

Stealing someone else's land is terrorism! Fukuoka brings Asia closer to Japan

DR. FAKHRUDDIN AHMED
writes from America

AND those who aid and abet such efforts are accessories to terrorism. For the last fifty-four years, the state of Israel has systematically stolen lands belonging to the Palestinians, and the world has not raised a whimper about the Israeli terrorism. Whenever the Palestinians resist Israeli larceny, however, the world jumps all over them and brand them as savage "terrorists." Israel believes that time is on their side: that the longer they can delay a settlement with the Palestinians, the more permanent their creeping annexation of the West Bank and Gaza will become.

In the 1930s, when British monarch Edward VI was romancing the American divorcee Wallace Simpson, through an unofficial gag order, the British people were kept in the dark. It was only after the King abdicated his throne for the woman he loved in 1936, (the Church of England would not allow the King to marry a divorcee) that the secret could not be withheld from the British public any longer. In the American media, on the other hand, the romance between the King and the American divorcee was getting the Fleet Street treatment. The situation is completely reversed presently vis-à-vis Israel. Through an unofficial gag order, in the American media, it is tantamount to sacrilege to question any of Israel's criminal activities, whereas in the European media, Israel's total domination of American media and exploitation of American are vividly portrayed. The Europeans are astounded as to how the Israelis have managed to keep such a monumental lie afloat for 54 years.

A few weeks ago, the writer was watching a news programme moderated by Bill Press and Patrick Buchanan, where the impending US attack on Iraq was being discussed. Mr. Press said that it was in America's and Israel's interest to attack Iraq. The guest, a former US Ambassador, Mr. Edward Peck, said: "I don't care about Israel; my only concern is the interest of the United States, and so it should be yours!" The interesting thing about the Ambassador Peck's comment is that although views such as his are widely held by the average Americans, they are seldom allowed to be articulated in the media. As though it is unpatriotic to talk solely about the interests of the United States, without stressing the interests of Israel in the same breath. Not surprisingly, Ambassador Edward Peck has not been invited back by Mr. Press or by any other media outlets.

The problem is that the Americans do not get agitated that easily. They do not like to take to the streets and demonstrate in a passionate way like they do in the Arab world. Since Americans are not passionate, any small group with a hidden agenda can make a disproportionate impact on American democracy. This is the squeaky wheel gets the grease syndrome. The Zionists understand that and are taking full advantage of America's passivity. They have hijacked American Middle East policy towards total support for Israel, and are now compelling America to attack Iraq first, and Iran next, which will benefit Israel enormously but may do irreparable harm to America in the long run.

How do the Zionists succeed? Because, Americans are trusting people. Rightly, they expect all Americans to have America's interests at heart exclusively. They

believe in the Americanization of all its citizens, regardless of their ethnicity, religion and country of origin. That is why they had no qualms about appointing General Dwight D. Eisenhower the Supreme Commander of the Allied Forces (much to the dismay of the British Field Marshall Bernard Montgomery) during the Second World War, although Eisenhower was of German ancestry. (Seeing German atrocities, General Eisenhower once commented: "It makes me ashamed to be a German!") Although their parents were interned in the US during the World War II, Japanese Americans fought bravely for their country in Europe. That is clearly not the case with the Zionists. Their allegiance is to Israel, not America. Americans find it impossible to believe that people who have taken advantages of living in the US for over a hundred years can have primary allegiance to another country, Israel. Taking full advantage of America's innocence

enemy. It does not require a rocket scientist to figure out that America's interests lie with the world's 1.3 billion peace-loving Muslims inhabiting about 60 Muslim-majority nations who (unlike Muslim terrorists) like America, and not with a tiny nation of six million people which also happens to be the number one terrorist nation on earth, and which only exploits America!

The reason why Saudi Arabia should be America's enemy, the Zionists say, is because 15 of the 19 Sept. 11 hijackers were Saudis. Listening to the Zionists, one gets the impression that the present Saudi government handpicked those terrorists to carry out attack against America! The Zionists suppress the fact that Osama bin Laden picked the 15 Saudis precisely to disrupt the friendly relations between the US and Saudi Arabia, and to punish his native land for expelling him and stripping him of his Saudi citizenship. The 15 terrorists have as much in common with

collective punishment, and demolishes the residences of people related to suicide bombers. To any impartial observer, the Israeli democracy is more like a mixture of theocracy and thugocracy!

