# The Baily Star

Founder-Editor: Late S. M. Ali

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## It's a shame

TATHY was the International Jute Organisation VV allowed to die? Why didn't we wake up to the crisis that had been brewing for so long? What efforts did Bangladesh make to persuade the EU members to agree to the 'successor instrument', if any? The trouble that ultimately caused the organisation to be closed must have originated much earlier. What diplomatic initiative did our relevant ministries take to resolve them before things came to such a pass? There are many such questions in the public mind. Therefore, our first demand is that the government must publish a White Paper on the IJO detailing the issues that first divided its members, and the reasons as to why they could not be solved in time to save the organisation.

As one of the major jute producing countries of the world we played a leading role in setting up the IJO. It was not an accident that its headquarters is located in Dhaka. However, we must admit that we did not take as much interest and spend as much energy and resources as we should have. We depended too much on donor assistance to run the IJO and an attitude of benign neglect marked our policy. It was a grievous mistake for which we are having to pay so dearly today. We have a vested interest in seeing that international co-operation in jute development and trade reaches greater heights in the coming years, and therefore we must pursue a more pro-active and innovative policy in this field. We think there was too much vagueness in the original mandate and some artificial division of work. This created confusion in the minds of the member states about the mandate and function of the organisation which lies at the root of some of

the conflicts of today.

tion in jute back on track.

Three important IJO members from Europe -UK, Finland and the Netherlands - strongly feel that the IJO has failed to promote jute trade and as such are against its continuation. We find a contradiction in their position when they say that they are keen to increase international co-operation in jute trade but are not willing to extend the mandate of IJO. Is the failure of any organisation a sufficient ground for its closure? Or, should such a failure lead to reforms so that the organisation becomes more efficient and able to fulfil its mandate? It is our view that if the objective of IJO remains relevant then the reform path should have been taken instead of the surgery that has been done. The EU proposal of a working group to chalk out newer ways of international co-operation in the jute sector is good. But couldn't such discussion be better held within the folds of the existing bodies rather than creating new ones?

Whatever be the cause we cannot allow international co-operation in jute to slacken in any sense particularly as we see a brighter future for our natural fibre in a more environmentally conscious world. We urge immediate attention and initiative by our government to put international co-opera-

### AL MP Blocks Road

DARRICADES were put and communication dis-Drupted for six hours on the Dhaka-Narayanganj road Monday as a sequel to an alleged dacoity in an establishment owned by ruling party MP Haji Selim. According to reports, the owner of Madina Traders alleged that a union parishad chairman belonging to the rulling party and his two brothers were responsible for the dacoity in which seven persons, some masked, with pistols and shotguns, looted more than fifteen lakh taka and made good their escape with the booty in front of some Ansars guarding a nearby property. Haji Selim himself and his men rounded up four of these Ansars and handed them over to the police. But in spite of all these no case was registered at the Fatullah thana till 10 pm on the day of occurrence. The powerful MP alleged that the police did not take any action in previous cases of mugging and looting in those areas and was heard using abusive language against the OCs of Shyampur and Fatullah police stations in front of the police super who reached that spot with police force.

Even if Haji Selim's allegation against the UP chairman, Golam Rasul and his two brothers was true, he had no business in taking the law into his own hands and causing serious dislocation in traffic movement on a busy road for such a long time. He was absolutely wrong in rounding up the Ansars himself and tying them up before handing them over to the police for alleged non-cooperation in apprehending the dacoits. It is quite interesting to note that two important members of the same party are at loggerheads allegedly over a piece of land. This is not the first time that ruling party members have fought each other over properties and sharing of booties. If these were any indications for the future then the party bosses must set their foot down before more damage is done.

In the meantime we strongly urge the authority to take action against those who disrupted public peace and movement of traffic in the area and took law into their own hands. Nobody is above the law.

## Courts Need Protection

TATHAT could be more poignant an indicator of VV alarming deterioration of law and order in the country than Monday's incident at the Cox's Bazar courthouse where a group of armed terrorists hurled crackers and fired gunshots to snatch away 18 prisoners from custody? Evidently, the police on duty were caught off guard, which amounts to inefficiency, to say the least; more so because, according to witnesses, the perpetrators had taken position in the court complex one and a half hours prior to the heinous incident. We are shocked and alarmed as well at the alarming slide of law and order; also, we condemn the police's failure to protect the sanctity of a court of law.

