

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.

It's a shame WHY was the International Jute Organisation allowed to die? Why didn't we wake up to the crisis that had been brewing for so long?

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.

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.

ALMP Blocks Road

BARRICADES were put up and communication disrupted 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.

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.

Courts Need Protection

WHAT could be more poignant an indicator of 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?

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.

The incident in Cox's Bazar once again highlights the dire need to step up security at the courts of law across the country.

WE have entered this New Millennium with great spirit and great hopes. And as we enter the new millennium we can feel that the world is very clearly shifting to a new gear in terms of speed of changes.

Information Technology is behind bringing this new speed unknown in human history. This fast speed of change will be focusing upon all aspects of human life.

Because of these fast changes already taking place in some economies, they are distinguishing themselves as 'New Economies'.

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.

It seems that United States scientists have continued quietly 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.

Today, Russia and China are upset by US proposals — yet to be given presidential approval — to go ahead with such a defence system, which would breach the 1972 ABM treaty.

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.

Vaccines are sensitive to heat. If vaccines are exposed to higher temperature, they lose their potency rapidly. Once vaccines lose their potency, they can no longer protect us from diseases.

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.

Inappropriate medical practitioners are administering vaccines to children. Vaccines are available in medicine shops

oped 'New Economies' will be so different from the 'Old Economies' that it will be difficult for the latter to cope with the situation.

Of course, rich economies are the ones emerging as 'New Economies'. They are expanding at a speed nobody could imagine before.

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.

Would globalisation help the poor getting out of poverty? No, I won't if we leave them at the mercy of greed-driven market forces.

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

2005 and 100 by 2010. The issue has prompted warnings that it could collapse the whole process of nuclear arms reduction.

Research to date into the whole range of SDI technologies — re-usable spacecraft, high-energy lasers, particle beam weapons, killer satellites and so forth — has so far produced a litany of failures and wishful thinking.

The Operation Hardtack high-altitude explosion over Johnston Island in 1958

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 opportunities.

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 norms for it.

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.

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.

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.

Dennis Chaplin writes from London



US physicist Arthur Holly Compton: Hurricane of electrons' when radioactive rays hit air molecules, a hurricane of electrons is released.

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

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.

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.

Skilled labour shortage in Bangladesh. Sir, Recently I was reading an article in a Bangla daily about the shortage of skilled labour in Bangladesh.

"Embezzlement of Tk. 20cr..." Sir, The report under the headline "Embezzlement of Tk. 20cr Detected" (DS, April 10, 2000) is like a recurrent nightmare.

Why this hurry? Sir, The HSC exam under the five education board will begin on 27th April and continue till 24th May.

withdraw themselves from all 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 people.

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.

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.

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 reality".

The influential US journal Foreign Affairs insisted that "what is centrally wrong with the President's objective is that it cannot be achieved."

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 Na-

organizational 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-health-care, e-education, e-knowledge to the poor, with an accent on the poor women.

Rotary can have its Millennium 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, NGOs and others to establish connectivity for the poor with the global economy and information.

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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 accomplishment.

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

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 25,000-kilometre-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.

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.

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.

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.

On another occasion, during a train journey a well-dressed co-passenger picked up my English daily and read aloud a headline "Ro-o-s-h (which was actually 'rush') of American businessmen to Vietnam." After 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 Shakespeare?

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