What did Mahathir actually say at the | Asia's economic ascendancy **OIC Summit?**



N 16th October, Datu Seri Dr. Mahathir Mohamad, Prime Minister of Malaysia for 22 years, delivered a thought provoking speech at the inaugura tion of the 10th Summit of the 57member Organisation of Islamic Conference (OIC) at Malaysia's new administrative capital, Putrajaya This was his last major speech on the plight of Muslim nations at an international conference prior to his retirement on 31st October.

However media outlets in the West selectively quoted some extracts of his OIC speech out of context that " the Jews ruled the world by proxy" so as to create further hatred between Muslims and Jews, When Italian Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi denigrated Islam no Western media criticized him for the statement. It seems doublestandard rules the day in Western

Dr. Mahathir complained that reports of his remarks had ignored his condemnation of all violence including suicide bombings, and his call on Muslims to heed to the teachings of the Holy Qu'ran and talk peace with Israel. In the speech, he said: " We also know that not all non-Muslims are against us. Some are well disposed towards us. Some even see our enemies as their enemies. Even among the Jews there are many who do not approve of what the Israelis are doing." This part of the speech was completely ignored by the Western media.

To Dr. Mahathir, the teachings of Islam appear to have been hijacked by conservatives and exploited by extremists to give a bad name to Islam. Dr. Mahathir is one of the few Islamic moderate leaders who speak publicly his views on Islamic teachings. He believes in tolerant Islam and to him modernism and Islam go together. His views are bold, candid and often raise eyebrows of those who do not agree

The OIC speech was characterized by its perceptive analysis as to why the 1.3 billion Muslims are

powerless against the domination of Christians and Jews in the prevailing world affairs. They have not only the "pen" but also the "sword". If one analyses his remarkable discourse, the following appears to come out very pointedly.

First, Muslims have to get their act together in acquiring knowledge in the field of science and medicine and not concentrate only on theol-The early Muslims produced great mathematicians, astronomers, physicians, philosophers and scholars when the Europeans in the and scientific discovery.

Third, Prime Minister Mahathir considered that Islam had been interpreted in a way that poverty was Islamic. He said: "This world is not for us. Ours are the joys of heaven in afterlife. All that we have to do is to perform certain rituals, wear certain garments and put up a certain appearance.....We need not do anything. We can do nothing against the Will of Allah". He seriously questioned this type of mindset of Muslims and quoted from Surah Ar-Raad, Verse 11 of the Holy

BOTTOM LINE

The speech could be regarded a timely advice to leaders of Muslim nations. What Prime Minister Mahathir has argued is that the fundamentals of Islam emphasise dignity, higher learning in science and technology, independence, self-help, compassion, modesty, democracy and accountability.

Middle Ages were steeped in ignorance and superstition. At present reverse is the story. It is reported that more books are translated and produced from Athens than all the Arab countries combined. This is a cause for concern for Muslims and one should find out the reasons why

Our Prophet's advice for Muslims was that for acquisition of knowledge, one could go even to China. Now the Muslims have shunned away from acquiring knowledge in the context of requirement of the 21° century. He argued that times had changed and whether Muslims liked it or not they had to change, not by changing Islam but by applying the teachings of Islam in the context of the world lived.

Second, education is central to advancement of a country and of an individual. But it seems that conservative Muslim Ulemas have fought hard and long against what most today would consider modern education. For them, religious education is the goal and only literal interpretation of the teachings of Islam is to be imparted in religious schools. Some scholars point out that the more literal and conservative an interpretation is on the teachings of the Holy Qu'ran, the more is the intensity of devoted acceptance displayed by many Muslim followers. The results are that there have been lower levels of education behind in professions, technological

Qu'ran that Allah would not change the fate of a community until the community had tried to change its

Fourth, he is of the view that striking rigidity in the belief and the practices of rituals of Islam are stressed unnecessarily. Rationalsts point out that the Qu'ranic descriptions of Heaven and Hell and, in general, of all eschatological subjects are allegorical. To support the argument, they cite Sural Imran, Verse 7 of the Holy Qu'ran that proclaims: "In it (Qu'ran), verses are basic or fundamental, They are the foundations of the Book, Others are allegorical

