

For Cancer-care

The good news is: Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) Radio-therapy Department has a simulator that can locate any cancerous tumour in human body with accuracy.

The Daily Star report Thursday last revealed that due to some defective appliances in the machine it could not be made operative, even after more than a year.

To our shock and disquiet, the authority concerned did not take the trouble to replace the flawed parts of the simulator. Doctors at the RT Department of DMCH did not come up with any comment or explanation for reasons better known to them.

People carrying malignant tumours or other unwanted growths within their persons are already suffering in terms of 'pain', 'time' and 'money'. All they need is doctoring with 'care' which may lessen their pain or even cure them.

Illegal, and Risky

Comes yet another revelation and yet another reminder that laws of the land are not effectively enforced. Existence of more than fifty illegal bars and guesthouses in the city can very well be construed as ineptitude on the part of the law enforcers.

The law enforcement agencies should swoop on these illegal establishments sooner than later before things go out of control. There are signs they might. The combination of drinking and dancing is regarded world over as dangerous.

The fact that most of these illegal bars and guesthouses are in the city's posh areas like Banani, Baridhara, Gulshan and Uttara implies presence of affluent section of the society, of people who think that law is there to bent, broken and made mockery of.

To restore and enhance people's credibility, the system has to work properly and efficiently and that needs strict enforcement of existing law. Police and the Narcotics Control Department have the list of licensed bars and so finding out who don't should not be too difficult.

How Dare, They?

Two reporters, representing two newspapers, went about their job of following up an illustrated report which was published in The Daily Star Wednesday. Kamalapur railway station was the place where two dead bodies were found lying unclaimed for days together under the nose of the Government Railway Police (GRP).

Kamalapur railway station has earned notoriety for its anti-social activities and harbouring anti-social elements despite presence, in adequate strength, of the railway police. There have been allegations about the involvement of some members of the force in these abominable acts and their getting away with impunity to the detriment of social peace and tranquillity.

The situation has deteriorated so much that even a constable has the cheek to browbeat a couple of reporters and get away with it. We can understand his predicament, but how dare he behave like that? We demand an investigation into allegations of the reporters and punishment to the offender under the law of the land.

EARLIER this week, Thailand's Deputy Prime Minister Supachai Panitchapki has called for the creation of an Asian parallel of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) in the new millennium to avoid financial crises like the one faced by the countries in East and Southeast Asia.

This call follows a proposal from the chief executive of Hong Kong's de facto central bank for Asian monetary union. Joseph Yam, the head of the Hong Kong Monetary Authority, has argued that the time may have come to consider the possibility of an Asian currency — perhaps something along the lines of an Asian Currency Unit — that would form an anchor currency for the region.

Speaking at a conference of the heads of central banks from both the developed and developing countries in Manila earlier this month, Yam floated the notion of an Asian version of the 'euro', saying that greater Asian unity in financial markets would make the region less vulnerable to the speculative attacks that hounded the countries in the region.

The proponents of a single currency have some strong arguments in their favour. Citing the example of Europe, they argue that a unified currency would reflect the region's strong trade linkages and also help address problems of intermediating financial resources within Asia.

At present, central banks in Asia make significant investments in foreign securities, particularly US dollar assets, only to see volatile funds flow back to the region from overseas markets.

In order to avoid the mistakes of the ADB, the proposed Asian Monetary Fund needs to broaden its participation beyond the initial 'Asia only' concept. It is clear that no single Asian country could effectively lead the effort.

However, we should be careful before joining the bandwagon for such a union as it would face many obstacles and a lengthy gestation period. Asia's disparate economies are at much more disparate stages of development than those of Europe, especially since the financial crisis. Moreover, the disadvantages of such a union may greatly outweigh any possible advantages for the Asian countries.

A more practical idea which deserves close attention is the call for forming an Asian Monetary Fund. It could provide financial resources to supplement IMF programme in the region and play the same complementary role as the Asian Development Bank plays to the World Bank.