It is not the first time that a court of law in the country came under attack. Early October last year, activists of various front organisations of the ruling party attacked the additional sessions judge's court and the magistrate's court in Narayanganj, and even stormed the district jail to free four accused in a murder case. There have also been killing at the compound of the Dhaka district and sessions judge's court. Murder in broad daylight of Ataur Rahman Azad is not a memory of too distant a past.

The incident in Cox's Bazar once again highlights the dire need to step up security at the courts of law across the country. While we expect the police to nab the rest of the breakaways, we demand immediate inquisition into the matter with a view to identifying the roots of such a serious breach of security at the courthouse.

IT for the Poor to End Global Poverty

by Muhammad Yunus

Should the world just accept the estimate that global poverty will be doubled by 2040, and wait for this to happen, or come up with an action plan to make this estimate turn out to be absolutely wrong? We can generate enough social, political, and economic commitment in the world to bring poverty to zero by 2040, instead of allowing poverty to double by this date. We can create a poverty-free world and celebrate it in 2040.

now it can be achieved in years, even in months. This is a very good news. This can also be a very bad

With higher and higher speed we can get to the destination very fast. We can save time so that we can use it for meaningful purposes. But high driving can be hazardous too - it increases the chances of fatal accidents. We must prepare ourselves to avoid all accidents. We must build right type of roads to be consistent with high speed driving. We should ensure better driving skills and establish driving norms, to have a safe journey.

T /E have entered this New

Millennium with great

And as we enter the new mil-

lennium we can feel that the

world is very clearly shifting to

a new gear in terms of new speed

of changes. Something that the

world needed decades to ac-

complish in the past century,

spirit and great hopes.

Information Technology is behind bringing this new speed unknown in human history. This fast speed of change will be touching upon all aspects of human life. We'll be very different kind of human beings in 25 years from now than what we are today. Ten years from today, in 2010, if we looked back at us in year 2000 we would get a great kick at our thoughts and activities. They will all appear so out of place and strangely primitive. When our children will reach our age, they'll pity us for missing out all the good things in life.

Because of these fast changes already taking place in some economies, they are distinguishing themselves as "New Economies". Soon fully devel-

oped "New Economies" will be so different from the "Old Economies" that it will be difficult for the latter to cope with the situation. If they themselves do not transform into New Economies they'll become portunities.

the junkyard of history. Of course, rich economies are the ones emerging as "New Economies". They are expanding at a speed nobody could imagine before. Rich people in rich economies, and the smart under-thirty dot.com people are accumulating wealth at an un-

obsolete and be dumped out in

heard of speed Just at the time when this accumulation of wealth is taking place at a high speed in New Economies, we are told that poverty is expanding in other parts of the world at an alarming rate. Today there are 1.5 billion people under abject poverty. This number used to be 1.2 billion four years back. At this rate of increase this number will double by 2040. That means, three billion people will be under abject poverty in forty years! What a news to have at the beginning of the new millennium!

Would globalisation help the poor getting out of poverty? No, it won't if we leave them at the mercy of greed-driven market forces. But if the world is concerned about the poor and is willing to help them prepare themselves to ride the wave of

globalisation, the poor can become the beneficiary of globalisation. Globalisation brings great opportunities to the poor to move out of poverty if they are equipped to seize these op-

As I mentioned earlier, we need to build appropriate roads for high speed driving, prepare everybody with skills to engage in high speed driving, establish global norm for it. In the age of high speed changes, the poor need to be equipped to participate in it with ease and comfort.

