

IJO Needs Revving Up

THE International Jute Organisation (IJO) finds itself literally at a cross-roads after fifteen years of somewhat bumpy existence. For one thing, it awaits an UNCTAD conference, likely to be held on March 27-31 to have its assignment remanded beyond the year 2000, a matter which should be treated as a formality given the imperative necessity for an organisation like the IJO. For the other, at the time of the renewal of its agreement with UNCTAD, in all likelihood, there will be a non-sense stock-taking of the IJO role in terms of research and development of jute, both as a commodity and an industry.

That jute is a versatile product of basically unrealised possibilities is something which must be recognised by the jute exporting and producing countries in that order. When that is done, the IJO on a new lease of life will be truly productive; otherwise it would be the repetition of the same old story — funds constraints, policy discords, doubts cast on its efficacy and all the rest. In the minds of researchers, environmentalists and users, jute ought to be the in-thing back again — a natural winner — over synthetics in terms of costing, durability and environmental friendliness. We believe that it is on the psychological level that the grounds will have to be prepared first.

Next comes the question of strengthening the efforts from within the organisation, a task which is being addressed efficiently, we think, by the International Jute Council (IJC). Significantly, India which had left the IJO has returned to its fold. Thailand, another country which too had disengaged itself from the organisation is said to be on a come-back trail. We urge all the member-countries of IJO to make sure that fund shortage does not hinder the follow-up on research projects already undertaken. Hearteningly, the European Commission looks poised to be interested in enhancing the effectiveness of the IJO, so have we been assured by EC Commissioner Paul Nielson who visited lately. The IJO must be helped to perform to its full potential with the cooperation of all concerned.

We welcome the shift of emphasis from the public sector on to the private sector in matters of promoting the diversified use of jute world-wide. This is a strategic decision that could unlock newer possibilities in the field.

Eating Up Waterbodies

INFLUENTIAL quarters are alleged to be grabbing waterbodies in the metropolis with the help of a section of Rajuk and some ministry officials. Defying a High Court order and the standing instructions of the Prime Minister to keep at bay from the Gulshan Lake, a developer has been allowed to trespass into it, so to speak. Interestingly enough these vested quarters are also conspiring to grab land on the Dhanmondi Lake area by filling up a large portion of the waterbody in the name of facelift for quite some time now. The High Court in 1998 directed Rajuk to uphold the master plan of the city and stop any sort of construction in the Gulshan Lake.

The latest attempt by a developer, according to a pictorial report in The Daily Star on Friday last has been termed as a mysterious deal between the developer in question and a section of Rajuk officials. Rajuk chief has denied knowledge of this, but doesn't it sound like someone smoking through his hand and yet he was not aware of it? The real estate company and Rajuk are blaming each other for the demarcation of a wide area of the lake measuring around 12 acres, though the workers of the company told The Daily Star correspondent on the spot that Rajuk's Land Department gave the permission to demarcate their land in the lake.

High Rajuk officials are threatening action against the person responsible for taking such a decision who happens to be a deputy director of Rajuk's Land Department. But he has purportedly been transferred to the sports ministry and some powerful officials allegedly involved in the shady deal are trying to make him a scapegoat.

The entire episode goes only to prove that corruption and highhandedness have made some officials so powerful that they can even dare violate the orders of the High Court and flout directives of the Prime Minister. And the most abhorrent aspect is that they can get away with it. Even though the minister in charge of the department made himself somewhat controversial on an earlier issue of plot allotment, we have to draw his attention to this gross violation so that he acted swiftly and before damage is done to the lake and its environs.

Wind of Change in Iran

THE reformists' surge in the Iranian elections may well have pointed to the electorate's choice for a break with ultra-conservatism. The poor showing in the polls by ex-president Hashemi Rafsanjani's hard-liners — they have secured 44 seats with their leader only avoiding a run-off by a whisker — amply displays a popular verdict for a change in the country's political make-up. However, it is still too early to say whether the heavily changed electoral equation would have a dramatic impact on the way the country is run, especially since the conservatives still weigh heavy on the legislative council. Moreover, they are the ones who have total control over Iran's armed forces, judiciary, radio and television. Also, for a nation which practically isolated itself from the world community for the most part since the clergy assumed power through an Islamic revolution back in 1979, it is difficult to imagine things will change radically on the societal level.