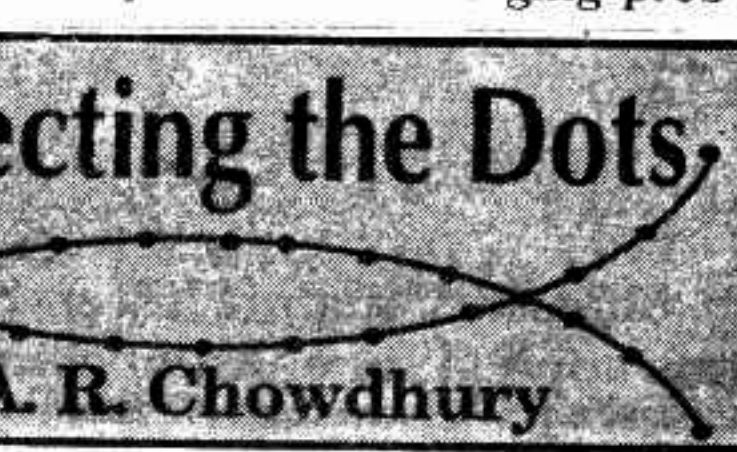
The idea of an Asian Monetary Fund was initially floated by Japan in late 1997. Japan's generous offer, reportedly reaching about \$50 billion, could have endowed the new institution with significant resources from the outset. But the trial balloon never received much attention as it was immediately rejected by the G-7 countries due to fears that it could undermine the leadership role of the IMF and lead to a split between Asia and North America.

Experience from the recent financial crisis in Thailand show that even when the problem was correctly identified, no preventive actions were taken. Consequently, Thailand's neighbours were badly burned by its failure to head off a crisis. Regional peer pressure is therefore the most promising route to induce anticipatory policy measures.



Setting international politics aside, the creation of an Asian Monetary Fund could be extremely useful for the entire region. It could provide an important regional complement for the IMF in the same way the Asian Development Bank and the other regional development banks complement the World Bank.

monetary issues. The ASEAN countries are also following a similar track. But these processes have no formal status, secretariat or other institutional foundation and would be much more effective if rolled into one organisation as the Asian Monetary Fund.



With Washington-based institutions being accused of both policy arrogance and being subservient to US-government interests, the ADB is usually seen as more understanding of its clients' needs. This almost automatic ensures less radical policy prescriptions than the World Bank. The proposed Asian Monetary Fund can en-

Moreover, it can also learn from the problems faced by the ADB. One of the major failures of the ADB, which depends on Japan and the US for its major source of funds, has been its reluctance to argue its case effectively to the non-Asian public.

In order to avoid the mistakes of the ADB, the proposed Asian Monetary Fund needs to broaden its participation beyond the initial 'Asia only' concept. It is clear that no single Asian country could effectively lead the effort. Any hint of Japanese domination will be rejected by many other countries in the region, and Japan's continued economic problems precludes its early leadership.

Hence countries from outside Asia should be encouraged in participating in the formation of the Asian Monetary Fund. Such a Fund would play an important role in the 'new international financial architecture' that will hopefully emerge from the current crisis engulfing the international financial markets.

India and Russia: The Primakov Visit

John Cherian writes from New Delhi

Russian Prime Minister Yevgeny Primakov's visit to India, the first state visit by an important head of government since the BJP-led coalition came to power, was marked by significant initiatives in bilateral relations.

ranging talks with the Russian side, India made it clear that it perceived any talk of a "strategic triangle" involving Russia, China and India reminiscent of Cold War jargon. The present Government also does not seem to give as much importance to the concept of multi-polarity as Russia and China do.

The confidence- and stability-building measures undertaken by Moscow and Beijing are models for an Asia-wide collective security system. They also illustrate a commitment to growing economic ties and an absence of ideological polemics. Moscow would like India and China to have a similar relationship. Before leaving for Moscow, Primakov, while admitting that there were no bilateral discussions on the issue of a "strategic triangle", said that if there was close cooperation between the three countries it would be good for the region and also the Third World.

together does not buy as much defence equipment as India does from Russia. The Indian Air Force is dependent on Russia for 80 per cent of its requirements. Indian officials acknowledge that Russia is the only country with which India has had a "consistent" relationship. Primakov assured the Indian side that his country had no plans to sell defence equipment to Pakistan and that defence contracts with India would be strictly adhered to. Russia delivered the first cryogenic rocket engine in September 1998; six more are due to be delivered in the near future.