It appears that rituals have become so important that Fatwas on "wazu" (ritual washing before prayer) have been numerous. For example. if the knee or thigh gets exposed, will the "wazu" remains intact ? Whether "wazu" is void if mehendi (henna) remain on the hands. Fatwas on "namaz" (prayer) run into hundreds. Critics say Fatwas are preoccupied with rituals. Furthermore conservative Ulemas had issued Fatwas against many liberal Islamic thinkers such as Sir Sved Ahmed, Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, Dr. Muhammad Iqbal and Dr.

Fifth, Muslims have to defend the Islamic Ummah (community). Dr. Mahathir pointed out that Muslims needed "guns and rockets, bombs and war planes, tanks and war-

Muslims discourage the learning of science and mathematics, they have no capacity to produce their own weapons. Muslims solely rely

on weapons produced by others. Sixth, he argued that angry people could not "think" properly. They would launch their attacks killing just about everybody including fellow Muslims to vent their anger. Peace efforts are sabotaged more indiscriminate attacks calculated "to anger the enemy". The attacks solve nothing and the Muslims gets more oppressed. Killing a believer (Jews and Christians) is against the Qu'ranic injunctions. Surah Nisa, Verse 92 of the Holy Qu'ran proclaims: " Never should a believer kill a believer" and in the same Surah, Verse 93 states: If a man kills a believer intentionally, his recompense is Hell, to abide therein for ever".

"to think". Blind faith is not approved in Islam. Islam is a religion that preaches reason and understanding of the mysteries created by Allah, Prayer without understanding the meaning of the contents of prayer is not endorsed. Furthermore Dr. Mahathir underscored that Muslim countries " must be stable, and well administered, must be economically and financially strong, industrially competent and technologically advanced." Political power is a privilege and trust for doing good for people and power must be exercised 'judiciously, prudently, concertedly.' t implies that he was critical of undemocratic and unaccountable regimes in Islamic world.

Finally, he stressed on the need

Conclusion: Although many Muslims may not agree with his views, they may feel encouraged to look deeper into the fundamentals of Islam in the light of the speech. The speech could be regarded a timely advice to leaders of Muslim nations. What Prime Minister Mahathir has argued is that the fundamentals of Islam emphasise dignity, higher learning in science and technology, independence, self-help, compassion, modesty, democracy and accountability. Furthermore Islam is a religion of moderation and fundamentals of Islam are to be interpreted with the extent of human knowledge and the stage of civilization at present. It has been further argued that Muslims will regain their exalted place once Islam and scientific education and modern technology co-exist.

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Is it here to stay?

GHALIB CHAUDHURI

E have had many false dawns about Asian economic ascendancy. Blistering growth of the nineties was the last one, but sadly it all came melting down with the Asian financial crisis of 1997. Ever since, particularly the East Asian economies of Korea. Hong Kong. Thailand, Malaysia, and Indonesia have been painfully re-structuring their tattered economies burdened with excessive foreign and domestic debt. The recent global downturn of 2000, which is somewhat persisting even today, has not helped its attempt for a quicker revival of their

But surprisingly, despite the current anemic growth of the US and the Eurozone, the two regions on which Asia is traditionally dependent, East and South Asian economies have bucked the downward trend of their Western part ners. Instead, they seem to be on a roll. The countries that are doing well among this cluster of nations are China, India, Korea, Taiwan and lately Japan. But will it last!

This time however it seems different, new growth dynamics, principally of homegrown nature are out to replace old ones. The traditional engine of export-led prosperity, championed chiefly by US buying power, no longer appears to be the only dominant factor. China instead, is starting to play a growing role in buttressing progress for Asian economies. Intra regional trade in Asia has grown from 2.2 per cent of world trade in 1985 to a respectable 6.5 per cent in 2001 and continues to be on its way up. South Korea, a major exporting nation, has seen its export to China grow by 47 per cent in the first seven months of this year, and also accounts for more than 40 per cent of its overall export. Similarly, Taiwan, Thailand, Singapore and Malaysia has seen a steady increase of trade with China. Japan's recent spurt of economic activity is also partly engineered by the Chinese buying power.

