Founder-Editor: Late S. M. Ali

For Cancer-care

Dhaka, Saturday, January 16, 1999

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 bad news is: this onecrore-taka sophisticated device has been unutilised since its installation in December 1997. And the worst news is: in the process a legion of cancer patients have been and are being deprived of the treatment they deserve, since this modern technology is here, from the DMCH Radio-therapy (RT) Department.

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 the distress of Bangladesh's increasing number of cancer-afflicted patients. Patients with malignancy are still being treated with the old 'X-Ray Exposure' doses. Using this old assemblage one always runs the risk of not being healed effectively.

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. And the executive officer, after communicating this to officials concerned, is still waiting for the precise information on the problem to solve it. Now, it is legible to come to a conclusion that there is a distinct lack of coordination between the department concerned and the administration. No wonder, other departments of the DMCH are plagued with this 'coordination malady' as well. And if such is the state of affairs at a leading hospital of the country, then the same or worse must be the condition at other hospitals and health-care of the entire populace simply in dire straits. This situation cannot be allowed to continue while there run countrywide whistle-blowing anti-cancer campaigns and 'health-for-all' initiatives.

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. But this uncaring attitude on the part of a principal health establishment does not seem to be of any relief or benefit to any one not to speak of the sufferers. We strongly urge the 'life-savers' to care for the ailing humanity at least and make arrangements to put the simulator in operation immediately.

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. Besides, the fact that the Narcotics Control Department and police have so far been indifferent and, therefore, ineffective, even after specific allegations lodged against these establishments in October last year, raises an obvious question — is there some sort of a nexus? We hope there

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. More often than not dispute among drunken youngsters on the dancing floors leads to physical violence. Some of these bars and guesthouses have dancing floors while a few can also be rented for disco parties. They have the ingredients for trouble for youngsters. A flare-up and the law-enforcers will have their work cut out.

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. Whoever they are, they shouldn't be let to toy with the law of the land.

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. Are they willing to? - ask many a cynic. Only the law enforcers can prove that they are and we believe that they can.

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). The purpose of the reporters was to gather further information on those hapless creatures who were at least human beings, the best creation of God, and the fault was that the reporters chose a disgruntled policeman who did not forget an earlier report on alleged child racketeering by some of his colleagues published also in this paper.

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 veracity of these allegations can be had from the railway officials who confided to the reporters about the misdeeds and unlawful activities of the policemen. They even indicated about the area and size of alleged involvement of the GRP in the black-marketing of railway tickets during the 'festive seasons'. If the keepers of law themselves break the law of the land then we must understand that there is hardly any administration which the people can repose their confidence in and expect safety of life and property

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.

from.

The Need for an Asian Mone-tary Fund

ARLIER this week, Thai-
 Iand's Deputy Prime
Minister Supachai Panitchapkdi 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. Addressing a conference organised by the Confederation of Indian Industry, Panitchapkdi suggested that the creation of an Asian fund similar to that of IMF would

help to prevent liquidity crisis. 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 has 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. Much of the trade is now carried out in US dollars. At present, central banks in

THE two-day visit of Rus-

■ Yevgeny Primakov to

sian Prime Minister

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. sence of effective early warning

Asia make significant investments in foreign securities. particularly US dollar assets only to see volatile funds flow back to the region from overseas markets. By investing reserves directly in Asian financial assets, this type of costly and unstable recycling through developed markets could be drastically reduced.

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. Its success depends on strong political unity and cohesion which is currently absent in Asia. These countries would be better off by taking a wait and see position for now and learning from the European experience.

A more practical idea which deserves close attention is the call for forming as 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. Several Asian countries, most notably China, also expressed their initial opposition to such a Fund. But China's opposition was more political than economic. She feared Japanese domination of such an institution.

the regional level, as countries in the neighbourhood are much more likely than those farther away to detect emerging prob-Connecting the Dots, Dr. A. R. Chowdhury

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. It would satisfy the strongly felt need of many Asians that an institution of their own would be more immediately responsive to their concerns. The spread of the Asian currency crisis underscores the advantages of creating such an institution.

