the separation of religion and politics? "You don't know where to draw the line (between religion and politics) and as long as you don't have that sense, don't discuss where religion should end and politics begin and vice versa. Why the hell are you making all this fuss? For whom are you doing it?" he asks. He then reiterates that the commission's report does not pay adequate attention to the "month of December" which sparked off the second phase of rioting on Jan. 6, 1993 — exactly a month after the demolition of the Babri Masjid and the ensuing riots in Mumbai. "And you blame that thing also on us and say that we are the initiators?" he asks. But what about the Maha-aratis and the Ghant-nadhs (ringing of temple bells) organised by the Shiv Sena in temples after the demolition of the Babri Masjid throughout the month of December up to the second phase of rioting? Didn't that create a communal atmosphere? "Yes. And I will do it again. I will do it again. If they don't stop performing Namaz on the streets, I will start the Maha-aratis again. It is my birth-right. We are not holding Maha-aratis in Pakistan or in some Arab country. You are putting restrictions on us in our Motherland, while they enjoy all the fruits of religious fanaticism? And Hindus like you are supporting them?" he retorts. But one did not support the public display of any religion. "I know, I am just saying it", he says inexplicably. The Shiv Sena chief also feels that "no importance is given by the Srikrishna Commission to the bomb blasts (of March 1993) in which thousands and thousands were crippled. They became the living dead. And more than 350 died. Nothing has been done about that because it was the work of Muslims in a Hindu area. And then it is said that it is the poor people who were responsible for the bomb blasts. Poor people? They are poor people and we are the *Khal-nayaks*, the villains?" he asks. In fact, nowhere does the Srikrishna Commission report describe the perpetrators of the bomb blasts as "poor people", and nor does it condone the blasts. In fact, the commission clearly identifies the hand of Pakistan and "brainwashed

by Bharat Bhushan

Muslim youngsters" in the conspiracy which was aided and abetted by Dawood Ibrahim, Mohammed Dossa and Tiger Memon. "Suffice it to say that all the accused, except two or three, are Muslims and there is no doubt that the major role in the conspiracy, at the Indian as well as foreign end, was played by Muslims," the report concludes. It also notes that 713 (and not thousands and thousands) were injured in the blasts, and 257 lost their lives. What seems apparent is that the crisis created by the indictment of the Shiv Sena in general and Mr Bal Thackeray in particular by the Srikrishna Commission is now being used politically by the Sena chief to reinforce his "Hindu" credentials. His brief flirtation with secular politics, although he hates the word, is coming to a swift end. This de-

Teachers and Trade Unionism

Amrik Singh writes from New Delhi

IN any trade union situation, there has to be an employer and employees. More than that, however, there has to be an element of exploitation of the employee by the employer. When it comes to higher education, we have developed a peculiar kind of variation from this pattern. It is the State which is the employer and the teachers are its employees. When it comes to grievances, sometimes those are selfimagined or invented, if one may say so.

Currently, we have a strike called by the All India Association of University and College Teachers Organisation (AIFUCTO). In addition, we have another body called FED-CUTA. This is an organisation of the Federation of Central Universities Teachers which came into being in the wake of the 1987 strike. Most of the time it was dormant but, of late, it has become active. Currently it represents the teachers of the central universities. These are directly funded by the UGC, it may be added. The AIFUCTO has called an indefinite strike while the latter body has given a call for a strike for a few days. Whether it chooses to end the strike beyond the first few days or extends it remains to be seen.

The issue is the UGC scales of pay. It should not be necessary to repeat the story of what the Rastogi Committee recommended, how the UGC revised those recommendations as it were and what decision has been finally taken by the Ministry of HRD. These have been discussed for quite some months now.

Having said this, it should be clearly recognised that these two bodies have two different targets. The AIFUCTO knows that in all likelihood the Centre is not likely to reconsider the decision made by it already. Its target, however, is the various State governments. While the Centre has committed itself to pay 80 per cent of the additional expenditure incurred by a State for a period of five years, it stands to reason that every

State has to take a definite decision in this regard.

The AIFUCTO believes that, if the strike goes on long enough, several of the State governments will accept the UGC scales; otherwise they might keep the matter pending. Even if half a dozen states do that, the strike would have been successful to that extent. Maybe, more than half a dozen will do it. One cannot say anything about how the situation will eventually turn out.

