

# New economy and poor countries

M G QUIBRIA writes from Tokyo

THE main divide in the world today is not between socialism and capitalism but between the rich and the poor nations. It is a divide defined not by ideology but by the access and ability to use technology. Today the countries that are rich and prospering are at the cutting edge of technology while those that are poor and struggling are in the backwaters--far removed from the technological frontier.

The most important technological breakthroughs the world has witnessed in recent years are in the area of information and communication technology (ICT). The crown jewel of this stream of innovations is the internet, which has brought about unprecedented connectivity in the world. The recent spectacular economic growth in the US and many other advanced countries owes a good deal to the advent of this technology. Some even suggest it has permanently shifted upward the long-term growth rate of the US economy.

However, much of this spurt in growth in many advanced economies did not seep through to poor countries. The obvious consequence has been the yawning economic chasm between rich and poor nations. To compound the problem, many poor countries are now faced with an even more daunting challenge of deteriorating poverty. In the last decade, while the incidence of poverty in the developing countries that is the percentage of the population that lives below an income of one dollar a day--has declined, the actual number has not shrunk due to rapid population growth.

The new ICT has brought about a ray of hope in poor countries. If the new ICT can give such an economic boost to rich countries, many would reason why it can't do the same in poor countries--and help eradicate their poverty. Compared to many other technologies, the new ICT is much easier to adopt, which

explains its rapid-fire diffusion rate across the developed world. If the ICT proves to be a helpful instrument in reducing poverty, its high diffusion propensity is likely to make it powerful as well.

One can think of a number of ways the ICT can contribute to growth and poverty reduction. One is through the innovative application of the technology to improve important aspects of life--such as income, employment, education and health--which affect the welfare of the poor. In India, rural information centers now provide

increase the efficiency of the system.

While innovative applications of the ICT may help the poor, it is often not clear how cost effective these applications are or to what extent they are complementary or substitute to the traditional instruments. In other words, it remains to be determined whether e-education is preferable to conventional schools or they are useful complements to each other--or the whole thing is just a simple waste of money.

Second, the ICT can help the poor if poor countries can find a

enough to ensure success. One would require excellent telecommunication links and a supportive institutional environment as well. The supportive environment would mean an excellent legal framework, respect for intellectual property rights and other related things that elicit business confidence.

Third, many argue the more effective way would be to go the whole hog to adopt the ICT in all facets of the economy. If this is done, then, so goes the argument, there would be an enormous gain in productivity as it happened in the advanced countries. However, this argument is fallacious, as the option is obviously patently unrealistic for most or all developing countries. The ICT diffusion rate is very low in poor countries. In Bangladesh, Internet connections are scarce (not even one person in thousand has Internet connection) and telephone lines are extremely limited (less than five people per thousand have fixed line phones). In addition, for effective use of the ICT, one requires not only education but also a higher level of education at that. Finally, in poor countries where unemployment is rampant, even if such technological "leapfrogging" were possible, it is not clear whether that would be desirable as it would have serious unemployment consequences.

The ICT has opened up a new window of opportunity for poor countries and poor people. However, to seize this opportunity, the poor countries need to do the first things first, which include improving the infrastructure, opening up markets, breaking telecommunication monopolies and offering universal education. All these are fundamental to economic development as well as to success in the ICT area. Indeed without addressing these problems, securing Internet access would yield little or no economic gains. However, once a country can go past these basic problems, it can hope to partake big time in the feast of global prosperity.

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market, weather and technology information to the farmers. There are websites now that help market products of artisans and peasants from developing countries, cutting out the intermediaries. Similarly, health centers in rural areas have been linked to advanced hospitals in and outside the country for consultation and health related information. Distance learning facilities that cater to the educational needs of adults are now commonplace in many countries. Innovative software is also being developed to meet the educational needs of the illiterate or semi-literate. The new ICT has been innovatively used to improve the functioning of the government. In India, the high-profile chief minister of Andhra Pradesh engages in video-conferencing with citizens to exchange views on public projects and programmes. The state also plans to provide many routine government services on the web to

niche product in the "new economy" to produce and export and make a bundle of money. India has found such a niche in software production and export. Now India is exporting close to 10 billion dollars of software and these earnings are projected to grow at a hefty rate of 40 per cent in the coming years. No doubt, this success in the new economy has allowed India to lift itself from a measly rate of growth to hefty 6-7 percent in recent years. Another area where the poor countries like Bangladesh can perhaps find a niche is distant data processing. Many of the back-office services of large business corporations for example, accounting, finance and call-centre operation are being transferred to poor countries. India, the Philippines and the Caribbean countries have become important players in this activity largely due to their technical skills and mastery of English. However, the availability of only human resources is not

