

Celebrating International Day for Older Persons: Is it enough?

SUMAIYA SABRIN EVA

WHAT do we want? Do we want to die at an early age? Of course not. Then we should keep in mind that those who are called 'young' today will be called 'elderly' one day. None of us can deny this truth. It is very unfortunate that after serving/dedicating her/his whole life for the family, society and country an elderly becomes a burden not only for her/his family but also for the society and the state. Is it not the time to think about the older persons? Have we ever thought that they can also be a resource rather than a burden?

With the improvement of medical science, the life expectancy of people is increasing. That is why the number of elderly people is also increasing throughout the world. And it can be said that a demographic revolution is under-way throughout the world. For instance, in 1950, there were 205 million persons aged 60 years or over in the world, which became almost 810 million by 2012. It is projected to reach 1 billion in less than ten years and double by 2050, reaching 2 billion, and the vast majority of them will be in the developing world. Hence, it's a serious issue to think about.

It is pertinent to note that there are marked differences between regions. For example, in 2012, 6% of the population in Africa was 60 years and over, compared with 10% in Latin America and the Caribbean, 11% in Asia, 15% in Oceania, 19% in Northern America, and 22% in Europe (UNFPA 2012). These are the statistics of the world. But it is a matter of great surprise that there is no recent concrete data of the elderly people in our country. According to Help Age country director Nirjharinee Hasan, 7% of the country's total population is elderly people. And "by 2050 it will rise to 20%."

Elderly people suffer very badly at their age. Many of them are ignored by their family. There are no policies related to elderly people in the development or health sectors. Are they "invisible" to the policy makers?

Our constitution says that "the state shall endeavour to ensure equality of opportunity to all citizens." [Article 19(1)] So, the government should take necessary measures to ensure equality of opportunity. This applies to people of all ages, whether s/he is 16 or 60. But a 60 year old person may not have the same ability as that of a 16 year old. In that case, the government has the duty to provide him/her necessary support. But it is a matter of disappointment that in our country no government could create an elderly-people-friendly environment.

Against the above backdrop, the question is, is there any

facility for the elderly in the public transports? Or in banks and hospitals (though some banks and hospitals keep space)? There are reserved seats for disable persons, women and children in the public buses, but no reserved seats for the older persons. If we look at the health sector, we can see so many super-specialist, specialist and sub-specialist doctors in various fields. But specialised treatment for senior citizens still remains ignored.

Treatment of the elderly is regarded as a specialised field all over the world. Specialised treatment of the elderly people is known as "geriatrics." It aims to promote health by preventing and treating diseases and disabilities in elderly people. Even though our neighbour, India, and other developing countries have already established separate geriatric medicine departments in both private and public hospitals, there are no such initiatives in our country.

The government must declare people aged over 60 as "senior citizens" and adopt effective policies for them and make an elderly-people-friendly environment. I appreciate the social safety net programmes for the elderly people, but they are not sufficient and, hence, should be increased. I understand that, because of resource limitations, the state has to work on priority basis. By using this logic, developing countries overlook the elderly people. Elderly people can also be resources rather than burdens. But have we ever thought about it?

According to WHO Brasilia Declaration on Healthy Ageing, 1996, "ageing is a development issue. Healthy older persons are a resource for their families, their communities and the economy." The World Health Organization says: "In our fast ageing world, older people will increasingly play a critical role through volunteer work, transmitting experience and knowledge, helping their families with caring responsibilities and increasing their participation in the paid labour force."

It will be biased to speak only about the state's responsibility and blame it. What about our responsibilities as human beings? We are getting services (got/get) throughout the year from them, but in return, what are they getting from us? Each year, on October 1, through big headlines in the media, talk shows, and some rallies and meetings or seminars we celebrate 'International Day for Older Persons,' but what about the follow up? What happens after the celebration? A single day's care for them. Is it enough? It's time to question our conscience.

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Productivity: Key to innovation and prosperity

MD. ABU ABDULLAH

INNOVATION and productivity are needed for prosperity. What do we mean by productivity? Business executives, government leaders, economists are always in discussions to determine the key enablers of productivity. People often think that productivity is the concern of the private sector, and why they should invest to improve their productivity and competitiveness. Some say they invest for producing cheaper and better quality products and services. Others say improving productivity is about giving workers the tools to do their jobs more efficiently and investing in technology to make them more effective.