SEVEN agreements were signed during Primakov's visit. The key agreement was on long-term military cooperation until 2010. India has spent out its long-term military requirements, with particular emphasis on indigenousisation. It also wants to enter into joint ven-

fire ground-to-air missiles. A report in a Russian newspaper in early December said that Russia had decided to convert a top-secret defence factory near Krasnyyarsk into a joint Russian-Indian venture to manufacture silicon chips for semiconductor gadgets. Quoting "official" sources in New Delhi, the newspaper, Navainmaya Gazeta, said that the new venture would give India an opportunity to obtain enough silicon chips for its civilian and defence sectors. (The chips are used to make solar batteries and semiconductors.) If such a project is indeed in the pipeline, it will be an illustration of the growing cooperation between the two countries in the sophisticated high-tech sector.

The agreement on economic, industrial and financial cooperation seeks to give a boost to tie-ups in the energy sector, including those relating to the civilian use of atomic energy. Official sources said that joint ventures in the hydrocarbon sector would extend to third countries such as Iraq and Central Asian countries like Azerbaijan and Kazakhstan. Russian firms will be given concessions to prospect for oil and gas on Indian territory. Indian companies have been offered exploration sites in Sakhalin and Siberia. The debt issue, which had become a minor irritant in the bilateral relations, has been more or less sorted out. According to Indian officials, India is repaying \$1 billion annually to Russia. As per the agreement, the entire amount is to be used to purchase Indian goods.

DURING his talks with Indian leaders, Primakov stuck to the Russian position that India should sign the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) and accede to the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT). The Russian side was of the view that signing the NPT would considerably strengthen India's case for a permanent seat in the U.N. Security Council. For its part, the Indian side reiterated its position that the NPT had become superfluous after India tested its nuclear weapons. As for the CTBT, New Delhi indicated that the talks with the U.S. were poised at a delicate stage. The relevant part of the joint statement on the nuclear issue said that "both sides supported the process of nuclear non-proliferation". On the question of India becoming a permanent member of a reconstituted Security Council, the Russian Prime Minister refused to endorse India's candidature categorically. The joint statement said that both sides "agreed on the need to expand the U.N. Security Council to make it more representative and increase its effectiveness."

Primakov reaffirmed his support for India's efforts to normalise relations with Pakistan on the basis of the 1972 Shimla Agreement. The two countries criticised the missile strikes against Iraq and strongly urged that diplomatic efforts under the auspices of the U.N. be resumed to restore peace.

By arrangement with Frontline magazine of India.



Yevgeny Primakov and Atal Behari Vajpayee in New Delhi, Dec 21.

In response to a question on the issue, Vajpayee told media persons that while Indo-Russian relations had withstood the test of time, India was still trying to improve relations with China.

Speaking at a reception hosted by President K.R. Narayanan, Primakov once again expressed the hope that India, China and Russia would be able to establish a "strategic triangle" that would be in the interests of peace and security. "India," Primakov said, "is a great power, and a lot depends on the policy pursued by India, Russia and China."

In a joint statement, India and Russia expressed satisfac-

ation over the fact that Indo-Russian bilateral cooperation was proceeding well in all spheres. They agreed to identify new ways to exploit jointly the tremendous potential that both sides have in the fields of science, technology and industry. Both sides expressed their determination to impart a "qualitatively new character and long-term perspective" to their partnership and actively develop them into the 21st century.

The joint statement affirmed that both countries would move towards a "strategic partnership". The Declaration on Strategic Partnership between the two countries will be signed when the next summit-level meeting is held in early 1999. According to officials, the Declaration will be a step forward in the elaboration of principles contained in the Indo-Soviet treaties of 1971, the Treaty of Friendship and Coop-

eration of 1993 and the Moscow Declaration of 1994. Primakov said that the new agreement "will set new parameters and guide further development of the close partnership between India and Russia."

