The Baily Star

Founder-Editor: Late S. M. Ali Dhaka, Thursday, April 1, 1999

Warm-up to BDF Meet

The Bangladesh Development Forum meeting in Paris next month is going to be held on a new format. Marking a departure from the past tradition of a routine announcement of an aid pledge, this year's donor meet is set to have thematic sessions devoted entirely to a set of burning issues that impacted on development. Such questions are likely to be discussed at length under three broad heads: governance and building strong institutions, strengthening human development and reforming the financial system including a focus on microcredit. Accordingly, the World Bank's country economic report has been given a self-explanatory title — Bangladesh: Key Challenge for the Next Millennium. The government of Bangladesh's position papers are understood to be in the works. And we are hoping to see some fruitful results emerge from the interface on 'a new format.'

This is for the first time perhaps that a WB report has been so elaborate on the role of the police force in Bangladesh. The report in a box item depicts the networks of extortion girdling the police force in their dealing with the transportation of goods in the country. It also notes "a pervasive feeling among the population that the police are antipoor and cannot be relied upon to maintain law and order or redress violations of human security." Furthermore in the perception of the World Bank, problems with the police force and judicial system have resulted in a deteriorating law and order situation. That 'pervasive toll-taking is affecting people from all walks of life' has not obviously es-

caped the WB's notice. It is unfortunate that the indictment on things going wrong in our country has to come from the World Bank when we as the perpetrators and sufferers should have known better and acted on the knowledge by now. Our problems are too obvious to the naked eyes to miss. Anyway, the solution is not for others to give; we have to find it ourselves, and that is how we can make up for the image loss.

There cannot be any second opinion on the World Bank's observation that 'problems created by weak institutions are being compounded by a political environment that is increasingly confrontational.

A broad public support should be readily available to any government serious enough to be tough and effective against the law breakers. The question is basically of leadership, one that is non-partisan, willing and determined to take action against the 'privileged minority in stout defence of the welfare of the majority.

Skeleton in the Cupboard

Several days have gone by since the decomposed corpse was recovered from an overhead water tank at the Detective Branch office Thursday last but investigators have so far made little progress towards the motive behind the killing. It was a case of murder, says the autopsy report. The murdered person was purportedly an informant for the DB, who used to be a foreign currency dealer and with whom there was a dispute over money, that was supposed to have led to the killing. Yet, at the time of writing, the only tangible progress, it seems, apart from the autopsy, has been revision of the "unnatural death' case filed with the Ramna Police Station into a 'murder case.'

Police commissioner AKM Shamsuddin reportedly said that without police help this could not have perhaps happened. That some DB officials had been using bottled water prior to the discovery of the dead body is also suggestive of things that could not be ignored. The investigation, however, has taken a different course. There is an apparent lack of co-ordination among people involved in the investigation. The CID said Friday night that they were yet to receive the autopsy report. The snail-pace of the investigation may well give rise to misgivings of a possible cover up of an internal foul play. Such a suggestion could have easily been dismissed as sheer cynicism had there not been tales to that effect. Death of Rubel in police custody is not an episode of too distant a past.

This incident surely comes as a severe jolt to the already-battered police image. The custodians of law can only come clean when they hunt the criminals down and send them to the court of law. We earnestly hope that they will do that sooner than

In Fool's Paradise

Bangladesh cricket team have brought disgrace to the nation, not so much because of the margins by which we were humiliated in the triangular series, but the way they conducted themselves in the tournament played in their own courtyard. Along with the braggarts in BCB, joined the captain of the Bangladesh team even before the start of the tournament making his wishes known in no uncertain terms that his team would 'play in the final after twice defeating Kenya'. He was not only being indiscreet there but also belittled his opponents who had better records against Bangladesh. The four losses in as many matches bared the pathetic state of the national colour holders in a game that generates high-voltage enthusiasm and support among millions in Bangladesh.

In any civilised country the persons responsible for the dismal performance would have taken the blame and resigned their posts. Far from it, the Board pundits have been very effusive about the prospect of Bangladesh's qualifying for the Test match status.