# Excerpts from the main report of Hamoodur Rahman Commission of Inquiry as declassified by Government of Pakistan

## POLITICAL BACKGROUND: IV

AS soon as the President asked Nawabzada Nasrullah Khan to issue invitations to the Round Table conference the question of Shaikh Mujibur Rahman's participation in the Round Table Conference arose.

The Shaikh was of course in custody undergoing a trial at Dacca. It having been left to Nawabzada Nasrullah Khan to invite whom he chose the problem of the President was not whether or not to invite Shaikh Mujibur Rahman; the question really was he would come, whether as a free man and, if not, under what degree of restraint. Of course interlinked with this question was also the question whether Shaikh Mujibur Rahman would consent to attend and if so, what degree of restraint he would accept in coming. To start was considered sufficient that he should not personally come but that he should be represented by a member of his party in whom he reposed sufficient confidence. The Democratic Action Committee, however, soon insisted that the personal presence of Shaikh Mujibur Rahman was necessary. Mr Mujibur Rahman agreed to come under parole. As we understand the word "parole", it means that a person who is in custody is released for a particular purpose or specified duration of time being bound to return to custody when such purpose was served or such period of time terminated. But we have also been told that he was not coming strictly under parole but under the Army's open custody and this is the version put forward and supported by General Yahya Khan. This expression, it would mean that the persons concerned could come as a free man temporarily able to move about without restriction but constantly accompanied by a military officer. The military officer

would have no power to direct him to go to a particular place or refrain from doing so but would have a right to insist that he should accompany him at all times.

Two things happened, however, at this stage--one of which at least is not entirely comprehensible. Two ministers of the Central Government, namely, Khawaja Shahabuddin and Admiral A.R.Khan went to Dacca and met the Shaikh. We should have thought that the purpose of these emissaries would have been to persuade the Shaikh to come to the conference. It has, however, been suggested that the purpose was to dissuade him from coming or at least to dissuade him from coming until he came as a completely free man, without the threat of a trial still hanging over him. It has been pointed out that Admiral Khan was a great personal friend of General Yahya Khan and the suggestion clearly is that General Yahya Khan was interested in escalating the demands of Shaikh Mujibur Rahman at that stage, the eventual purpose being the long and far-sighted one of ensuring that the Round Table Conference did not meet with success. We pass on for the time being.

The other event that took place which also may have a distinct bearing upon Shaikh Mujibur Rahman's conduct was that one of the accused persons in the Agartala Conspiracy trial, one Sergeant Zahoorul Haq, was killed on the 17th February, 1969. The official explanation given was that in the morning while returning from the lavatory Sgt. Zahoorul Haq attempted to escape and was killed in an attempt to prevent his escape. There are several matters which make it difficult to accept this explanation. In the first place a stage had already come when the Tribunal was

becoming convinced that against some of the accused persons at least there would not be sufficient ground to justify conviction and indeed, immediately before this incident the Prosecutor had agreed to make a statement in Court of the names of the persons against whom he no longer intended to proceed. Sergeant Zahoorul Haq was one of those persons and it must surely have been obvious to counsel for defence that his name was at least likely to figure on this list. Quite apart from the fool-hardiness of the attempt to escape, therefore, Sergeant Zahoorul Haq was one of the accused persons who had, at that particular stage the least incentive for making such an attempt.