Israel's Zionist counterparts in America are doing just as well teaching the Americans the Israeli version of democracy. African American US Congressman Earl Hilliard of Alabama and US Congresswoman Cynthia McKinney of Georgia were two of the very few legislators who dared to speak sympathetically of the Palestinians. In last month's democratic primaries, Jews all over America flooded Hilliard's and McKinney's opponents with money and made sure that they were defeated! Hilliard, McKinney and the "suppily" African Americans learned the painful lesson that the Zionists-controlled democracy in America means only one thing: unquestioned support for Israel, or else!

In one of his recent columns,

LETTER FROM AMERICA

The Zionists suppress the fact that Osama bin Laden picked the 15 Saudis precisely to disrupt the friendly relations between the US and Saudi Arabia, and to punish his native land for expelling him and stripping him of his Saudi citizenship. The 15 terrorists have as much in common with the average Saudis as Timothy McVeigh, David Koresh and Jim Jones have with average Americans. The Zionists suppress the fact that by keeping the oil prices low, the Saudis had saved American consumers trillions of dollars over the last 60 years, whereas Israel has only siphoned off trillions of American taxpayers' money in the same period without any benefit to America.

or naïveté, the Zionists, who look like Americans, talk like Americans, walk like Americans, freely peddle Israel's interests instead of America's. Such hypocrisy may be the Zionist's way; it is certainly not the American way.

Take the case of attacking Iraq. The movement for belligerence is spearheaded by Deputy Secretary of Defense (a "Deputy," no less!) Dr. Paul Wolfowitz, who is Jewish and a staunch supporter of Israel. It has to be more than a coincidence that every Jewish leader of any consequence, from Dr. Henry Kissinger and Dr. Wolfowitz on down, are egging President Bush on to attack Iraq, Israel's enemy. On the other hand, all of America's allies in Europe and the Middle East, as well as very prominent non-Jewish Republicans, such as, former National Security Chief under President Bush Senior Brent Scowcroft, former Secretary of State James Baker (who engineered the installation of Bush Junior as President through the US Supreme Court), as well as Secretary of State Eggleburger, Gulf War Supreme Commander Norman Schwarzkopf and Senator Chuck Hagel are all dead set against it! If America attacks Iraq, Israeli soldiers will not die, only American soldiers will die.

Before September 11, the Zionists were satisfied with America's exclusive support for Israel. Now, on top of that, they are out to destroy America's friendly relationships with the Muslim world in general and the Arab world in particular. Saudi Arabia is their number one target. The reasons are obvious; it is oil rich and because it hosts Islam's two holiest sites, any American mistreatment of Saudi Arabia will have repercussions throughout the Muslim world. The Zionists want America to declare Saudi Arabia an enemy state. If they succeed, by extension, they hope that the Muslim world will also become America's

the average Saudis as Timothy McVeigh, David Koresh and Jim Jones have with average Americans. The Zionists suppress the fact that by keeping the oil prices low, the Saudis had saved American consumers trillions of dollars over the last 60 years, whereas Israel has only siphoned off trillions of American taxpayers' money in the same period without any benefit to America. Additionally, although American Jews send billions of tax-deductible dollars to Israel annually, the Zionists want to stop Saudi Arabia or any other Muslim country from sending a penny to Palestinian groups such as Hamas and Islamic Jihad, who have repeatedly said that America is not their enemy, only the Israeli occupiers of their lands are.

The only reason the apologists for Israel can come up with for this unilateral exploitation of America by Israel is that Israel is the only democracy in the region. Israel is definitely a democracy for the Jews. Any Jew anywhere in the world, who has never set his/her foot on Israel, is a citizen of Israel, and can vote. On the other hand, Palestinians, who had lived in the land now occupied by Israel for thousands of years and were expelled in 1948 can neither vote nor return to their home. Israel is a democracy that continually, illegally according to the United Nations Security Council resolutions, steals Palestinian lands and builds illegal Jewish settlements on it. Israel is a democracy whose government assassinates Palestinian leaders, collaterally killing innocent children who happen to be around. Israel is a democracy that uses Palestinian children as human shield as it goes hunting for suspects, and kills those children. Israel is a democracy that imposes curfew on Arab villages within Israel and massacres unsuspecting Israeli Arab civilians unaware of it. (TIME magazine, August 19, 2002) Israel is a democracy that believes in

NEWSWEEK's George Will, accused the Palestinians of "occupying" the West Bank and Gaza, and pronounced the Palestinians savages for allowing suicide bombers among them! According to August 19's TIME magazine, page 30, after rounding up young Palestinians, Israeli soldiers mercilessly beat them up until "they recite a crude rhyme that professed love for Israeli troops and cursed the genitalia of Palestinian mothers!" Mr. Will will no doubt be proud of the etiquette of his people and characterize it as thoroughly civilized!