Indian officials, however, hastened to add that neither was the proposed strategic partnership intended to be directed against a third country nor did it give rise to a political bloc; it would encompass expanded cooperation in key areas such as trade and defence supplies. Russia already has the biggest defence as well as science and technology tie-up with India. According to Indian officials, the rest of the world

to run the state. It all looks nice on paper and in print! Will someone please make a list of the invisible walls we have been facing all these years? How to get out of the maze? It looks like the endless loop experiment (see science textbook) with a piece of twisted tape on which an eat goes round and round all over space and hyperspace, and does not get any wiser!

Development, or ideology? Sir, Bangladesh has been sucked into a black hole (as found in space) from which even light cannot come out, due to the intense pull inwards! What we see on the earthly stage in Dhaka is the tragedy of the comedy being enacted passionately by the political parties. Choose between ideology or development? Why we cannot make up our mind even after three decades?

Both sides reiterated their commitment to peace, non-violence and secularism. More importantly, in the joint press statement both countries emphasised the need to create a multi-polar world based on the sovereign equality of all states. They also pledged to contribute their mite to strengthen the role of the UN and its specialised agencies and the

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To the Editor...

Ramadan decoration

Sir, During Ramadan, shopkeepers decorate the front of their shops with shades in order to facilitate shoppers to save from sunlight. There is no exception this year.

But on 1st Ramadan at about 10 o'clock a pick-up load police came from Motijheel Thana (as they claimed) and asked shopkeepers to remove those shades within half an hour. When one of the shopkeepers asked the senior-most police that there was no such notice in the press, the police man retorted that his words were law. One policeman in the rear seat murmured that the Hon'ble President was passing by and expressed his displeasure at such shades (I am not sure whether that was true). In the meantime shopkeepers ran for the decorators who were still sleeping (as it was 1st of Ramadan). Before they (decorators) could scramble after gathering their force it was more than an hour. But within an hour those police personnel returned and started tearing off cloths used for decoration and took those away without

preparing a seizure list. If the President of the Republic so desired it is well and good. But we know in his heart he believes in rule of law. In this case, it was absent.

A R Chowdhury, Uttara, Dhaka

Stop pollution

Sir, It gave me immense pain to read the report on disposing hospital waste. I think it is a criminal act committed by the health authority to pollute the already polluted environment in the name of disposal of hospital waste. The authority concerned must have the knowledge before procuring an obsolete machinery from abroad. As a general public we may not know, but the health authority must know that burning of PVC produces toxic gas dioxin which is deadly for human beings and for the environment at large. The matter needs urgent investigation and immediate measure must be taken to stop the plant.

A Rashid Sylhet

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Dirts around!

Sir, It seems chaos has become the order of the day, be it road-islands, footpaths, road-sides, parks and other vacant places. When there are raids the free-style occupants move out. But they reappear with the disappearance of Municipal Magistrates and police and pollute the areas of the utter dismay of the local residents as usual leaving dirt and filth around. I wonder if the environmentalists and the authorities no-

PM on wrong side

Sir, Congratulations for printing the photograph of PM's car violating the traffic rule, in DS of January 11, 1999. Hope our PM will understand the problem we face everyday on the road. Thank God it was PM's car and it went through. We do not understand what her advance party was doing? Are they not equipped with telecom facilities? As a tax-payer, we feel PM should take tough action against those irresponsible people engaged in traffic control. Everyday we find lots of ambulances stuck in the jam and funny enough, not a single

Strange, but true

Sir, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina recently warned JP Chairman Hussain Muhammad Ershad that his conduct would determine his position where he would want to stay — on the streets or in the red coloured building. We, general people, are very much disheartened at this remark. Her government always claims that they never try to influence law, and law should take its own course. But it is clear from her remark that government do influence the law. Hasan Sharif Ahmed Abangan, Nayatala, Moghbar, Dhaka-1217