The alternative now was to proceed with the Round Table Conference without Shaikh Mujibur Rahman or to withdraw the case against him. It was decided to withdraw the case but nevertheless, the Law Minister, not wishing to take so final a step, urged the President to withdraw the ordinance setting up the Tribunal which was trying the case instead of withdrawing the case itself. The distinction of course is clear; the withdrawal of the case would have meant the acquittal of Shaikh Mujibur Rahman and as a result, immunity from a fresh prosecution; the withdrawal of the ordinance, on the other hand, merely meant that the Tribunal would be no longer competent to try Shaikh Mujibur Rahman who himself, however, would continue to be liable to prosecution at any future time. In practical terms, however, at that stage the distinction meant little--in either event Shaikh Mujibur Rahman was no longer facing a trial and completely free to move about.

The Round Table Conference eventually met on the 10th of March, 1969. The political parties which were represented were combined under the Democratic Action Committee and the only persons of any consequence who refused to attend were Maulana Abdul Hameed Khan Bhashani and Mr Z.A.Bhutto. Far from being amenable, Shaikh Mujibur Rahman's attitude at the Round Table Conference was harder after he met General Yahya Khan. His custody in the Agartala case by the Army could hardly have had the effect of endearing the army to him.

The Round Table Conference ended on the 13th of March, 1969. The Field Marshal had already earlier announced his intention not to continue as President after the amendments had been adopted. The parties had been invited to send any other proposals for constitutional amendment without of course it being agreed that they would be accepted. The two Governors were replaced. The Governor of East Pakistan had already become an extremely unpopular person, partly, due to his own unacceptability in that province and partly as representing Field Marshal Ayub Khan. The Governor in West Pakistan had also by and large not proved effective. On the 17th of March, 1969, Mr Yusuf Haroon was appointed Governor of West Pakistan and on

the 22nd, Dr M N Huda, in East Pakistan. Apparently some cooling of tempers had been taken place though upon this point there is a divergence. Some believe that the Governors had been in office for too short a time for anybody to say that the change had diminished the tempo of feelings while others think that the mere fact that they had been appointed or rather that the old ones had been removed, was itself sufficient to lower passions. One cannot help feeling at any rate that the time had not come on the 25th of March, when any desperate measures were called for.

The RTC ended, therefore, on a note of agreement only on two points, namely that the form of government be changed to a federal parliamentary one and that the elections should thenceforth be held upon the basis of direct adult franchise. The President also said that he would be willing to make any other amendments upon which there was unanimity or an agreed decision. It is hardly to be expected that any other decision could, therefore, be reached by the DAC to say nothing of the fact that neither Mr Bhashani nor Mr Bhutto were parties to this agreement and that in any event Shaikh Mujibur Rahman still wanted his Six Points to be incorporated into the Constitution. Indeed among the constitutional amendment proposals which were then received was one sent by Shaikh Mujibur Rahman and, after receiving it, the President is reported to have despaired of a constitutional solution.

On the 20th of March, 1969, at a press conference addressed by the then Law Minister the constitutional amendments intended to be made were announced to the public. Indeed we are told that it was intended at this conference also to announce a date somewhere in April when the National Assembly would meet to take these amendments in hand. For some mysterious reasons, however, which we have not been able to discover, even while he was addressing the press conference the Law Minister was instructed on the telephone to withhold this particular announcement.

It has been said that the RTC was a failure. It certainly was not an unmitigated success. But we wonder whether, upon a cooler appreciation of the events, the term "failure" can really be attached to the conference. For reasons which we have already stated it would have been optimistic indeed to expect that the RTC would attain complete unanimity. Two important leaders were anyhow outside the negotiations. In these circumstances the two major changes agreed upon could hardly be regarded as an insignificant matter. Indeed it may well be that that was the maximum agreement that could be expected to be reached. Nations do not exist on unanimity and difference of views is an essential part of democracy. The agreement reached was sufficient to start a new chapter.

Next: POLITICAL BACKGROUND: V

# He was simply... Tawfiq Bhai

ALMER

LIKE everyone else in the profession, and the millions across Bangladesh who tuned in to his sports broadcasts on radio and television, I had known him simply as Tawfiq Bhai. There were easily a good couple of generations between our ages. But he wouldn't have it any other way. After all, he would remind me, we were colleagues.