We have been waiting for 50 years to be somewhere near the top. We have talked too much and done little to improve the standards of the game. We have only tried to find scapegoats for our debacles without acknowledging our own faults and weaknesses. An institution like the BKSP has proved a failure over the years. It is now time to look back and take stock of the successes and failures and chart the future course of action. The first imperative is to shy away from commercialisation of the game until such time as we are ready for it. The whole format of the major leagues and tournaments have to be readjusted making room for more longer matches. Without fail more age-group tourneys will have to be organised with immediate effect. And, participation in Nirman School Cricket Tournament should be made compulsory for government-aided schools. Inter-college and inter-university cricket is almost extinct now-a-days. This needs to be rejuvenated and organised regularly. And finally, the format of the national championship has to be radically changed with provision for 3- and 5-day matches. Along with these steps, coaching and training must go on in full swing. Where cricket is concerned people don't want to live in fool's paradise any more.

Return of Star Wars and its Likely Repercussions T ECENTLY the US House of Would the missile defense system touch off a new arms race as warned by Chinese Foreign Ministry's other countries are forced to Representatives, closely

arms control and disarmament division, Sha Zukang on January 12, 1999? If "other countries are

future scenario of a nuclear South Asia?

▲ following a Senate approved missile defense bill, has passed its own version. Now the legislation would allow the Pentagon to build the system. The system consisting of constellation of space-based sensors and ground-based missiles, popularly known as Star Wars, would eventually, if it is developed and deployed, protect all 50 states from the onslaught of possible missile attacks. Initially the idea of Star Wars was conceived and propagated by the Republicans led by former President Ronald Reagan and that too was done in cold war matrix. And the Democrats were firmly against the development of national missile defense shield by the year 2005 for two very compelling reasons: first, the price tag was considered to be too high; and second, its possible destabilizing effects on

disarmament and arms control

agreements. As the cold war drew to its end the reasons cited by the Democrats were not only convincing but desirable as well. The Democrats' arguments were matched with the ensuing of post war euphoria and ushering of a New World order, and raised hopes for a world, which would shy away from building of weaponry and slowly and steadily move towards total disarmament. General idea was that peace and stability depended not on confrontation but on dialogue, free trade and development of civilian technologies. A definite shift in US's - the only surviving superpower's - foreign policy seemed to be in the offing. In sum it was expected that with the end of cold war the world was going to get benefited from the much-awaited peace dividends: No more expensive weaponry -- only development for peace. A young Governor from the baby boom generation actually got elected to White House on this post cold war

crescendo. President William

forced to develop more advanced missile," would Beijing be one of them? If so what then would be Jefferson Clinton promised a new era — an era of peace and prosperity led by the only su-

perpower of the world.

But ironically, only two years of his reelection as the second term President of the United States, the same President, who propagated national security measures based on disarmament, arms control agreements and building of less weaponry, sent a military budget to the Congress which was to allocate \$6.6 billion so that the Pentagon can build the very system he had so far opposed and thought unnecessary and expensive. Now that GOP led House of Representatives has approved a slightly different version of Senate approved one. the development of the missiledefense, much to the delight of the weapons manufactures, is on its way. There is, however, a slight difference between the Senate approved bill which includes a provision designed to encourage continued nuclear arms reduction talks with Moscow, and the House approved one without such provision. But such difference will be, in all likelihood, resolved by a House-Senate conference committee. About its deployment there is no definite timetable. Both bills remain vague on the possible timetable for its deployment. And White House insists that before the actual deployment three criteria - threat, cost and the impact on arms control - would be seri-

ously taken into consideration. The question is why does the United States - the most powerful state in the world - need such a system? And why is this volta face by the Democrats and a Democratic President, especially during post-cold war era? Washington, however, cites a rationale for its policy. It seems that the whole system is being

built and eventually be deployed for the alleged threats of missile attacks from the 'rogue states' like North Korea, Iran and Iraq. It's a perception. But perceptions matter, and moreover when it is accentuated by incident like North Korea's firing of a Taepo Dong I missile that crashed into the Pacific after flying over Japan. As the United States goes ahead with the development of its own national missile defense system, and uneasy world awaits for its possible repercussions if the system is actually deployed. What would be possible impact of such a system?