Another indigenous growth engine has been Asia's consumer Easy monetary policy with low interest rate has led to easy access to consumer credit. This has turned Asians into voracious shoppers The relatively younger population of Asia are keen to spend. The government also welcomes and encourages such expansion as it makes the country less dependent on western growth.

Shortage of foreign exchange reserve of some Asian countries, lec to en-masse (barring Malaysia)

capitulation to the IMF and its concomitant stringent terms. The 1997 Asian financial crisis was a bitter pil to swallow. Asian countries have learned the hard way that when times are tough foreign capital flow retreats quickly without compunction. Credit rating suffers, and shutters rapidly come down on all avenues of raising fresh foreign capital. Countries are left with a depreciating domestic currency and burgeoning existing international debt. Such were the humbling experience during the crisis, and

communiqué in Dubai added the With 56 per cent of world population, Asia is still far from making its proportionate contribution to global growth and trade (currently both around 25%). But there are encouraging signs of progress and not all is dependent on the largesse of the West. It is building its own indigenous engines of growth that appear sustainable.

from it. That is why today Asia is hoarding a total foreign exchange reserve of US\$1,670 billion, amounting to 60 per cent of global reserve. China is estimated to have reserve of US\$365 billion with Japan in excess of US\$500 billion. These are unprecedented big numbers, reflecting financial

Today it is this financial powerhouse that is funding the growing budget deficit of the US. For once not because it is compelled to, but because it suits Asia to do so. It helps to keep its currency undervalued. Kenneth Rogoff, the departing IMF chief economist, recently commenting on US growth said, perhaps facetiously, "best growth that money can buy," referring to Asian money. This may look win win for both sides but surely there must be an undercurrent of a threat from Asia. Think what can happen if Asia decides to retreat from buying US treasuries (debt obligations). will have a catastrophic effect on

exchange management by countries. An unprecedented comment over a market that is so sensitive to any signs, let alone explicit words. Sure enough, soon after dollar tumbled and yen appreciated. This was indeed a veiled aspersion over pegged and managed Asian currencies vis-à -vis China, Japan, Korea and few other minor ones. So what is really bugging the US? They are crying foul that China with its peg to US dollar at 8.28 renminbi is undervalued and therefore responsible for hollowing out US manufacturing. Because of the peg, China remains cheap even while dollar depreciates. US is forced to buy Chinese goods over its own, because it is competitive. This US-China tension is really not all to do with the right price for renminbi but more to do with the US election politics. They need to find a bogeyman to blame for their lacklustre economic perfor-

word "flexibility" in relation to foreign

dollar value and US interest rate

would have to go shooting up to attract fresh capital for its burgeon-

ing budget and trade deficit. Under

such circumstances the tentative

growth that we have seen in the US

causing consternation in Western

camps particularly in the US. We

have recently witnessed how John

Snow, US Tréasury Secretary, in his

Asian trip tried to persuade Japan

and China to re-value its currency

We have also seen how the G7

Colossal Asian reserve is also

so far, would inevitably suffer.

Asian habits die hard. Asian's are known for their thrift. Their savings rate is one of the highest in the world, estimated to be in the region of 37 per cent of GDP. China saves at an even higher rate of 40 per cent and Japan at 30 per cent. Compare this to 13 per cent of the US. Admittedly, the absolute numbers may still be in favour of the US given the size of the respective economies. But with wealth rising in Asia these numbers can get very meaningful. High savings help investment and help develop capital markets which channel invest ments. Asia, other than Japan, stil lacks deep financial markets, partly because of lack of infrastructure and maturity in the markets. But with such nigh savings rate, it is inevitable that

over time Asia's financial and capita

markets can potentially be one of the

oiggest in the world. Outsourcing is the other big happening phenomenon in Asia China and India have already established their names for being the manufacturing and service backyard of the West. This is a shift of seismic proportion in global eco-nomic balance with serious implications on Western economies, where all sorts of numbers are being bandied around in terms of job loss in both manufacturing and service sectors. This East-West partnership is here to stay and global businesses are now inextricably linked with Asia. As long as Asia is able to provide the cost efficiency, its importance can only continue to rise and become more dominant.