I had known of him since childhood. There was no way I couldn't have. Dhaka Stadium they...ami Tawfiq Aziz Khan every sports enthusiast in Bangladesh had heard that voice. So it was quite exciting when I first got to meet him in person. I was a wide-eyed 16-year-old, on my first week as a trainee sports reporter at The Daily Star. I could feel that the others at the sports desk, the reporters and sub-editors, were still skeptical about my presence there, not least because of my age (to their credit, the skepticism turned to warmth and camaraderie before long). In my eagerness to impress them, I had put in a piece about the ongoing football league filled with some teeth-grinding words more fit for an eighteenth century essay on philosophy than page ten of The Daily Star. The next day, as I was going about my job writing up a match report, I saw the legendary Tawfiq Aziz Khan walk into the sports section, his booming voice inquiring, "So where is this

Charles Dickens of ours?" We were introduced, and after noticing that I was struggling with the unmistakably Bengali dilemma of not knowing how to address him, he came to my rescue saying, "You can call me Tawfiq Bhai, if I can call you Charles Dickens!"

For the next year or so, I saw Tawfiq Bhai almost everyday. However busy he was, he would unfailingly drop by the sports desk at least once a day. He was a source of knowledge and a pillar of strength for all of us. His sense of journalistic etiquette and ethics, his uncanny recollection of crucial facts long forgotten by others, his scrutinizing eye for catching the slightest error all his qualities as a colleague, an editor and a mentor were not only valuable, but indispensable. I could never stop being amazed by his wisdom, his judgement, his sense of humour and witty quips, and mostly, his unending passion for sports.

Sometimes during my stint at The Daily Star, I was covering an Abahani-Mohammedan cricket match along with another colleague of mine. It was a tight game, and in the over-crowded, tension-filled press enclosure I couldn't help but show some emotions that gave away which team I was a fan of. Although I wasn't the only one expressing my feelings, we certainly weren't a majority and our actions were considered far from the norms of the press box. Somehow word got to Tawfiq Bhai, and the next day he came by the sports desk and asked me to look up the report I filed for

that game. He went over the piece intently and once he was sure that it wasn't biased either way, he congratulated me. He surprised me by



saying that as long as my reports don't betray my personal bias, I shouldn't stop supporting my team, even while on duty. Tawfiq Bhai believed that a true sports reporter needed to have a true passion for sports, and you couldn't have that passion if you weren't a true fan.

What endeared me most to Tawfiq Bhai was the way he treated me. Never mind the heavily hierarchical world of Bangladeshi journalism, and never mind the huge gulf between our ages, I always felt that first and foremost, I was his colleague. There would be the occasional fatherly advice, the rare disapproval of an editor, and the even rarer admonition of senior management. But he was never patronizing, never intimidating, never overindulging. He was simply...Tawfiq Bhai.

# We will continue to miss him

MUNIRA KHAN

I first met Tawfiq Aziz Khan while rehearsing in a drama at the Central Students' Union office of Dhaka University as early as 1956. As a part of the delegation for the cultural exchange programme between the then East and West Pakistan, we, the students of Dhaka University staged some Bengali dramas in Karachi, Lahore, Peshawar and then in the centenary celebration programme of Calcutta University.

Tawfiq Bhai in those days acted in roles, which brought life to the stage; and then in his whole life he played the same role making every place of his errand lively with his pleasant presence.

Before his marriage, he stayed with us at Joynag Road from 1959 to 1965, and his role as my husband's friend and well-wisher of our family made all of us extremely fond of him and established an invisible bond of lifelong friendship.

He was such a personality of honest, straightforward, and balanced character that nobody could ever have any complaint against him. His complacent attitude towards life and the simplicity of his lifestyle were really appreciable and exemplary. His ready wit and sense of humour attracted people that came to know him. I personally know that, even the doctors who treated him became very fond of him, would remember him as a good-natured patient and a courageous fighter as he never lacked patience and wit even in his pain.