Not satisfied with vilifying the Muslims, the Zionists have teamed up with rightwing Christians to defame Islam itself. The author has heard the Zionists on television question the genesis of Islam itself. "It was not Gabriel, but the Satan who spoke to Muhammad," one of them asserted. Reverend Franklin Graham, the son of evangelist Billy Graham, who in February had called Islam "an evil and wicked religion," recently criticized Muslim clergy for not apologizing for Sept. 11, as though Muslim clergy had blessed the terrorist acts! I did not hear of Reverend Franklin or Billy Graham leading a group of Christian clergy and apologizing to the Jews for the extermination of six million Jews by fellow German Christians during World War III! When the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill assigned its freshman class, "Approaching the Qur'an," for summer reading, Islam-haters went ballistic. Fox News's Bill O'Reilly, the moderator of the popular "O'Riley Factor," compared this assignment to having students read Hitler's "Mein Kampf" in 1941! Mr. O'Riley has single-handedly destroyed the career of Professor Sami Al Arian, a tenured Professor at the University of South Florida, who is Palestinian, by suggesting he has terrorist links. Although after prolonged investigations by the law enforcement agencies Professor Al Arian has not been

charged with anything, both the school President and Florida Governor Jeb Bush. President Bush's younger brother, want him removed! Such bigotry from high places has resulted in the arrest a few weeks ago, after a tip off, of a Jewish man in Florida, Dr. Goldstein, who assembled a cache of explosives and had a list of Islamic Centers and mosques to blow up in Florida! Mr. O'Riley is too afraid to condemn such Jewish terrorism!

What do Muslim Americans do in the face of such attack on their religion? Most throw up their hands in the air, switch television channels and pray to God so that their jobs are safe! Very few, like the author, who speak out, risk ridicule, intimidation, retaliation, loss of livelihood and possible incarceration without charges. Yet, the Qur'an says that God will not change the condition of a people unless they change it themselves. A case in point is the birth of Prophet Issa (Jesus) (peace be upon him). As Maryam (Mary) was overcome with the pangs of childbirth, Allah (SWT) did not drop dates at her feet. Even while in excruciating pain, she was asked to work. She was told to approach the date tree and shake it gently for the dates to fall near her. If Muslim Americans believe that Allah (SWT) will solve their problem without their having to sacrifice, they are in for a big surprise!

There is no other way to say it: the witch-hunt against the Muslim Americans has begun. Although not one of the September 11 terrorists were long-time residents of the US, all the recent anti-terrorist legislations seem to target Arab or Muslim Americans. However, only three persons have been charged thus far, and none of them fit the profile or are Arab: Zacarias Mousaoui who is French, John Walker Lindh, who is a white American, and Jose Padilla, who is a Hispanic American, and the case against whom is floundering fast. Nevertheless, Muslim Americans welcome such scrutiny and would be delighted to see anyone with terrorist inclinations amongst them flushed out, and the stigma against their community removed. But the Attorney General, Mr. John Ashcroft, should not stop there. He should also investigate why Jewish Americans enjoying immense political power, such as Deputy Defense Secretary Dr. Paul Wolfowitz, Senator Joseph Lieberman of Connecticut, Senator Chuck Schumer of New York and Senator Arlen Specter of Pennsylvania, among others, always seem to put the interest of Israel ahead of America's. Mr. Ashcroft should also investigate why Jewish journalists and so-called "experts," such as Mr. Steve Emerson, Mr. Daniel Pipes, Mr. Frank Gaffney, Mr. Rich Lowery (who once suggested that America should bomb Mecca) and Mr. Yossef Bodansky, among others, never admit that they are Jewish/Israeli hawks and are a front for Israel, as they push Israeli agenda on American TV, and chart a course for America that is beneficial to Israeli interests and detrimental to America's interests.