impossible. Then one has to consider about the fate of 1972 Anti Ballistic Treaty on which subsequent arms control treaties were signed between Washington and Moscow. Would not building of Star Wars be a violation of that Treaty? Granted that the United States is the most powerful country in the world and Russia is in shambles. But isn't it in Washington's interest not to thrust or impose its version of national security without mollifying Moscow's strategic concerns and convincing it that the system is meant only for regional purpose i. e. protecting only 50



Dilara Choudhury First and foremost would be states of America? Would Rus-

its possible negative impacts on disarmament and arms control agreements. Already the Russian Foreign Minister and a spokesman of Chinese Foreign Ministry have termed Washington's planned development as counterproductive for international agreements on arms control which were painstakingly worked out for years, and it, adversarial effects on global strategic balance. It can then be safely assumed that it would make the possibility of an already difficult ratification of Start II, the 1993 agreement, which would have cut strategic offensive nuclear arsenals for both countries to as low as 3.500 (though it is too many but compared to thousands of nuclear war heads the figure is pretty low), more difficult if not

sia feel strategically secure knowing that its cold war adversary is now safely under a ballistic defense system and not knowing for sure what it is upto? After al these cold war adversaries have not yet developed the kind of trusting relationship, though they have come a long way, like those between Washington and its European allies. So it is only nat ural that in the absence of a genuine and mutually trusting relationship perception about Washington's real intentions would be uppermost in Moscow's thinking.

Second, besides Russia, the impacts of Star Wars on Sino-American relations, which have been rather turbulent since the formal opening between the two countries in 1972,

are to be considered seriously. Washington-Beijing bilateral relationship has been uneasy and sprinkled with accusations and counter accusations. At the same time there were also some positive and mutually beneficial development, especially on the disarmament agenda. Beijing has formally joined Missile Technology Control Regime (MTCR) and signed Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT). But the recent reactions and activities of Beijing point that the Star Wars and its possible deployment may have far reaching consequences not only on Sino-American relations but disarmament, arms control and global strategic balance as well. It has reacted rather drastically by deploying more than 100 additional ballistic mis-. siles facing Taiwan at the slightest hints of the prospect of an US-sponsored theatre missile-defense system in Asia. Beijing's actions may be hasty but from its point of view any ambiguous defence ties between Washington and Taiwan, which is considered to be a breakaway province and must eventually return to mainland, only underline and embolden its intention to declare independence. In effect what Beijing feels is that Washington might be backing away from its one-China policy by having such ties. So the missile defense system has now touched the very core of Sino-

over Taiwan in 1996. Lastly, the vital question of a potentially risky arms race. Would the missile defense system touch off a new arms race as warned by Chinese Foreign Ministry's arms control and disarmament division. Sha Zukang on January 12, 1999? If

US relations and heightened

tensions along one of world's

most strategic waterways since

the standoff between the two

develop more advanced missile," would Beijing be one of them? If so what then would be future scenario of a nuclear South Asia? Would not then India be "compelled" to develop more advanced missiles and deploy them for its strategic interest and defense? Would not it also effect India's strategic anxieties when many India strategic thinkers already are uneasy over American presence in Diego Garcia? What would be then Pakistan's response? Would not there be a renewed arms race between the two when both countries are trying to restrain their newly acquired nuclear capabilities? Can one rule out such eventuality especially when the new era of Indo-Pakistan relationship is still in the murky area of mistrust and misperceptions? The snowballing of such development would be destabilizing not only for Asia but globally as well. One may argue that all these

reactions are unnecessary as the actual development of Star Wars and its potential deployment is at least eight years away and the technology is highly unproved. And moreover Washington needs it strictly for its territorial defense. It may cite examples like Pyongyang's testing of Taepo Dong I or Iran's potential capacity to launch Inter Continental Ballistic Missiles with whom its has adversarial relations and no hot lines. It may also feel that it is being compelled to develop such a system because of Beijing's socalled failure to contain North Korea in developing missiles. But for countries like Russia and China, the whole thing may look like Washington's endeavour to dominate the world from within its protective missile defense system, unless Washington explicitly explains the inner purposes of its policy, especially when averting risk of "suitcase bomb" hitting an American city cannot be guaranteed by the system. A prospect no respectable country will accept.