Admittedly, Iran has recently shown an appreciable degree of inclination for opening up to the outside world. President Mohammad Khatami's visit to the United States last year was interpreted as Iran's step towards normalising its ties with the 'enemy'. However, the country's relations with the West, meaning principally the US, looks set to hit another rock with the Senate's passage of a bill that "directs the president to identify foreign persons or countries that transfer weapon materials or technology to Iran and authorises him to impose sanction." Already, the bill has invoked sharp reaction from the Iranian leadership. Khatami included.

When the Iranian people have expressed their support for the reformists, America's reservations in certain matters could only delay the process of transformation in that important West-Asian country.

PRESIDENT Clinton's planned visit to South Asia in March, in which the visit to Islamabad has not yet been included, has heated the already-heated environment of this region. Whether the President would, at least, make a stop over in Islamabad or not, has now taken a dramatic turn. As a matter of fact, the whole issue is now being debated not only in the capitals of India and Pakistan but also in the US capital. According to media reports, both the countries are spending millions of dollars in order to have their respective influence on the presidential visit.

India has successfully isolated Islamabad regionally by postponing the Kathmandu summit of the SAARC. And internationally to an extent it has suspended Pakistan from the Commonwealth for the latter's deviation from the path of democracy. Now India wants Washington to do the same. Its lobbyists in Washington argue that even a 'technical halt' in Pakistan by the US President would condone army take over in the country and its alleged involvement in Indian air-bus hijacking as well as its promotion of terrorism. It's something a country like the United States with democratisation at the top of its foreign policy agenda cannot afford to do.

Previously New Delhi's endeavour to persuade Washington to declare Islamabad as a terrorist state has had limited success with India and the United States simply agreeing to form a joint working group to counter terrorism giving the former a slight edge over Islamabad. Thus New Delhi is now prepared to do its best to convince Washington for accepting its own assessment of the situation in Pakistan.

Pakistani lobbyists, on the other hand, have based their plea on the ground of US's responsibility in easing the regional tension and on the dire need for peace in an area where two nuclear capable adversaries face each other. They argue that the US President should play a proactive peace role like did in Ireland, Kosovo and Middle East. At the heart of all these high-level diplomacy lies in New Delhi's attempts to persuade Washington to have a 'tilt' toward Indian South Asian

policy by replacing the one which treats India and Pakistan equally. But those were cold war realities. The situation, according to New Delhi, since then has changed dramatically. What New Delhi is now hoping for is a definite paradigm shift in US's South Asian policy. In New Delhi's assessment, dropping Islamabad from President Clinton's scheduled visit would be a right step in the right direction.

A paradigm shift is something which India has been trying to achieve for a long time. It bitterly resented Washington's cold-war policy of treating both on equal terms (which Washington pursued for strategic reasons), and preventing India from becoming what it ought to be. Despite both being democracies, Washington was allegedly insensitive to New Delhi's concerns due to cold war dynamics, which constricted potential closer relations between the two. The 'balance of power' pursued by the US for the maintenance of peace and stability was, thus, an anathema to New Delhi. What New Delhi refused to recognise is that the pro-US South Asian policy was in lieu with American interests that were frequently demonstrated through US's unwillingness to de-link its relations with India from US-Pakistan and India-Pakistan relations. Now, however, a number of things have taken place in India's favour. Pakistan has lost its strategic importance with the collapse of the Soviet Union. That removed the only irritant between India and the US. Along with it came gradual and steady convergence of interests between the two, which came to a head with New Delhi's wide ranging economic reforms providing wonderful opportunities for US investment and burgeoning markets for US goods. Past apathy is being corrected by rebuilding political and economic ties and by attempting to reconcile the differences on India's nuclear programme.

Exchange of visits of high level officials is taking place. India has lifted the trade barriers which for nearly five decades blocked US products in its own instead of making Indo-US relations a hostage of Indo-Pak conflicts. Indian elite and policy makers feel that the 'tilt' is a natural ramification of India's rise as a potential economic, military and strategic power. These are developments, which the US cannot ignore. So the 'paradigm shift' would be natural. And Washington can make that clear by dropping Pakistan from the presidential visit, which would give legitimacy to New Delhi's claim to be the only power in the region to be reckoned with. The perceived 'paradigm shift' in South Asia would have, in that case, a lot of substance.