So what will happen if America attacks Iraq? Once again, hundreds of thousands of Iraqi civilians will be killed. The recession will deepen in the US and the American stock market will crash. Toeing the Israeli line will not get President Bush reelected, according to a famous Russian astrologer. America will earn the undying enmity of the Muslim world. With one more of its enemies neutralized and many new enemies of America created, Israel will continue to enjoy more security at America's expense.

MONZURUL HUQ writes from Tokyo

THE rest of Asia often views Japan as a country belonging not to the continent despite the geographic reality. The main reason for such an assessment rests on the economic strength of Japan, which places the country in a position parallel to those situated far beyond the continent. This economic strength of Japan also drifted the nation further from the continent it belongs to and in many aspects of social and cultural life. Japan in recent years was seen busy copying trends and styles that are essentially western. The rapid industrialization of Japan was also accompanied by new social norms that go beyond the conventional understanding of Asia. Although traditional eastern values are still preserved and practiced in many ways, particularly in matters related to family bondage, a new set of social norms that are essential by-products of western urban culture is rapidly replacing them, and by doing so drifting Japan further apart from the continent Asia where the age old understandings are still predominant in many ways.

The trend has obviously triggered the emergence of some form of an identity crisis among a group of Japanese who firmly believe in Japan's Asian origin. As Japan's economic crisis has deepened during the last decade, the sense of country's Asian belonging is once again finding its way even among people who during the bubble years were happy considering their country as an essential part of the west located only in Asia as a result of some strange geographic coincidence. With the economy of some parts of other Asia moving rapidly towards an advanced stage, this trend would definitely find further ground to bring Japan back to the ranks of Asian states in true sense.

If the process of economic development can provide stimulus for bridging the artificial gap that has been created during the post World War II period between Japan and the rest of Asia, a better understanding of other Asia by the people of Japan would definitely serve as an additional factor that would help achieve that goal. There is no shortage of people in Japan who subscribe to such understanding and they are relentlessly trying to put these ideas into practice through their individual as well as collective efforts based on goodwill and mutual understanding. Japan's western city of Fukuoka is a unique example of how such understanding can turn into a collective approach and help people getting better knowledge about next-door neighbours.

Fukuoka is the largest city of Japan's Kyushu Island and situated at the closest proximity to the continent Asia. This geographic location has rightfully endowed the title 'Japan's gateway to Asia' to the city. Historically the city was in close contact with the continent and during Japan's pre-modern period ships from Fukuoka regularly sailed to Korea, China and Vietnam; places with which the region had strong business ties. Although Japan's long period of self-imposed isolation during the Tokugawa period disrupted that historic contact, it didn't take much longer for the island of Kyushu to re-establish the broken tie after the era of self-imposed isolation came to an end.

As the twentieth century was coming to an end paving the way for a period of optimism based on mutual respect and understanding, Fukuoka once again came forward with the initiative of forging a meaningful tie with Asia that would help people of Japan to know about the continent and its culture better. The idea of Asia Month is an essential by product of such an understanding of the leadership of the city. Established in 1990, the Asia Month's programme has three different sides that cover