Indo-Pak Relations

Encouraging Omens Shouldn't be Avoided

Arguably, the Lahore Declaration, outcome of the summit following Indian prime minister's much-

talked and highly publicised bus trip to Lahore, has certainly laid a basis of a scope for tangible

improvement of the hostile ties between India and Pakistan. As a logical corollary to the results of

the summit, a number of positive developments are taking places reflective of the desire of the two

countries to take the spirit generated by the summit further ahead.

NDIA and Pakistan, following the Lahore summit Abetween their prime ministers, seem to be keeping up the trend of co-operation as they have initiated a series of measures that reflect a positive tone in their bilateral ties. The two countries have relaxed restrictions on visa for certain category of people like judges and newspaper editors. Relationship between two archrivals have also exchanged

prisoners after a long break. In fact, the last time such exchange of prisoners took place was in 1991. The issue concerning the figure of the prisoners to be released were discussed by the two sides at various levels from time to time but no agreement could be reached on the actual number of prisoners and how many would be released. The meeting of Indian Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee and his Pakistani counterpart Nawaz Sharif in Lahore changed the scenario. An accord in this regard was reached and is being implemented. Emotive scenes were witnessed at the border where prisoners were swapped amidst optimism by officials of the two sides that more such gestures are in the store. They are also moving

closer in terms of culture. Islamabad has, for the first time, given permission to the filming of an Indian film on Shaheed Udam Singh at certain locations in Pakistan. New Delhi is expected to reciprocate if such a request comes from Pakistan. It would have been

rather impossible even a few months back. The former Punjab offers a lot of commonality between the two countries. During the partition of 1947. Punjab too was divided like many other provinces including Bengal, and people who had migrated to India (and vice versa) as a sequel of the partition, still suffer from nostalgia. Indian capital New Delhi is largely a place of migrants from mainly West Punjab. Lahore has many

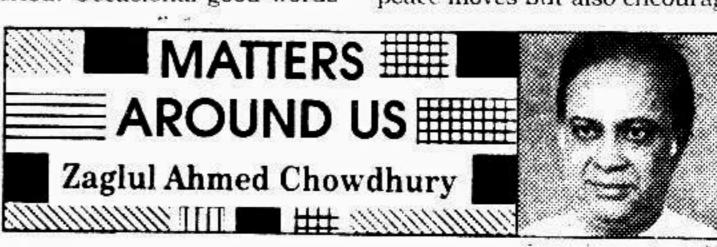
people from East Punjab (which is now in India). Nawaz Sharif is from a place of East Punjab while former Indian Prime Minister Inder Kumar Gujral hails from Jehlum of West Punjab. As such, filming on Shaheed Udam Singh is rather impossible without sequences in West Punjab which is now in Pakistan because the life and works of the martyr is inextricably linked with the areas that now fall in Pakistan.

Nawaz Sharif's government has given permission to the shooting of the film and this has been welcomed by the Indian authorities. Expectedly, this will open up further co-operation on the cultural front. Indeed, all these augur well for normalisation and development of relationship between

two neighbours who have been mostly at daggers drawn since their independence in 1947. Not that their ties have always been belligerent and no form of cooperation took place during the last 52 years but hostility and mistrust have characterised their relations throughout this period. Occasional good words

generated by the summit further ahead. It is in this context that the gestures coming from two sides are not only being largely welcomed in two countries but also by the peace-loving people in South Asia.

Other South Asian leaders are not only supporting the peace moves but also encourag-



and some of co-operation in some ways have not helped much in bettering the ties.

Arguably, the Lahore Declaration, outcome of the summit following Indian prime minister's much-talked and highly publicised bus trip to Lahore. has certainly laid a basis of a scope for tangible improvement of the hostile ties between India and Pakistan. As a logical corollary to the results of the summit, a number of positive developments are taking places reflective of the desire of the two countries to take the spirit

ing them. During the recent third conference of the SAARC speakers and parliamentarians in Dhaka, Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina welcomed the peace moves between India and Pakistan, and mentioned her own initiative in this direction as she undertook trips to both countries following the nuclear explosions by the two countries in May last year. Similarly, other South Asian leaders - whether in power or in opposition — have favoured lessening of tension between the two neighbours.