But such a shift in US South Asian policy, as defined by New Delhi, would not be so easily forthcoming. First and foremost is the issue of nuclear non-proliferation. Nuclear non-proliferation has been at the top of US's South Asian policy. For years Washington attempted to pre-

South Asia and the US

Is there a Paradigm Shift in the Offing?

President's offer of mediation on Kashmir despite New Delhi's stand against third party intervention, is an indication that the US considers it to be a disputed area and wants India to resume high level talks with Pakistan.

key Indian markets such as textiles, agriculture, and consumer and manufactured goods. Environment for US investment in India's software industries are being explored by Treasury Secretary Summers highest ranking US official visiting India since India detonated nuclear explosives in 1998. Besides Indian analysts feel that US strategic interests in Asia in the coming decades would also converge with those of New Delhi, especially in the backdrop of its potential to be a balance of power in wider Asian region.

US will find India extremely important in pursuing its policy like countering terrorism and constraining Chinese power in Asia. The current thinking in India, thus, points that Washington is now ready and willing to deal with India

vent, since the so-called peaceful nuclear explosion (PNE), subsequent ambiguous nuclear postures of India and Pakistan, the potentials spread of nuclear weapons in the region, through a policy mix of sticks and carrots. It's endeavours to cap, freeze and eventual roll up of South Asian nuclear programmes faced a severe jolt when New Delhi conducted five nuclear tests, a suit followed by Pakistan with six that changed the strategic environment of the region and posed a formidable challenge to US security.

India's and Pakistan's declaratory stands on the deployment and deployment of nuclear weapons in the backdrop of New Delhi's ambitious nuclear doctrine have all the ingredients of a dangerous arms race in the region bringing

Pakistan have been using one excuse or the other in deferring the treaty from coming into force. At present, Pakistan has softened its stance to sign CTBT. India, however, is not impressed. It has linked the issue with that of China and most likely will not sign CTBT and eventually ratify it without Beijing's willing to do so and the latter would link it with US ratification of the Treaty. On this pretext India would probably not oblige Washington but its underlying reasons and motivations will be no secrets. The fact is that signing and ratification of CTBT would tantamount to agree in giving up New Delhi's nuclear ambitions. It's something India is not ready to reconcile with. India's ambition to become an established nuclear power — along with its nuclear doctrine — would, thus, go against US strategic interests and remain a major irritant in Indo-US relations. Linked with it is the question of Kashmir, which according to US strategic thinkers still remains the most dangerous source of conflicts between India and Pakistan and regional instability. Obviously, if Washington wants to maintain peace and stability in the region, at some point, it will have to pay attention to Kashmir problem that would definitely displease New Delhi. But despite such potentials of negative response from India the US desire to play the role of peacemaker is discernible from President Clinton's recent statement.

Prevention of a nuclear arms race, thus, as stated by President Clinton, is imperative for US's long term security interest. Washington's challenge would be to restrain both India and Pakistan from their weaponisation programme, more so in case of India. It started the potential spread of weapons of mass destruction by deviating from New Delhi's long-standing nuclear ambiguity by going overtly nuclear. This is where the stumbling blocks lie. There are fundamental differences between the two in this arena despite a series of discussion between US Deputy Secretary of State Strobe Talbot and Indian Foreign Minister Jaswant Singh.

First is the CTBT. It is interesting to note that all three governments of USA, India and

China into the fray. Containing the nuclear proliferation in the region, thus, is considered to be vital for the peace and stability in the region.

Prevention of a nuclear arms race, thus, as stated by President Clinton, is imperative for US's long term security interest. Washington's challenge would be to restrain both India and Pakistan from their weaponisation programme, more so in case of India. It started the potential spread of weapons of mass destruction by deviating from New Delhi's long-standing nuclear ambiguity by going overtly nuclear. This is where the stumbling blocks lie. There are fundamental differences between the two in this arena despite a series of discussion between US Deputy Secretary of State Strobe Talbot and Indian Foreign Minister Jaswant Singh.

First is the CTBT. It is interesting to note that all three governments of USA, India and

China into the fray. Containing the nuclear proliferation in the region, thus, is considered to be vital for the peace and stability in the region.