One thing is clear, however. The decisions will not be taken on merits. If that were to be the case, hardly any state government would accept the revised scales of pay. This is for two reasons. The first one is that most States do not have the requisite resources. Thus, they know and nobody has to tell

not going to teach.

Properly speaking, the parents should be up in arms against what is happening. At most two months of the academic session have already been wasted. But the fee charged is so nominal that nobody seems to be upset about it. What is more, examinations are conducted in such a shoddy and casual manner that even if a student studies for a month or two, he manages to clear the exam in a large number of cases. As to those who are going to fail, that is going to happen in any case; that seems to be the general cynical view.

In this background, therefore, a prolonged strike will simply wear down the state governments and, in the end, they will surrender. This is what has been happening all these years.

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them about it. In terms of commitments, they are over-extended. Not only that, there are equally pressing demands both from the sectors of elementary education and school education.

It is the second factor, however, which is sought to be demoralised by this indefinite strike. Hardly any State has gone into the question whether the problem in higher education is underpayment or underperformance. The truth of the matter is that while in most cases teachers are paid as well as large, the real problem is that they do not perform. The dominant feeling throughout the country is that no matter what the teachers are paid at the level of higher education, they are

how or other. Last time, when there was a strike in Delhi University, the UGC chose to be a little tough and wanted every college to attest as to which teachers had been taking classes or were on strike. Some of even those who were on strike somehow managed to be counted amongst those who had been teaching.

This did not happen in every case. In certain cases, Principals were a little assertive or there was some other evidence to the contrary. But wherever evidence could be judged and the person at the top was assertive, even those who were on strike managed to get their salary. It was, in other words, a signal case of eating the cake and having it too.

That is why the reference to the classical trade unionism was made in the beginning. Trade union workers when they go on strike are prepared to be victimised and sometimes are actually victimised. In certain cases, they go through a very difficult time. In middle class professions, and college and university teaching belong to this category, there are no such ground rules with the result that even those who are on strike, unless it is publicly embarrassing, get away with being on strike and also get their full salary. This is a game in which all political parties — Congress, B.J.P., C.P.I., C.P.M. etc. are all involved.

To say no more about it, trade unionism amongst teachers is a game in which the only victims are the students and their parents. For the rest, the decision makers, do not mind cut-throat corners, doling out public funds and not feel at all bothered whether any education is taking place or not. With this frame of mind, the only question one can legitimately ask is: When will we learn, indeed if at all?

— Mandira

The writer is a retired Vice Chancellor and educationist. A

ment Organisation (DRDO) have recently patented a breakthrough biotechnological process that can be employed to produce kevlar aramid fibres used extensively in aircraft, space systems and rocket motor casings. These are also used as high-strength materials to make fibre-reinforced polymer matrix composites that find various applications in aircraft as well as space-related industries. DRDO's newly-patented process overcomes a major hurdle faced in all conventional modes of developing kevlar aramid fibres — poor surface bonding — by exposing these to a substance produced by a certain bacteria in a complex organic medium. The organisation claims that the process improves the adhesive properties of the fibres by as much as 30-50 per cent.

Sticky Fibres

SCIENTISTS from the Indian Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) have recently patented a breakthrough biotechnological process that can be employed to produce kevlar aramid fibres used extensively in aircraft, space systems and rocket motor casings. These are also used as high-strength materials to make fibre-reinforced polymer matrix composites that find various applications in aircraft as well as space-related industries. DRDO's newly-patented process overcomes a major hurdle faced in all conventional modes of developing kevlar aramid fibres — poor surface bonding — by exposing these to a substance produced by a certain bacteria in a complex organic medium. The organisation claims that the process improves the adhesive properties of the fibres by as much as 30-50 per cent.

Damaged Senseless

THE first concrete evidence that repetitive strain injury (RSI) is caused by damage to sensory nerves by has been reported by researchers at the University of London, UK. This study shows a quantitative sensory deficit in patients with RSI. Jane Greening and her team used a 100-hertz vibrometer to obtain threshold vibrations for the nerves of hands and arms of 17 patients whose jobs involved intensive keyboarding. Patients and nerve workers showed clear signs of sensory loss consistent with nerve damage.

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