Information Technology is the road which must be brought to the door-steps of the poor. The poor should be given the opportunity to muster the skill to use this technology to their advantage. We must design the Information Technology in such a way that a totally unprepared poor person can immediately get the hang of it without tre for Information Technology to End Global Poverty" be established to create appropriate Information Technology infrastructure and design suitable appliances for delivering the

service to the poor. Since Information Technology (IT) is playing the central role in transforming the Old Economies into high speed New Economies we must open up all the doors to welcome this tech-

nology in the poor economies. If not only can create New Economies, it has a great potential for creating a New Great Global Society. As far as changing societies are concerned. IT is the greatest thing that ever happened to mankind in the entire human history. It offers an unprecedented opportunity to end global poverty once for all. It can help the economies with a very tiny base to expand fast to catch up with the rest of the world. This can happen not in a

confrontational way between the rich and the poor economies, but in a very supportive, and mutually reinforc-But IT is not a "mantra" from an old scripture found in a cave somewhere. One cannot just meditate and chant the "mantra" and the "New Great

Global Society" will be born. In order to create this Great Global Society, where not a single hufeeling threatened. I am propos- man being will suffer from the ing that an "International Cen- misery of being poor, it needs a lot of doing. Some of these are: 1). Governments will have to decide to stay out of the way and let people's initiatives flourish

without hindrance. This is a very simple thing to do — but somehow governments find it very difficult to do. It does not cost the government any money to allow that. Instead it can bring a lot of money in revenue. Most important thing of all, governments will have to

withdraw themselves from al IT related services, and create INDEPENDENT high level regulatory body to oversee, help the IT industry flourish, and establish access to IT services to the poorest and the remotest

2.) Civil society has to be very active and vigilant to see that the private sector IT does not fool the consumers, does not make excuses for restricting competition, makes continuous efforts to bring IT services by the poorest, particularly the women among them.

3.) Rotary can play a very important role in all of these Rotary has done an amazing job in wiping out the curse of polio from the surface of this planet. Whatever little is left of polio. hopefully, will soon be gone. bow my head in respect to the Rotarians all around the world, who have made this impossible

Now Rotary is ready for much bigger challenge, appropriate for an experienced and

successful world player. I propose that the Rotary take on the challenge of ending poverty from the world. With the emergence of IT the issue of poverty can be addressed in a different perspective. Bringing IT to the poor can create a strong foundation for poverty eradication. Rotary can dedicate its energy, resources and

organisational capability in bringing IT to the poor people and link them with the world economy. While linking the poor with businesses the Rotary can also help bring e-healthcare, e-education, e-knowledge to the poor, with an accent on

the poor women. Rotary can have its Millen-nium Slogan as: "IT for the Poor to End Global Poverty". Rotary can create partnerships with governments, businesses, foundations, UN agencies, financial institutions, IT industry leaders. NGO's and others to establish connectivity for the poor with the global economy and information.

Should the world just accept the estimate that global poverty will be doubled by 2040, and wait for this to happen, or come up with an action plan to make this estimate turn out to be absolutely wrong? We can generate enough social, political, and economic commitment in the world to bring poverty to zero by 2040, instead of allowing poverty to double by this date. We can create a poverty-free world and celebrate it in 2040.

Let history of mankind record that not only men went out the earth and made settlements on other planets in the 21st century, they ended poverty on their planet half way through the century: they create a new Global Humane Human Society by assigning it a much higher priority over every other planned accomplish-

This piece is based on the author's key-note speech delivered at Rotary Presidential Conference 2000 in Dhaka on April 7.

# 'Star Wars' Still Caged by the Laws of Nature

The Eighties spectre of Ronald Reagan's 'Star Wars' programme has been raised anew by the Hollywood

film star Michael Douglas as he seeks to win support for tougher nuclear disarmament measures. A Gem-

ini News Service correspondent examines the continuing technical problems plaguing US efforts to con-

struct a super missile shield.

RESH fears of a renewed nuclear arms race, spurred on by Washington's continued interest in a 'Star Wars' anti-ballistic missile (ABM) system, have been voiced by a high-profile United Nations

But could such a system actually give the United States a decisive edge over other nuclear powers - or do massive technical problems still render it ineffective?

The Hollywood film star Michael Douglas, who was appointed UN Messenger of Peace in 1998, is certainly concerned about it. He has been visiting Britain, seeking to arouse awareness ahead of international nuclear non-proliferation talks starting in New York in the last week of April (UN Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty Review Conference, 24

April to 19 May). etly working on a sophisticated missile shield ever since President Ronald Reagan announced his Strategic Defense Initiative (SDI) as the ultimate Cold War weapon in 1983. The costly programme helped to bring the old Soviet Union to its knees.