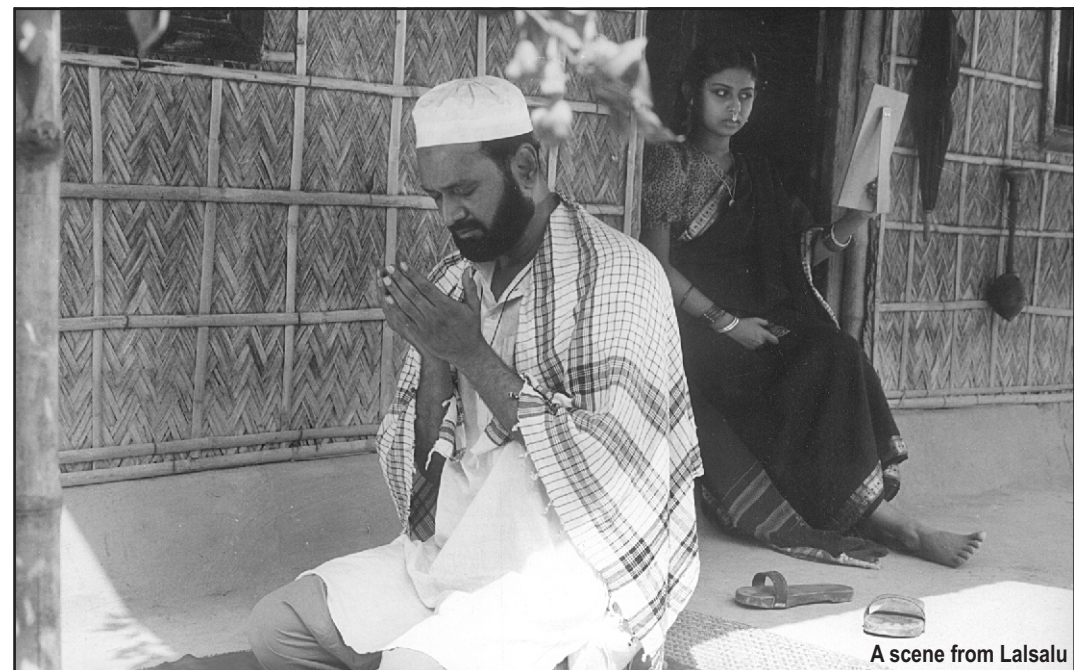
a broader aspect of the region in general. While the Asia-Pacific Festival provides the audience with the opportunity to view first hand the presentation of cultural programmes by troupes invited from different Asian countries, a festival of film focusing on Asian cinema allows the viewers to have a better understanding of the societies through their reflections on films. Finally, Fukuoka Asian Cultural Prizes honour leading personalities from different Asian countries for their achievements in a particular field, which also help fostering mutual understanding among different Asian nations.

Traditionally the programmes of the Asia Month start at the beginning of September and continue for almost thirty days. This year's thirteenth Asia Month programs are now already on as cultural troupes from a number of Asian countries are busy showing their artistic skills to the people of Fukuoka. The film festival, scheduled from September 13, is to show 27 films from 15 Asian countries including Japan. Bangladesh too has her due share at the festival as Tanvir Mokammel's 'Lalsalu' being chosen to represent the country at a specially designated part for this year's festival where the world of Islam is to get a rightful focus through the medium of film. The organizers of the festival came up with this unique idea as the western media had variously presented distorted and faulty understanding of Islamic societies after the September 11 incidents. Films, according to the organizers of the Fukuoka Film Festival, can be of great help in correcting any wrong image about a particular society, and they are hopeful that the Festival would provide the people of Fukuoka with the right opportunity to get to know more about Islamic societies through films that have been produced in those countries. Hence, the choice of 'Lalsalu' can be considered as a perfect one as the film, based on a powerful novel by Syed Waliullah, traces the other side of exploitation in the name of religion that runs contrary to the teachings of Islam.

The names of the laureates for this year's Fukuoka Asian Cultural Prizes were announced in July and the four recipients have been invited to attend the award giving ceremony on September 19. They will also speak at seminars being organized as part of the Asia Month. The aim of the Fukuoka Cultural Prizes is to preserve and foster Asian culture and promote the recognition of its prestigious value. The prize is regularly been awarded in three categories since 1990. Besides a grand prize, there are also academic as well as arts and culture awards. Each category carries financial reward as well as a special citation recognizing the winners' contribution.

Four distinguished personalities from four different countries have been selected for this year's prize from a broader list that was compiled after approximately 4,000 nominators from 54 countries submitted their nominations. The laureate for the 2002 grand prize is the renowned Chinese film director Zhang Yimou, who consistently depicted the hardship of life in contemporary China in his films and made significant contribution in the advancement of Chinese cinematography. Two distinguished historians from Australia and Sri Lanka, Professor Anthony Reid and Professor Kingsley Muthumuni, were chosen for the academic prize, while the arts and culture prize goes to the Malaysian cartoonist Lat.

Last year's grand prize winner being Professor Mohammad Yunus, Bangladesh enjoys prestige in events related to Fukuoka's Asia Month celebration. The participation of 'Lalsalu' at this year's film festival no doubt helps keep that tradition high.



A scene from Lalsalu

Sustainable development: Is the road too far?