The question that is being consistently raised is that can they maintain the trend of positive overtures while keeping the solution of the main problems like that of Kashmir at the backburner? Undoubtedly, the core issue between India and Pakistan is Kashmir which has defied a settlement over the last decades and was the heart of more than one war between them, it is also the source of regular tensions along the borders. The Lahore Declaration has spoken about efforts to solve all disputes including Kashmir through dialogue. If has also vowed to spare no efforts to minimise the risks of even accidental nuclear clash now that both possess the dangerous weapon. But this has to be admitted that solution of a problem like Kashmir is a real difficult task and more so when two contending countries have divergent positions in this.

The government in both countries always remain under domestic compulsions not to shift from their known stance in such a critical dispute. Their views on the subject is well known. Even then the Lahore summit has provided a scope for discussions on this which was non-existent before. The

summit has also upgraded the level of bi-lateral talks on political issues ranging from foreign secretary to the plane of the foreign ministers. Their foreign ministers are scheduled to meet shortly in New Delhi to discuss the follow-up matters of the summit in Lahore.

Certain remarks, in the meantime, from leaders of the two countries seem to have potentials to vitiate the sober ambience. Political analysts feel that relations can be taken towards gradual improvement through corporation in different forms like what is being witnessed now from both sides while both have to demonstrate patience and prudence about the progress in the resolution of the main disputes. There are hawks in both countries who are opposed to the efforts to mending the fences and more keen to maintain the jingoistic postures. They seem to be overzealous to rule out any chances of eventual meaningful improvement of the Indo-Pak ties. The leadership in both countries which has contributed remarkably to the recent healthy developments must remain alert and not fall prey to machinations or provocative tendencies.

Peace between India and Pakistan — as far as possible in the given situation — is a matter that the entire South Asia look forward to and the current encouraging omens must not go fully unutilised in that direc-

The Culture of "Cheating"

The guns roared in this month of March and people died proudly for the sake of their country. None cheated and thus we silenced those enemy guns to snatch victory. Now, talk to the "real voter," the "real people," and all they say is — "politicians come and go promising all big things for us, but nothing changed for us in 27 years."

connotations. But from school class rooms to the field of politics, from business houses to government offices and even in personal relationships, "cheating" appears to be gaining importance every day. A cheat is one who exploits the trust of others to reap his own benefit and is basically

HEATING. It has many

of Bangladesh we often cheat ourselves, although I wonder how many people realize that. Whenever major examinations are underway, a regular news one cannot overlook is "cheating" by students or if we put it more sophisticatedly it is called "adopting unfair means."

A recent report in The Daily

Star said "Trend of unfair

means in SSC exams alarming."

called a 'fraud.' But in the case

It gave a statistical picture of "adopting unfair means." In Dhaka Board alone, 5,506 students were expelled for cheating in 1998, while it was 3,797 in 1997 and 1,553 the previous year. This year more than 10,000 were expelled in seven days of the Secondary School Certificate examinations. Here is an EXTRA: about 150 teachers were also suspended for helping students cheat or adopt unfair means. Sometimes teachers in non-government schools also help their students because if 50 per cent of the candidates fail consecutively for three years the school stands to lose its affiliation, admitted Sheikh Amanullah. chairman of the Federation of Bangladesh Teachers' Associa-

That is a great news for Bangladesh. A new generation of experts in forgery or cheating are awaiting to join the next stage of education, with minimal or just no knowledge of

subjects they had to 'study' during 10 years of schooling. There has been recommendations year-in and year-out to stop the breeding of new frauds, but it goes on unabated.

We journalists sometimes have to file such stories. The International Herald Tribune. which usually carries only briefs about Bangladesh, some years ago published in details the story of students cheating in their school-final tests. One of my friend still pursuing a doctorate abroad wrote me asking that I stop filing such "embarrassing" stories as he was swamped by questions if he ever adopted "unfair means" while in Bangladesh. I told him if it is true. I can't help but file the story or lose to competitors.

The problem here also involves the EXTRA news - the teachers who are "obliged" to their private students, also dish out 'techniques' to help them pass the tests. So, who is to be put in charge of stoping the alarming menace?"

And when we look at cheating or forgery in other parts of our national life, it does give a very gloomy picture. It was during our childhood that most of us learned about a place called "Jinjira." Everything from children's milk to ladies' cosmetics were produced there labeled not "Made in Jinjira," but every other place in the world. What was that? Simply cheating consumers to make personal gains.