Prevention of a nuclear arms race, thus, as stated by President Clinton, is imperative for US's long term security interest. Washington's challenge would be to restrain both India and Pakistan from their weaponisation programme, more so in case of India. It started the potential spread of weapons of mass destruction by deviating from New Delhi's long-standing nuclear ambiguity by going overtly nuclear. This is where the stumbling blocks lie. There are fundamental differences between the two in this arena despite a series of discussion between US Deputy Secretary of State Strobe Talbot and Indian Foreign Minister Jaswant Singh.

First is the CTBT. It is interesting to note that all three governments of USA, India and

China into the fray. Containing the nuclear proliferation in the region, thus, is considered to be vital for the peace and stability in the region.

Prevention of a nuclear arms race, thus, as stated by President Clinton, is imperative for US's long term security interest. Washington's challenge would be to restrain both India and Pakistan from their weaponisation programme, more so in case of India. It started the potential spread of weapons of mass destruction by deviating from New Delhi's long-standing nuclear ambiguity by going overtly nuclear. This is where the stumbling blocks lie. There are fundamental differences between the two in this arena despite a series of discussion between US Deputy Secretary of State Strobe Talbot and Indian Foreign Minister Jaswant Singh.

First is the CTBT. It is interesting to note that all three governments of USA, India and

China into the fray. Containing the nuclear proliferation in the region, thus, is considered to be vital for the peace and stability in the region.

Prevention of a nuclear arms race, thus, as stated by President Clinton, is imperative for US's long term security interest. Washington's challenge would be to restrain both India and Pakistan from their weaponisation programme, more so in case of India. It started the potential spread of weapons of mass destruction by deviating from New Delhi's long-standing nuclear ambiguity by going overtly nuclear. This is where the stumbling blocks lie. There are fundamental differences between the two in this arena despite a series of discussion between US Deputy Secretary of State Strobe Talbot and Indian Foreign Minister Jaswant Singh.

First is the CTBT. It is interesting to note that all three governments of USA, India and

China into the fray. Containing the nuclear proliferation in the region, thus, is considered to be vital for the peace and stability in the region.

Prevention of a nuclear arms race, thus, as stated by President Clinton, is imperative for US's long term security interest. Washington's challenge would be to restrain both India and Pakistan from their weaponisation programme, more so in case of India. It started the potential spread of weapons of mass destruction by deviating from New Delhi's long-standing nuclear ambiguity by going overtly nuclear. This is where the stumbling blocks lie. There are fundamental differences between the two in this arena despite a series of discussion between US Deputy Secretary of State Strobe Talbot and Indian Foreign Minister Jaswant Singh.

First is the CTBT. It is interesting to note that all three governments of USA, India and

China into the fray. Containing the nuclear proliferation in the region, thus, is considered to be vital for the peace and stability in the region.

Prevention of a nuclear arms race, thus, as stated by President Clinton, is imperative for US's long term security interest. Washington's challenge would be to restrain both India and Pakistan from their weaponisation programme, more so in case of India. It started the potential spread of weapons of mass destruction by deviating from New Delhi's long-standing nuclear ambiguity by going overtly nuclear. This is where the stumbling blocks lie. There are fundamental differences between the two in this arena despite a series of discussion between US Deputy Secretary of State Strobe Talbot and Indian Foreign Minister Jaswant Singh.

First is the CTBT. It is interesting to note that all three governments of USA, India and

China into the fray. Containing the nuclear proliferation in the region, thus, is considered to be vital for the peace and stability in the region.

Prevention of a nuclear arms race, thus, as stated by President Clinton, is imperative for US's long term security interest. Washington's challenge would be to restrain both India and Pakistan from their weaponisation programme, more so in case of India. It started the potential spread of weapons of mass destruction by deviating from New Delhi's long-standing nuclear ambiguity by going overtly nuclear. This is where the stumbling blocks lie. There are fundamental differences between the two in this arena despite a series of discussion between US Deputy Secretary of State Strobe Talbot and Indian Foreign Minister Jaswant Singh.

First is the CTBT. It is interesting to note that all three governments of USA, India and

China into the fray. Containing the nuclear proliferation in the region, thus, is considered to be vital for the peace and stability in the region.