His ready comments on every happening of life was practical and at the same time tinged with

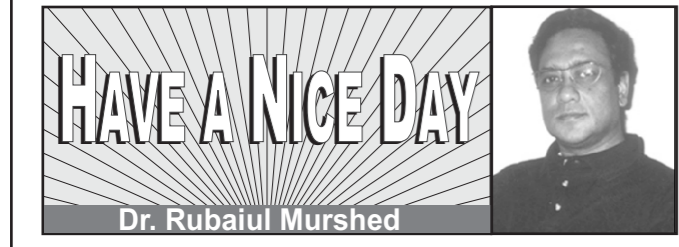
humour, and that's what made him a favourite commentator and an astute journalist. After sports, photography, drama and music were his love. In the early days of cable television in Bangladesh, I have seen him in my drawing room, sitting with a camera in front of the television for hours to take pictures of significant sports events, which were published next day in The Daily Star.

He was a real connoisseur of music, used to sing so well, but for himself, and for friends, always humming especially light classics of Manna Dey and Lata Mangeshkar. Even before a month of his sad demise, I brought him a cassette of Ajay Chakrabarti and he lying on his hospital bed listened to it and commented on the singers' perfection.

Another feature of his character was love for children and grandchildren. My children and grandchildren along with his own sons and grandson would miss him most and would be deprived of that great affection and love. It is an irreparable loss for them.

Although, I believe, Tawfiq Bhai was not recognised in his public life as much as he deserved for his contribution in the field of sports and other areas of his service, he lived a full private life. He had an affectionate companion and a great soul as his wife, two sons just like his friends, many loving relatives and many admirers and well-wisher friends.

As for us the near and dear ones it will be impossible to forget Tawfiq Bhai. We will continue to miss him as long as we live. May Allah rest his soul in Heaven.



All health information to keep you up to date

## Health and Nutrition

### Food poisoning

You can tell when food is spoiled by the way it smells! Not necessarily. Although many of the organisms that spoil food and make it dangerous to eat do make the food smell bad, some do not. For example, Clostridium botulinum, whose toxin causes the deadly form of food poisoning called botulism, spoils food without making it smell bad.

C. botulinum, an anaerobic microbe that flourishes in the absence of air, is most likely to be found in canned or vacuum-sealed goods. As it grows, it releases gases that may actually cause a can of food to bulge outward. If you find a can bulging at the end, throw it out without opening the can, the botulinum toxin can contaminate your can opener.

Heating food protects you against food poisoning. Sometimes, yes, sometimes, no. Thorough cooking at high temperatures can kill many of the potentially dangerous bacteria and/or parasites in raw fish, poultry, beef and milk. But you should never rely on reheating to make questionable leftovers or canned food safe. And no amount of cooking, regardless of the heat, will neutralize the toxins in such hazardous plants as the poisonous varieties of Amanita mushrooms.

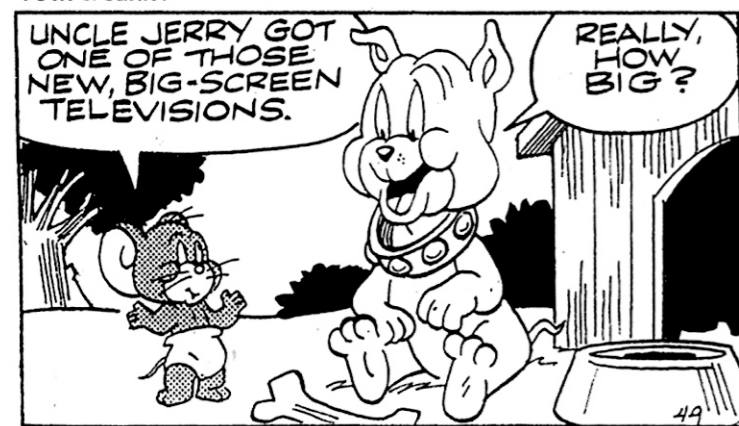
## Facts about eczema

Is eczema contagious? No. Eczema is an itchy, blistery, sometimes oozing or crusty rash, a form of contact dermatitis that occurs when a person is exposed to substances or materials to which he is sensitive. No matter how unpleasant it looks, eczema cannot be passed from one person to another. Of course, if the eczematous rash becomes infected, the infection can spread from one person to another through direct contact.

Only children get eczema. Sorry, no. Eczema can pop up at any time in your life. In fact, for some unknown reason, men older than 40 are particularly likely to develop eczematous patches on the back of the legs or around the waist.

Tomorrow: Children first and other tips

## TOM & JERRY



## By Hanna-Barbera