One such Jinjira-made canned milk powder sent a child to near death. The oneyear-old was attacked with di-

arrhea soon after taking the milk the mother so carefully prepared with boiled water in sterilized bottle. Then skin lesions appeared and doctors fought a battle with an unknown disease, they thought so at that time. A hunch then led to laboratory test of the milk powder. The result: the milk was found mixed with urea fertilizer plus some other chemicals fatal for children. The child survived because he had the means to good treatment and only God knows what happened to many others.

ter, but fed-up he just walked in. The private secretary asked him to wait. So he waited for 30 minutes and then asked when he would be able to have the much sought after audience. The answer was: "You have to wait if you want to meet a minister. Have patience." Getting friendly with the PS helped a bit and he found out that the minister was never told that he was waiting.

In personal relationships. news items and letters in different magazines and newspapers speak of high tendencies of be-



In Fool's Paradise

by Nadeem Qadir

In Dhaka, now one can get perfumes of all brand names within an envious price range. One really has to be an expert to differentiate the false from the real. Of course, we are more attracted to labels "made in anywhere, but not Bangladesh." Even clothes — the items which we export — fetch a better price if it has a label that says Made in England or even "Made AS England."

In offices, specially government ones, one is given different lessons from time to time just to make a pocketful if possible. Frauds in action or simply cheating? Recently somebody was seeking an appointment with an important minis-

trayal that leave thousands broken heart or maimed by acid burns. That is a matter of the heart, but what about business commitments or professional agreements based on hitherto good personal relationships? A ship carrying rice for Bangladesh flees to some other country after pocketing the entire bill. How ? The exporter and importer cheated the nation or may be they did not

want to, but some wise fraud gave them the idea to carve out a handsome balance for himself. Go to a butcher's shop, yes, the one that has been serving your table for ages. You look the other way, you are almost certain to get more bones than

meat. The fruit vendor does that too. Imagine, even some of the people you think have beautiful hearts as they home deliver flowers for your loved ones, are cheating you! You order one kind of flowers, for which they charge extra, and then you find out the delivered bunch has other flowers too which cost

And talk about politicians, how many of them lie, creating a new debate in national history and then say "we have failed to keep our promises to the electorate." Well that might also be a genuine expression, but who knows the incumbent was not trying to be a "good person" again before the next general elections? I was in a thick soup once for publicly crying hoarse about promises made by a national leader due to their non-implementation by those who were supposed to. Why? Cheating me or the leader they were serving?

Recently a tabloid daily published a letter from a former minister where he calls for giving up "politics of hostilities." "We politicians are failing to correctly run the affairs of the country," he admits, adding "we are not being able to leave behind a healthy social system for our children or for the future generation. We. politicians are only thinking about our-

What does all that mean? All the promises and failures are the result of the acts of politicians themselves. I am glad that at least one politician admitted he had done wrong to the na-

selves."

tion. Of course, being in the opposition now, he has time to remorse — that's what I thought. No, it is a good start to put his mind against the regime to say "now rape, hijacking people are screaming for help ... to be saved from this situation." So where is the remorse? Rather a sophisticated way of putting his

And history says, it was that politician who introduced a new controversial episode in the country's usually volatile politics in the parliament six or seven years back. Did that controversy help him, his party or the nation? Lastly, but not the least, does he have a new agenda for healthy politics or ready to quit the politics that has failed to deliver.

I am sorry if anyone is offended, but these are facts that one comes across as he experiences Bangladesh. And I have feelings and can't help remember all those who had shed their blood for the birth of this country in 1971. Yes, this is the month of our great independence. If your memories betray you, please open the book or visit the Muktijuddha Jadughar (Liberation War Museum) or talk to a war veteran or the mother or wife of a dead freedom fighter. Ah! the television has been showing the forgotten history since 1996 - the one or the only good thing one may speak about the television. The guns roared in this month of March and people died proudly for the sake of their country. None cheated and thus we silenced those enemy guns to snatch victory.

Now, talk to the "real voter," the "real people," and all they say is - "politicians come and go promising all big things for us, but nothing changed for us in 27 years." What do we call that? The culture of "cheating"?