A fuller understanding of productivity is critical for making decisions and taking action. It is also key to harnessing people's support and contributions to productivity initiatives that increase our competitiveness. Women empowerment contributes towards economic prosperity. Higher incomes for women lead to higher household spending -- a key pre-requisite for faster long term growth. Employment of women provides opportunity for increasing creativity, innovation and productivity.

How does increased productivity lead to prosperity? First of all, increase in production leads to increase in flow of goods and services in the economy, as a result of which consumption rises in the society. Therefore, the size of the market increases, inducing firms to invest, which leads to further economic growth and development.

People, process and technology are the main factors of productivity. We need leaders with clear vision who can inspire others to develop and support high performing teams of diverse, skilled and dedicated employees. Our processes must be streamlined and standardised. We must use latest technology to improve client access and service delivery. Strategic leadership of people, proper production process and proper system are needed for higher productivity.

Today, in the context of globalisation, most people's lives are ruled by the wish to become more efficient, more innovative, more imaginative, but not truly creative. Nowadays, economic development is influenced by complex international politics and media, so increased productivity is not key to real prosperity. World leaders profess increased productivity and enhanced distributive justice. People exercise minds and bodies at work in the quest for better productivity, but they suffer in the form of psychological stress and social isolation. Increased productivity can lead to lasting prosperity only if it is ruled by a genuine national ideology that respects the economic basis of the good life and the psychological and social cost of increased production.

Healthy workplace culture supports performance, productivity and innovation. The company must be clear about what it wants, provide frameworks on where to work, and then try to use the manpower with their creativity. Entrepreneurs could learn from best practices of other successful and competitive companies. An entrepreneurial mindset and good practices focus on customers and results.

Higher productivity largely depends on the relationship between management and workers. Employees are more productive when their ideas are heard and when they participate in making decision and get recognised for their contri-

butions. Hyundai and Toyota are examples of productive relationship between management and workers. They focused on creating an environment for success and meeting customers' needs.

High performing leaders make all feel that they are a part of their team culture, involve them in planning and decision making, and listen to their ideas. In terms of building capability for higher knowledge, most organisations follow mentoring, on the job training and higher education as a way for further development.

Employee satisfaction, job satisfaction, healthy workplace, higher profitability create a conducive environment for higher productivity. Healthy workplaces help recruitment and retention of talent, and better wage paves the way for distribution of wealth. Insufficient investment in people, lack of research, ineffective management, and lack of leadership are the main obstacles in achieving better productivity. Poor management, outdated system, multitasking, employees dissatisfaction and long hours also lead to low productivity.

Increase in productivity wouldn't necessarily be good news, for the same reason slow rates of productivity aren't bad news. High productivity does not guarantee prosperity all the time. With everything being equal, higher productivity leads to higher income. But everything else isn't always equal. High price

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of scientific products and commodities sometimes allowed higher incomes despite poor productivity. If prices are falling, then higher rates of productivity may not be enough for profit. Making more of something, which people do not want to buy at a reasonable price, does not guarantee prosperity.

The country's future depends on skills, innovation and productivity, therefore we need to address long term financial challenges and modernise the education system for our future prospects. We can move forward to create a forum where public and private sector leaders and academics can solve the puzzle of productivity and growth. They can analyse private sector business behaviour, engage more people in industrial relation and business schools and focus on the latest technology and research for improvement. They must make sure that our products have the opportunity to develop with high quality and higher productivity and ensure prosperity for everyone.

Improving productivity needs to be addressed from a wider perspective, i.e. strategy, customer perspective, partnership, teamwork and employee management. Thus, many of our efforts toward enhancing productivity contribute to innovation and our country's prosperity.

The writer is Director General, Bangladesh Accreditation Board.

TALUKDAR RASEL MAHMUD

NO doubt we feel proud of our Sundarbans, which is the largest single block of tidal halophytic mangrove forest in the world. It was marked as a Unesco World Heritage Site in 1997, and also contested for the New 7 Wonders of Nature in the world. However, the world's largest mangrove forest is under threat because of proposed construction of a thermal power plant at Rampal. Although the government is arguing that the coal-based project will be constructed using modern technology for minimising any ill effects on the Sundarbans, no one can ensure that there will be no damage to the forest.