Md. ASADULLAH KHAN

BETWEEN the last Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro, and the just concluded Johannesburg Summit in South Africa, scientists reckon that there has been little progress in cleaning up the mess. Shockingly, the road to the just concluded summit was littered with unkept promises and shattered treaties. The world today seems no better a place than what it was in 1992. In taking stock of the whole scenario, people both in the developed and underdeveloped world find to their utter shock and dismay that air pollution has now become a major killer with three million people dying of it every year, carbon emission doubled in three decades with the U.S. pumping 16 percent above 1990 level making it a major polluter. In the water front, forty percent of world population now faces chronic shortage of fresh water for daily needs. Although we live in a world that is 70 per cent water, only 2.5 per cent is fresh, and only a fraction of that is accessible. At present 1.1 billion people lack access to clean drinking water and more than 2.4 billion lack adequate sanitation. Added to this is the problem of contaminated water that kills around 2.2 million every year. In Bangladesh, in spite of the fact that we have 4m hectares of inland water support area, water crisis was building up since long because of declining surface water availability during lean period. Other than this, water quality degradation, especially of surface water due to poor sanitation, industrial effluents and pesticide run off has added to the woes. Compounding with this problem arsenic contamination of ground water and poor surface water quality has put the country in a

critical situation. Water scarcity and water stress experienced in the length and breadth of Bangladesh that are directly linked to human activities run counter to sustainable development in the country. "Unless we take swift and decisive action", says U.N. Secretary General Kofi Annan, "by 2025 two-thirds of the world's population may be living in countries that face serious water shortages". Arguably, agriculture accounts for two thirds of the fresh water consumed. The Johannesburg summit endorsed a proposal that envisages "more crop per drop" approach. The proposal calls for more efficient irrigation techniques, planting of drought and self-tolerant crop varieties that require less water and better monitoring of growing conditions such as soil humidity levels. Improving water delivery system would also help reducing the amount that is lost enroute to the people who use it. The programme it envisages is WASH - Water, Sanitation and Hygiene for All - a global effort that aims to provide water services and hygiene training to everyone who lacks them by 2015. In spite of the fact that world wide population growth has eased, in poor Asian countries the growth is still horrific. Mentionably, world population increased 48% from 1975 to 2000, compared with 64 per cent from 1950 to 1975. But even as this deceleration continues, the population is expected to level off eventually, perhaps at 11 billion sometimes in the last half of this century. In the Cairo conference on "population" attendees pledged \$5.7 billion, to reduce birth rates in the developing world and acknowledged that giving women more education and reproductive freedom was the key to accomplishing

that goal. Even a global calamity like AIDS has yielded unexpected dividends, with international campaigns to promote condom use and abstinence helping to prevent not only disease transmission but also conception. Such efforts have paid off in a big way. According to U.N. head quarters, the average number of children produced per couple in the developing world - a figure that reached a whopping 4.9 per cent in the early part of the last century - plunged to just 2.7. In many coun-

tries in Europe and America the fertility rate is well below 1.5. A little more than 30 years ago, global population growth was 2.04 per cent a year, today it's just 1.3 per cent.

Sunny, as the global averages look, things get a lot darker when you break them down by region. Even the best family planning programmes do no good if there is neither the money nor governmental expertise nor education to carry them out and in less developed countries - which currently account for a staggering 96 per cent of the annual population increase - all these are sorely lacking. In India, Pakistan and Bangladesh the population is expected to level off eventually, perhaps at 11 billion sometimes in the last half of this century. In the Cairo conference on "population" attendees pledged \$5.7 billion, to reduce birth rates in the developing world and acknowledged that giving women more education and reproductive freedom was the key to accomplishing

reliable access to safe nutritious food and 800 million of them -- including - 300 million children are chronically malnourished. Around the world, just 15 cash crops such as corn, wheat, and rice provide 90 per cent of the world's food, but planting and replanting the same crops strip fields of nutrients and make them vulnerable to pests. Slash and burn planting techniques and over reliance on pesticides further degrade the soil. Beset with agricultural failure, fragile ecosys-

tem, erratic weather and other factors, Bangladesh now faces serious problem in feeding its people. Because of dismal poverty situation and population boom, land clearing for agriculture principally through shifting cultivation in the hill forests goes apace. In Bangladesh forest areas are being destroyed through logging, mostly illegal for timber industry related to the current building boom. Experts opine that all remaining forest patches will be destroyed within 10-15 years at the current rate of destruction. Again half the world's wetlands have been lost and one-fifth of the 10,000 fresh water species has been extinct.