Prevention of a nuclear arms race, thus, as stated by President Clinton, is imperative for US's long term security interest. Washington's challenge would be to restrain both India and Pakistan from their weaponisation programme, more so in case of India. It started the potential spread of weapons of mass destruction by deviating from New Delhi's long-standing nuclear ambiguity by going overtly nuclear. This is where the stumbling blocks lie. There are fundamental differences between the two in this arena despite a series of discussion between US Deputy Secretary of State Strobe Talbot and Indian Foreign Minister Jaswant Singh.

First is the CTBT. It is interesting to note that all three governments of USA, India and

China into the fray. Containing the nuclear proliferation in the region, thus, is considered to be vital for the peace and stability in the region.

Prevention of a nuclear arms race, thus, as stated by President Clinton, is imperative for US's long term security interest. Washington's challenge would be to restrain both India and Pakistan from their weaponisation programme, more so in case of India. It started the potential spread of weapons of mass destruction by deviating from New Delhi's long-standing nuclear ambiguity by going overtly nuclear. This is where the stumbling blocks lie. There are fundamental differences between the two in this arena despite a series of discussion between US Deputy Secretary of State Strobe Talbot and Indian Foreign Minister Jaswant Singh.

First is the CTBT. It is interesting to note that all three governments of USA, India and

China into the fray. Containing the nuclear proliferation in the region, thus, is considered to be vital for the peace and stability in the region.

Prevention of a nuclear arms race, thus, as stated by President Clinton, is imperative for US's long term security interest. Washington's challenge would be to restrain both India and Pakistan from their weaponisation programme, more so in case of India. It started the potential spread of weapons of mass destruction by deviating from New Delhi's long-standing nuclear ambiguity by going overtly nuclear. This is where the stumbling blocks lie. There are fundamental differences between the two in this arena despite a series of discussion between US Deputy Secretary of State Strobe Talbot and Indian Foreign Minister Jaswant Singh.

First is the CTBT. It is interesting to note that all three governments of USA, India and

China into the fray. Containing the nuclear proliferation in the region, thus, is considered to be vital for the peace and stability in the region.

Prevention of a nuclear arms race, thus, as stated by President Clinton, is imperative for US's long term security interest. Washington's challenge would be to restrain both India and Pakistan from their weaponisation programme, more so in case of India. It started the potential spread of weapons of mass destruction by deviating from New Delhi's long-standing nuclear ambiguity by going overtly nuclear. This is where the stumbling blocks lie. There are fundamental differences between the two in this arena despite a series of discussion between US Deputy Secretary of State Strobe Talbot and Indian Foreign Minister Jaswant Singh.

First is the CTBT. It is interesting to note that all three governments of USA, India and

China into the fray. Containing the nuclear proliferation in the region, thus, is considered to be vital for the peace and stability in the region.

Prevention of a nuclear arms race, thus, as stated by President Clinton, is imperative for US's long term security interest. Washington's challenge would be to restrain both India and Pakistan from their weaponisation programme, more so in case of India. It started the potential spread of weapons of mass destruction by deviating from New Delhi's long-standing nuclear ambiguity by going overtly nuclear. This is where the stumbling blocks lie. There are fundamental differences between the two in this arena despite a series of discussion between US Deputy Secretary of State Strobe Talbot and Indian Foreign Minister Jaswant Singh.

First is the CTBT. It is interesting to note that all three governments of USA, India and

China into the fray. Containing the nuclear proliferation in the region, thus, is considered to be vital for the peace and stability in the region.

Prevention of a nuclear arms race, thus, as stated by President Clinton, is imperative for US's long term security interest. Washington's challenge would be to restrain both India and Pakistan from their weaponisation programme, more so in case of India. It started the potential spread of weapons of mass destruction by deviating from New Delhi's long-standing nuclear ambiguity by going overtly nuclear. This is where the stumbling blocks lie. There are fundamental differences between the two in this arena despite a series of discussion between US Deputy Secretary of State Strobe Talbot and Indian Foreign Minister Jaswant Singh.

First is the CTBT. It is interesting to note that all three governments of USA, India and

China into the fray. Containing the nuclear proliferation in the region, thus, is considered to be vital for the peace and stability in the region.

Prevention of a nuclear arms race, thus, as stated by President Clinton, is imperative for US