Locals and environmentalists started to protest against the proposed power plant from the very beginning, and are still determined to protect the Sundarbans because it is our heritage, and also for greater public interest.

Bangladesh has a legal mechanism for protecting the environment for greater public interest. The Bangladesh Environment Conservation Act, 1995 provides provisions relating to protection of the environment. Section-2 of

this Act defines environment pollutant as any solid, liquid or gaseous substance which has harmful effect on the environment, and it also includes heat, sound, radiation and hazardous substances whose chemical or biochemical properties are such that their manufacture, storage, discharge or unregulated transportation can be harmful to the environment.

Dr Abdullah Harun, Professor of Environmental Science Discipline of the Khulna University, has prepared a report on Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) which says that nearly 220 tons of different toxic gases will be emitted daily from the power plant. The authorities say that the toxic gases will be properly treated before emission by using higher technology but, according to environmentalists, that won't be enough to protect the forest. These toxic gases can be considered as environment pollutant and hazardous substance under Section-2 of Environment Conservation Act, 1995. The ships coal carrying through the forest will emit toxic waste, which is also restricted by Section-6 of the Act.

The Act also defines ecosystem as a balanced complex association of all components of the environment



The Environment Conservation Act, 1995 defines ecosystem as a balanced complex association of all components of the environment which can support and influence the conservation and growth of all organisms. Thus, because of the construction of power plant at Rampal the ecosystem will be largely affected due to traffic movements, oil and chemical spillage and dredging.

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plant is being constructed for producing electricity for betterment of the society, but the ill effects on the environment will lead to a worse situation. Safety of the people is the supreme law and construction of Rampal power plant near the Sundarbans will endanger the safety of the people living in the area by destroying the ecosystem. So, construction of power plant near the Sundarbans is against greater public interest.

In *City Sugar Industries Ltd. And others Vs. Human Rights and Peace for Bangladesh and others case* (7 ADC 860,2010) Mr. Justice Md. Abdul Matin observed that public interest lies in protecting the rivers from encroachment and pollution by all means, and said that the safety of the people should be the supreme law.

The project will use deep tube wells and water of the Posur River for washing coal, which will push ground level water down and will completely destroy the ecosystem of the river. The EIA report prepared by Dr. Abdullah Harun also shows that the project will draw around 25,000 cubic metres of water every day, which is really a threat for the environment.

The Sundarbans plays an important role in the economy of the southwest-

ern region of Bangladesh and thus it contributes in the national economy. It provides raw materials for wood-based industries, timber, fuel wood, pulpwood, thatching materials, honey, bees-wax, fish, crustaceans and much more, and the coal-based power plant will endanger the lives and livelihood of the people of the southwestern part of Bangladesh.

I am not against the project but I am against building of the power plant in Rampal. The project can be transferred anywhere else, far from the Sundarbans, to protect it and to protect public interest as well. The experts and environmentalists are really worried about the impact of the power plant project at Rampal. A great number of concerned people are protesting against this project. The government itself is violating environment law by constructing coal-based power plant at Rampal arbitrarily without considering public interest, and this arbitrary use of power is also against the rule of law. So the government should take notice of this issue, rather than being adamant.

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Rampal power plant violates environmental law

QUOTABLE Quotes

"Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world."

Nelson Mandela

AXYDLBAAXR is LONGFELLOW

One letter stands for another. In this sample, A is used for the three L's, X for the two O's, etc. Single letters, apostrophes, the length and formation of the words are all hints. Each day the code letters are different.