It is high time that societies throughout the world work in a way to ensure that economic growth and environmental protection go together, be not at odds. We can't think of development alone in total disregard of the environment. ...Development that takes little account of sustainability is ultimately self-defeating.

less tragic if rich nations did more to help the developing world reduce birth rates and slow the spread of diseases. To make the WASH programme, mooted in the summit, a success it must target at women who must be provided with basic education and job training. In our country as well as in most other places of Asia, we have hardly made any headway in this sector. Understandably, while any factor that eases population pressures may also help the environment. On the other hand, educated mothers not only have a stepladder out of poverty, but they also choose to have fewer babies. Moreover, any developmental effort aimed at improving the environment worldwide will require good healthcare for the young since there are more than one billion people aged 15 to 24.

The West although have noticed but blatantly ignored the fact that up to a third of the world is in danger of starving. Two billion people lack

scarcity. With a rate of loss at 90,000 sq. km per year since 1990, 2.4 percent of the world's forests has been destroyed. Around the world, biodiversity defined as the full variety of life from genes to species to ecosystems is in trouble; 800 species have become extinct and 11000 more are threatened. Experts have shifted their focus from individual species to threatened habitats known as "hot spots". The countries with the most hot spots in the world are Ecuador, Madagascar and the

Philippines. Each has lost two-thirds or more of its biologically rich rain forest and the remainder is under assault. After ten years since Rio in 1992 the fact remains that things haven't changed meaning the air is just as grimy in many places, the oceans just as stressed, wild life and forest resources in ever increasing peril.

Shockingly, the World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg that wound up on September 2, attended by about 100 leaders, scientists and NGO workers could hardly invoke the amount of interest and action it called for. It is worth recalling that at Rio developed countries agreed to spend 0.7 percent of their GNP towards development assistance. But instead of increasing, the figure has come down from 0.34 percent in 1992 to 0.22 percent now. The developing countries opine President George W. Bush's pulling out of the Summit as a play by the U.S. to bypass

multilateral negotiations and renege on the firm commitments it had made at Rio. The blueprint for sustainable development for the earth that was agreed upon at Rio, in 1992 under Agenda No. 21, with annual cost of \$600 billion with the North's agreeing to contribute \$125 billion as development assistance to poorer countries, fell down to just \$53 billion in 2000. In consequence, at Johannesburg, key environmental issues such as saving forests and protecting biological diversity have been pushed to the background. Noticeably, the progress of most of the environmental treaties agreed upon earlier has been dismal. Most noteworthy, the U.S. has derailed the global treaty on climate change by refusing to comply with the agreements at 1990 levels.

But the problem is mounting up with dark clouds hovering all around. The amount of crops, animals, biomatter that we extract each year from the earth inhabited by 6.1 billion people exceeds what the planet can replace by an estimated 20 per cent. Experts have opined after detailed analysis that it takes 14.4 months to replenish what we use in 12 indicating a deficit spending of the worst kind. It is high time we realize the dangers we are going to face. For too long, too many people have believed that natural limits to human well-being have been conquered. And too many have put their faith solely in technological breakthroughs as the inevitable answer to any resource constraints or other vulnerabilities that might emerge. But sustainable development means equitable distribution of wealth and opportunities. Sustainable development is an exceptional opportunity - economically, to build markets and create

jobs; socially, to bring people in from margins; and politically, to reduce tensions over resources that could lead to violence and to give every man and woman a voice and a choice in deciding their own lives, not at the expense of future generations. In our march towards progress and development we have begun to recognize the perils inherent in the prevailing model of development. Noticeably, as forests have been felled and aquifers drawn down, as the atmosphere has been fished to exhaustion and the climate itself has started striking back, the world has seen the dangers of business as usual.

It is high time that societies throughout the world work in a way to ensure that economic growth and environmental protection go together, be not at odds. We can't think of development alone in total disregard of the environment. Even then for the poorest members of the human family in Bangladesh in particular, development means the chance to feed, school and healthcare for themselves and their children. Undeniably, the U.S. and some countries of East Asia and China are going ahead with developmental efforts at a breath-taking speed that brings distress, disease, suffering and hardship to the world at large. These sort of development that takes little account of sustainability is ultimately self-defeating. Prosperity built on the despoliation of natural environment is no prosperity at all, only a temporary reprieve from some immediate disaster.

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