Today, Russia and China are upset by US proposals - yet to - to go ahead with such a defence system, which would breach the 1972 ABM treaty. Its backers would like to have 20 ABM interceptors in place by

2005 and 100 by 2010. The issue has prompted warnings that it

could collapse the whole pro-

cess of nuclear arms reduction. With the atomic equivalent of an estimated 18 million tons of explosives still poised in operational weapons around the world - 5,000 times that detonated throughout the Second World War - some say the planet faces a fresh threat from the militarisation of space.

Or does it? Was the Reagan initiative mostly an audacious but effective bluff?

Research to date into the whole range of SDI technologies It seems that United States - re-usable spacecraft, high-enscientists have continued qui- ergy lasers, particle beam weapons, killer satellites and so forth — has so far produced a litany of failures and wishful thinking. One British defence analyst, David Fairhall, has dismissed it all as a "fairy tale".

For the fundamental vulnerability of all military systems, including an ABM one, lies not with a human enemy, but in nabe given presidential approval ture itself - something few scientists like to admit.

The big drawback is the Compton Effect, discovered in 1923 by the US physicist Arthur Holly Compton. He found that

Dennis Chaplin writes from London

Compton: 'Hurricane of

electrons' when radioactive rays hit air molecules, a hurricane of electrons is released. In a nuclear explosion, the effect is multiplied into a virtual hurricane causing electrical and radio interference over a wide area.

This was highlighted by atomic tests in the Pacific, dating back to the Fities.

The 'Operation Hardtack' high-altitude explosion over Johnstone Island in 1958 radio communications 900 kilometres away in Honolulu, an overall 18 hour radio-navigational stoppage across the Pacific and nine hours of severe electrical interference in Australasia.

A further test in 1962 generated similar 'poltergeist' effects. Street lights were extinguished 1,200 kilometres away, alarm systems were activated and electronic and radio gadgets of all types went haywire.

The Compton Effect was beginning to be understood. The bottom line? All ground, sea, air and space-based military US physicist Arthur Holly what became classified as the EMP (electro-magnetic pulse) and TREE (transient radiation effects on electronics) consequences of high-altitude nuclear blasts. The survivability of ABM systems had become an

> Subsequent nuclear tests confirmed the problem, alarming military scientists and causing an international chorus of informed sceptics. A host of specialists, writing in defence journals on either side of the Atlantic, expressed seri-

caused a crippling rupture of all ous doubts during the Reagan era about whether such an ABM system would ever be effective.

The former US Defense Secretary Robert McNamara joined in by denouncing SDI research as "totally divorced from real-

The influential US journal Foreign Affairs insisted that "what is centrally wrong with the President's objective is that it cannot be achieved. The overwhelming consensus of the nation's technical community is that, in fact, there is no prospect whatsoever that science and technology can, at any time in the next several systems could be neutralised by decades, make nuclear weapons impotent and obsolete."

More recently, Britain's Nature magazine has reminded 'Star Wars' fans that military research "does not suspend the laws of physics."

The US Defense Advanced research Projects Agency and Britain's Royal Military College of Science have been trying to overcome the blinding effects of EMP and TREE by investigating ways of "hardening" military systems through better circuit design and cable screening.

However, the US defense Nu-

clear Agency has become frustrated in its own research work. and has stated pessimistically that "there is no defence against EMP". The agency has calculated that a single one-megaton nuclear blast in space could cripple orbital and ground defence systems over a 25,000kilometre-wide area.

Difficulties have been compounded by the more unpredictable TREE, which can cause transient but debilitating interference with electronics, particularly complex defence computers, where any disruption of data transmission and switching systems can lead to disastrous consequences - such as unplanned missile launches.

In fact, although termed 'transient', these effects can cause permanent component damage or seizure - blacking out all military equipment in the sea, land, air and space dimensions of strategic thinking.

With continued research into 'enhanced radiation' (or neutron) warheads, the prospects for an effective ABM strategy seem further from realisation.