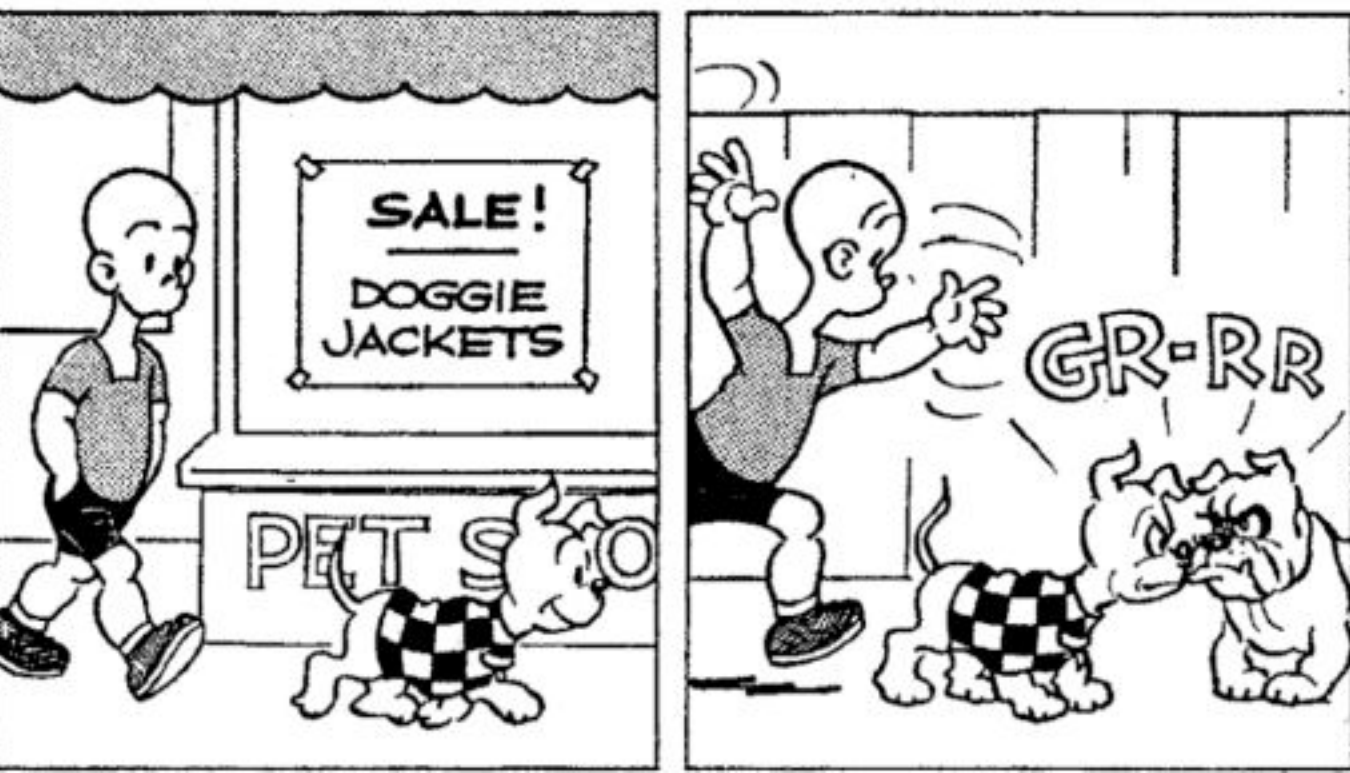
9-9 CRYPTOQUOTE

F A F I D V Z F P L O Z E R V Q
B L J Z U O Z U P L F H V I N T,
M X P Z V V Z F P L O Z E R V Q
B L J Z U O Z U L O Y R F N Q. — N F V
P V N R P V D
Saturday's Cryptoquote: SINCE LOVE GROWS WITHIN YOU, SO BEAUTY GROWS. FOR LOVE IS THE BEAUTY OF THE SOUL. — SAINT AUGUSTINE