The major architectural weakness as revealed by the Asian financial crisis is the ablems. An Asian Monetary Fund could provide the institutional

and early action systems. No

one predicted the regional

spread of the economic down-

turn that started with the col-

lapse of the baht in Thailand.

Given the current surge of glob-

alisation, the world desperately

needs effective early warning

systems. Once developed, such

warning systems can probably

be applied most effectively at

locus of such an effort. 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. The Thai experience shows that neighbouring countries have a legitimate right to apply such pressure.

The Manila Framework signed by the APEC countries in 1997 sought to start such a process on macroeconomic and

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. The ability to provide financial resources to supplement IMF lending would obviously strengthen the Asian Monetary Fund's clout in pursuing its primary responsibilities for early warning and early ac-

I mentioned earlier that I see the relationship between the proposed Asian Monetary Fund and the IMF similar to the relationship that exists between the Asian Development Bank (ADB) and the World Bank. In this respect, let me shed some light on the ADB and the World Bank. One could argue quite persua-sively that Asia needs the ADB as well as the World Bank since competition in the provision of all services is better than monopoly. Since the ADB is more efficient provider of those services, assuming equivalent quality, there is little cost to the international donor commu-nity from the duplication of

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 automatically ensures less radical policy prescriptions than the World Bank. The proposed Asian Monetary Fund can en-

jov similar advantages. 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.

The causes of its failure to do so are two-fold. First, a reluctance of the Japanese authorities to take and maintain a high profile position if it conflicts with monetary US government interests. The ADB, while important to the Japanese, tends to take second place to other issues in the US-Japan policy relationship. Second, the US authorities are more than ambivalent about the ADB developing a high profile that would imply any diminution of their ultimate control.

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. China, despite its praiseworthy performance during the recent financial crisis, is not yet ready for such a role.

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.

"democratisation" of interna-

views about the recent devel-

opments in the region. The top-

ics that came up for discussion

included the situation in and

around Afghanistan, the West

Asian peace process and the

economic crisis in the Asia-Pa-

cific region. Russia has been

particularly alarmed by the de-

velopments in Afghanistan

since the "fundamentalist

virus" has already spread to

many of the autonomous re-

publics in the Russian Federa-

tion. It fears that if Central

Asian republics such as Tajik-

istan succumb to the virus, it

would be calamitous for Russi-

a's security. Both Moscow and

New Delhi also expressed con-

cern over the illicit trafficking

in drugs, the bulk of which orig-

inates from Afghanistan.

There was convergence of

tional relations.

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.

New Delhi in the third week of December was the most significant state visit by a foreign government leader since the Bharatiya Janata Party-led coalition came to power at the Centre. Since the Pokhran-II nuclear tests of May, no important leader from the West has visited India. In this context Primakov's visit assumes importance since Russia, a Permanent Five (P-5) member of the United Nations Security Council, had also expressed serious reservations about the tests conducted by India and Pakistan. Russian President Boris Yeltsin was originally supposed to visit New Delhi in late November, but ow-

On his arrival in New Delhi, Primakov told mediapersons that Yeltsin would visit India in the early part of 1999 and that he would sign important bilateral treaties, including a declaration to move towards "strategic partnership" until the year

ing to his continuing indisposi-

tion he deputed Primakov in-

Primakov is an old friend of India and the Third World. After a long gap, Russia now has a Prime Minister who is being allowed to exercise his powers. since Primakov enjoys the confidence of his President. Unlike some of his predecessors, Primakov is no political lightweight either.