The original US justification for SDI was to make nuclear war accepted as pointless and obsolete — and it is perhaps in the continued vulnerability rather than effectiveness of the technologies involved that this could actually become reality.

The author is a freelance journalist and defence analyst.

## To the Editor ...

Letters for publication in these columns should be addressed to the Editor and legibly written or typed with double space. For reasons of space, short letters are preferred, and all are subject to editing and cuts. Pseudonyms are accepted. However, all communications must bear the writer's real name, signature and address.

### The cold chain

Sir, Health for all by 2000 AD is the declaration of World Health Organisation (WHO). There is now national and international drive to achieve it by the end of this century. Immunising children against six common diseases e.g. diphtheria, whooping cough, tetanus, tuberculosis, measles and poliomyelitis is one of the milestones set by WHO to attain health for all by 2000 AD. Our government is doing the same through Expanded Programme Rezaul Karim, MD on Immunisation (EPI).

Vaccines are sensitive to heat. If vaccines are exposed to higher temperature, they loose their potency rapidly. Once vaccines loose their potency. they can no long protect us from diseases. So vaccines that have lost their potency are obsolete and the potency cannot be regained once it is lost. Returning vaccines to the refrigerator or freezer will not revive their effectiveness. The cold chain system is very important for storing and distributing vaccines in potent state from the manufacfurer to the vaccination site.

DPT, BCG and TT vaccine must be stored at +2°C to +8°C and polio and measles vaccines at -15°C to -25°C. During vaccination programme, all vaccines should be kept at +2°C to +8°C.

EPI strictly maintains the cold chain system. However it is very difficult for others to maintain cold chain system. So there is a chance of taking non potent vaccines by our people from vaccinators other than

Some private medical practitioners are administering vaccines to children. Vaccines rupt practices is apparently not

as well. But it is observed that some pharmacists are keeping vaccines at room temperature. And it is quite a common scenario in our country particularly at certain wholesale shops. It should be investigated whether vaccines are kept at the recommended temperature. It not then these vaccines would and no longer be capable of protecting us from diseases. The authorities concerned

Senior Consultant, Pediatrics, District Sadar Hospital, Cox's

should take the necessary steps

to stop non-potent vaccination

#### "Embezzlement of Tk. 20cr..."

Sir. The report under the headline "Embezzlement of Tk 20cr Detected" (DS, April 10 2000) is like a recurrent nightmare. The irregularities mentioned in the report serve as a grim reminder that Bangladesh continues to be held hostage not only by mastaans and extortionists, but also by seemingly respectable people in positions of authority who are singleminded in their pursuits -- the mining of national resources for personal gain.

That corruption and its insidious effects are devastating for social, political and economic development is a foregone conclusion. What is frightening is that the core values such as self-respect, self-esteem and dignity seem to have deteriorated so drastically, especially among many in positions of power, that indulging in corare available in medicine shops viewed as a despicable and so-

cially undesirable act any

However, I still firmly believe that corruption is viewed by decent people as despicable. It's just that many of them seem to have lost the courage to stand up against it. This is perhaps because of the environment in which they are embedded, an environment that does not guarantee many basic rights. Many of our leaders have also lost their moral authority to take decisive action in such matters and bring the culprits to justice. One wonders why. One also wonders why donor agencies like NORAD, ADB and the World Bank, mentioned in the report, are silent? Where are their oversight procedures? Are they not interested in holding Savar-1340 anyone accountable for the money that taxpayers in other countries have willingly allocated for the development of Bangladesh? This silence is

even more deafening.

I believe here is another "golden" opportunity for the political leadership to gain the confidence of the people by helping find the answers to where Tk. 20 crore disappeared -- if it did at all. Surely someone is accountable for this significant discrepancy. If accountability is going to be one of the hallmarks of reform, let it be made more visible to the common man through this window of opportunity. It is high time for the country's leadership to demonstrate that fairness and justice can be reincarnated and re-established, and their resultant benefits shared with the public.

Syed Saad Andaleeb Associate Professor Pennsylvania State University, USA

Why this hurry?