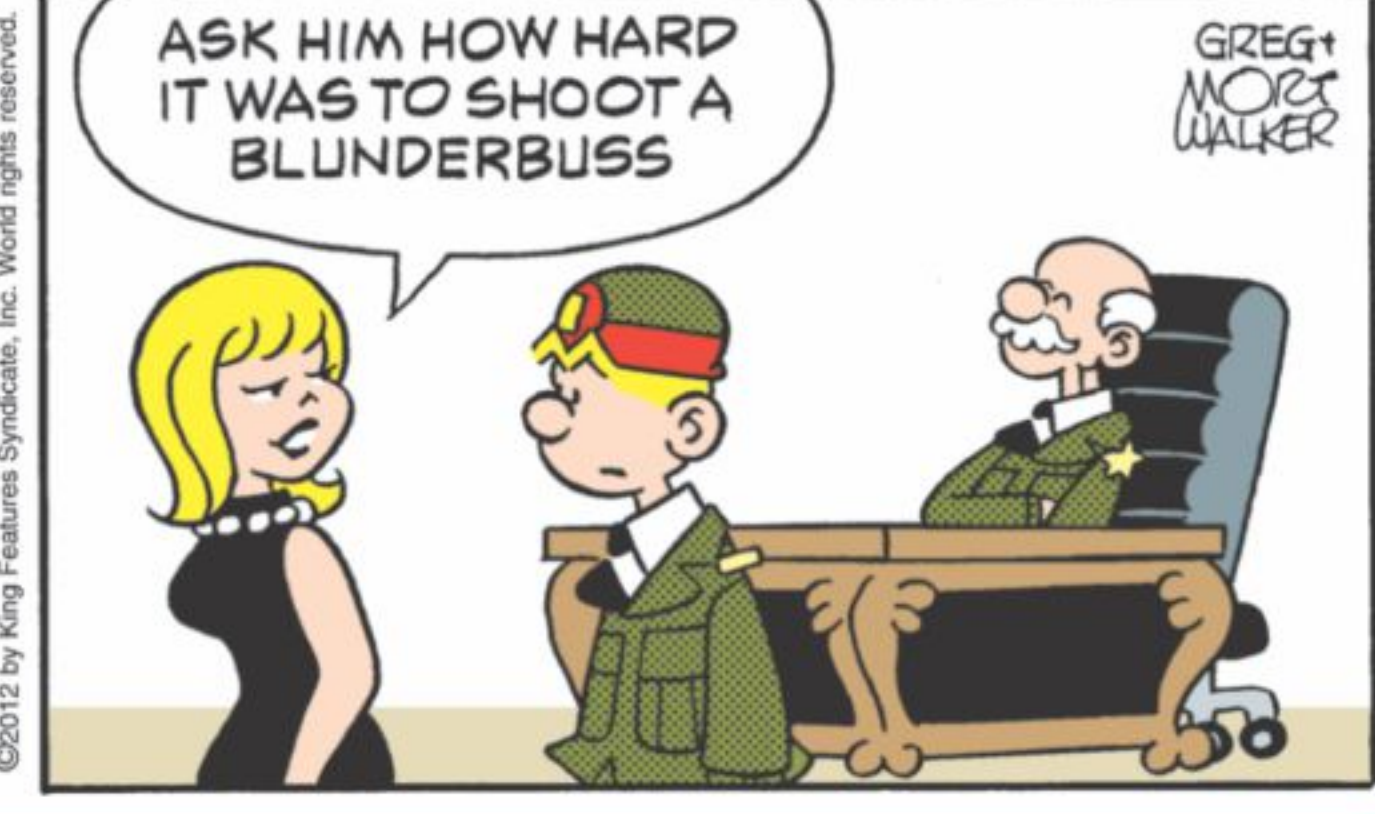
BEETLE BAILY



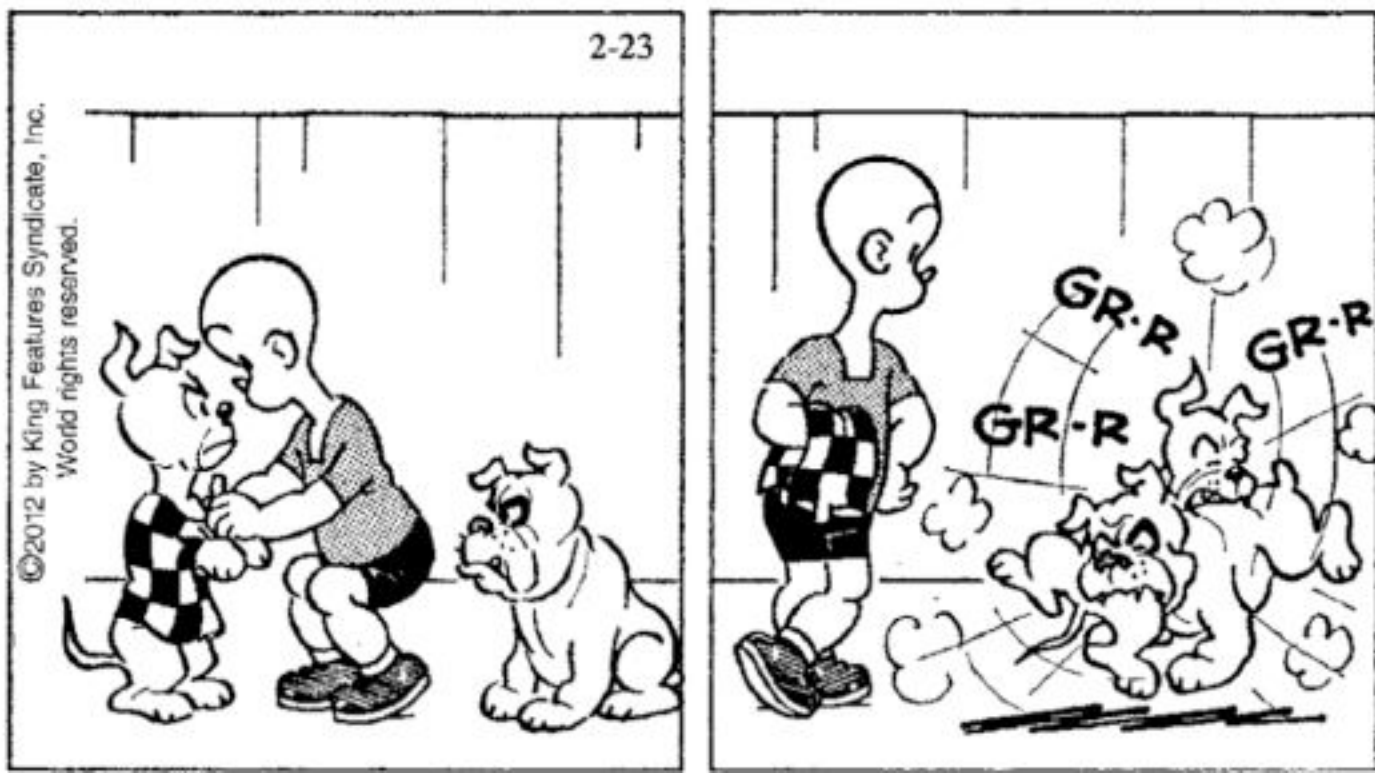
HENRY



by Mort Walker

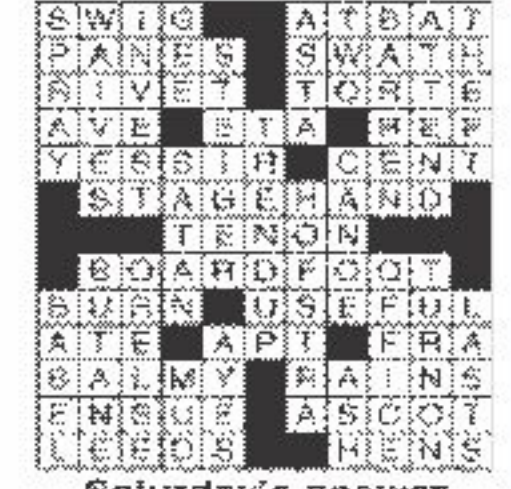


by Don Trachte



By THOMAS JOSEPH

- ACROSS
- 1 Turn to
- 5 Dance
- 9 Bravery
- 10 Does a
- 11 Choke
- 12 Chilled
- 13 Quartz
- 14 Croquet
- 15 Hopp
- 16 Carpenter's
- 17 Yale
- 18 Travel
- 19 Back
- 20 Muscle
- 21 Makeup
- 22 Walked
- 23 Like
- 24 Beer
- 25 Visibility
- 26 Lesser
- 27 Car-wash
- 28 Smooth
- 29 Mouth
- 30 Singer
- 31 Coochie
- 32 Setting
- 33 Box office
- 34 Fire
- 35 Feature
- 36 Scarlett's
- 37 Play place
- 38 Friendship



SWIG ATBAT
PANE SWATE
RIVER TORTE
AVE EIA REF
YESIR GENT
STAGE HAND
TERRON
BOMBS FROTH
BURN USHERAL
ATE AP RERA
BALMY RAINS
PNEUM ASCOT
LEIROS HENS