PRIMAKOV landed in Delhi the day after the United States and the United Kingdom suspended their attacks against Iraq. Under Primakov's leadership, Russia had adopted a tough stance against the attacks and gone to the extent of withdrawing its Ambassadors from Washington and London. (China too strongly criticised the military action against Iraq.) However, in his statement to Parliament, Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee expressed only "grave concern" over the happenings in the Gulf, without actually condemning the attacks. It has been evident for some time now that both Beijing and Moscow have become extremely wary of the unipolar world and the hegemony being exercised by

Washington in world affairs. It was therefore no surprise that Primakov spoke about the need for closer strategic linkbetween Moscow, New Delhi and Beijing. However, his remarks appeared to have caught the Indian side unawares. It is well-known that the BJP-led Government consists of leaders who view China as a potential threat to India's security. Thus, during the wide-

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 stabil-

ity-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.

tion 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 cen-

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 summitlevel 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-

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 longterm military cooperation until 2010. India has spelt out its long-term military requirements, with particular emphasis on indigenisation. 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 Krasnayorsk into a joint Russian-Indian venture to manufacture silicon chips for semiconductor gadgets. Quoting "official" sources in New Delhi, the newspaper, Navaisimaya 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 semi-conductors.) 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.

Bilateral trade between the two countries has also improved. Joint bilateral trade turnover in 1997 amounted to \$1.79 billion as compared to \$1.39 billion in 1996. When the Soviet Union collapsed in 1991, the volume of trade between the two countries amounted to \$5.5 billion. Russian officials feel that it is possible to boost bilateral trade by 300 per cent by the year 2005.

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

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 stated that both sides "agreed on the need to expand the U.N. Security Council to make it more representative

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

and increase its effectiveness."

"Russia considers India an in-

fluential member of the inter-

national community, to be a

strong and appropriate candi-

date for permanent member-

ship of an expanded U.N. Secu-

rity Council."

By arrangement with Fron-

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

In response to a question on the issue, Vajpayee told mediapersons 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-

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

ture sophisticated defence hardware. Both countries signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) for the possible purchase of the 40,000tonne Russian aircraft carrier 'Admiral Gorshkov'. According to Indian officials, the MoU is only a signal of intent of India's desire to acquire the ship, the price of which is considered a little too high by the Indian

tures to develop and manufac-

India has also evinced interest in the MIG AT advanced jet trainers and mid-air refuelling planes for frontline aircraft such as Su-30s and MiG-27s. The Indian Army is looking at T-90 tanks, which can

tline magazine of India

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 on 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.

A R Choudhury Uttara, Dhaka

Stop pollution

In this case, it was absent.

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

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? Revolutions are fought on ideologies, and after gaining freedom or independence, the whole focus is on rapid development; but in Dhaka the struggle continues with something else, sapping the national energy, thanks to the strongwilled politicians with their political fatwas. How long this fatwa-baazi will go on?

How do we get out of this black hole? I have no idea of the energy equations involved, but I am willing to push or pull, if all the rest of the crowd lend me a helping hand, to push the country forward. It does not mean I am entering politics, but how to help our politicians to help us 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.

Politicians of the country, Unite! It is time the party is

Abul M Ahmad Dhaka

Dirts around!

Sir, It seems chaos has become the order of the day, be it road-islands, footpaths, roadsides, parks and other vacant places. When there are raids the free-style occupants move out. But they reapper with the disappearance of Municipal Magistrates and police and pollute the areas of the utter dismay of local residents as usual leaving dirts and filths around.

I wonder if the environmentalists and the authorities noticed this all.

The new areas like Uttara. Baridhara, Banani, Gulshan etc., which are on the way of being polluted and yet not polluted like Baitul Mukarram, Bangabandhu Avenue and other dense city areas can still be saved from this menace with honest efforts and plans.

A Bari Uttara, Dhaka

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 traffic police comesforward to make a way for those ambulances. Many patients die be-

fore reaching hospital. May, I request our Prime Minister to instruct Bangladesh Army to man the city streets immediately. I am sure they will be able to do the job more professionally and people will not die in ambulances.

> KM Alam Banani, Dhaka.

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

Hasan Sharif Ahmed Ambagan, Nayatola, Moghbazar, Dhaka-1217