Sir. The HSC exam under the five education board will begin on 27th April and continue till 24th May. That means, it will take almost a month. But still the examinees will be under pressure during the exam since

the schedule has been planned without any suitable gap between different subjects. For example, in science group there is no gap between part-I and part-II. On the other hand, after ten days gap Mathematics part-1 and part-II will be held on two consecutive days. Since the exam is continuing for almost a month, it is very much possible to keep at least one day gap before each subject. But on the contrary gapless routine has been introduced that will create further pressure on the examinees. What possibly could be the reason to end the HSC exam so hurriedly by putting the student's under immense pressure?

Md Jasimuddin

#### Skilled labour shortage in Bangladesh

Sir, Recently I was reading an article in a Bangla daily about the shortage of skilled labour in Bangladesh. It is very interesting that we always hear about unemployment in Bangladesh, graduates not getting any job, people moving to other countries for jobs. But hardly ever we hear anything about importing workforce from a foreign country. That is what is happening in Bangladesh now. According to the article, workers with referrals fill many positions in Bangladesh, not workers with skills. So what happens is that, these unskilled workers cannot have the job done. Corporations then again have to look for workers. Recently more and more companies are looking for people outside Bangladesh, like India and Sri Lanka. What happened to the unemployed graduates in Bangladesh? Most of the graduates from BUET and other Universities leave the country. And the ones who stay in Bangladesh cannot fill out

the requirements for some high skilled positions. My uncle started a technical school two years ago. At that

time he had hard time recruiting some trainers for that school. He had to get some Engineering graduates from India. Recruiting foreign workers started with mostly IT workers, but nowadays Bangladeshi companies are importing Busi-

ness Executives also. Bangladeshi education system is responsible for this. Our education system has failed to produce the skilled labour force needed. And the way things are done in Bangladesh; a person with a Geography degree (no offence to anybody, just an example) can be a Manager at a bank! We are loosing productivity because of these unskilled workers, paying our money to foreign workers, and our skilled labour force is leaving the country.

What a dilemma! Rashedul

Houston, Texas, USA.

#### State of English in Bangladesh

Sir, The sacrifice during the language movement in 1952 was not only to give a rightful position to our mother tongue, it was also a struggle to give this nation an identity, to enable us to live with dignity. In pursuit of this goal, we went through the later struggles and ultimately the liberation war. Although we achieved independence twenty-nine years back, we are still amongst the poorest nations in the world. And in the process of making endeavors to change our lot, overlooking the importance of English language has not helped us. It has proved to be immature and hypocritical. We seem to have a belated awareness now and so we are seeing mushroom and erratic growth of English medium schools particularly in Dhaka. and children of affluent families are being sent abroad for education. But to meet the demands of the present day world. learning of English should be made cheap and easy. And most

importantly, it should start at the lower level of schooling and spread in every nook and corner of the country. In India, a student has to learn three languages -- his mother tongue. Hindi and English. Top most priority is, of course, given to English. In this respect, we have Many people think that the the advantage of learning only two languages.

> I would like to like to take this opportunity of mentioning two pitiful experiences.

> Few years back, just before the subdivisions were upgraded to district level, I was present as a guest in a flag-meeting between our BDR and Indian BSF officers. Besides army officers, S.D.Os of bordering subdivisions of Bangladesh and India were also present in the meeting. It was very embarrassing to witness that only the Battalion Commander of BDR could communicate with the Indian officers comfortably, his second-in-command was finding it very difficult and our S.D.O had to keep mum almost throughout the meeting. However, all other members including the S.D.O of the Indian team were non-Bengalis who were conversing in English with normal ease.

On another occasion, during a train journey a well-dressed co-passenger picked up my English daily and read aloud a headline "R-o-o-s-h (which was actually 'rush') of American businessmen to Vietnam." After a little while when he found out that I was working in a tea garden, he said that tea garden life was very nice, Shakespearean life. With my little knowledge of English literature, I was wondering what Shakespeare had to do with tea garden life. Perhaps my co-passenger referred this to link-up poet Shakespeare with the natural beauty of tea garden. But for a college teacher of English, as that is what he turned out to be, wouldn't it have been appropriate to refer a poet of nature instead of Shake-

M M Hassan