With 56 per cent of world population, Asia is still far from making its proportionate contribution to global growth and trade (currently both around 25%). But there are encouraging signs of progress and not all is dependent on the largesse of the West. It is building its own indigenous engines of growth that appear sustainable. The global economic dynamics are shifting in favour of Asia and it is beginning to take root. With growing financial strength Asian ascendancy seems secure.

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Spreading higher education in villages

An act of philanthropy worth emulation

MOHAMMAD AMJAD HOSSAIN

DUCATION is the backbone of the nation, as many educationists would have us believe. There is no dispute about this axiom. Almost 50 per cent of the population of present-day Bangladesh is female. Therefore, the country will not make much progress if its womenfolk remain uneducated.

The government also has been attaching priority to the spread of education among females. As a result, girls up to 12 grade are allowed free of cost study in colleges. Similarly, some philanthropists have volunteered their land and money to build schools and colleges in towns and villages

Mohammad Fazlul Hague, who dedicated himself to teaching profession for two decades at Mymensingh Agriculture University and at the Philippine University, is one of such philanthropists to help establish a college exclusively for girls at Bagoan village under Daulatpur upazila in Kushtia district. Bagoan village was hitherto unknown until Dr. Fazlul Haque Girls' College was established there in 1997. Mohammad Fazlul Haque had a dream from his boyhood to spread education among female community in his village, which had been deprived of such facilities.

But his dream could not perhaps have been translated into action had he remained just an educationist after obtaining graduation in Economics from Dhaka University in 1960 and PhD from Texas A+M University. From mid 1980's he began his pursuit as a business personality by establishing garment industries. Now he is one of the pioneers in the production of RMG in Bangladesh. Prior to becoming an industrialist Dr Fazlu Hague had the privilege to serve as economic consultant at Kor Porasi Pembangounan Desa in Kota Kinabalu, capital of Sabah, one of the states in Malaysia from 1978 to 1984.

It has been possible for him to establish the girls' college at Bagoan on nine bighas of land not only as an educationist but perhaps more as an industrialist. Apart from donating nine bighas at the beginning, he gave away another five bighas of land for expansion of the college. Construction of the buildings were completed at a cost of one crore fifty lakh taka. The entire amount was given by him which shows his urge for and magnanimity towards education of girls. This is the manifestation of the educated bent of his mind. He has also distinguished himself as a writer with two books to his credit, one on his stay abroad and another a historical episode of Nawab Serajuddowla

Situated far from madding crowd of the town Dr Fazlul Hague Girls' College is one of the three colleges in the whole upazila with a population of 4,34,635 of which 2.11.613 are female. Judged from the situation where womenfolks are deprived of education Dr Fazlul Hague Girls' College has made its mark which has been reflected in the results of the Higher Secondary Certificate examination of last consecutive two years. From this year students of this college have started appearing in the degree examination too. Presently there are about 6,500 students, which shows a trend of increasing year by year. Seventy per cent of the teachers of this college are woman. Only 30 per cent of the teachers represent male community. A good number of teachers have been offering really sincere and dedicated services to earn reputation for the college.

Being an educationist turned industrialist Dr Mohammad Fazlul Haque himself spends his valuable time to visit and monitor the activities of the college. In the campus he holds meeting with teachers and staff members to enquire about the on going activities and also the problems confronted by teachers and students and recommends solution on the spot.

This is possibly one of the very few girls' colleges in such remote rural area where dormitories are set up to accommodate pupils from outside the village. With the financial assistance from the founder-president of the college, Dr Fazlul Haque two hostels with 100 beds each were founded, named after his wife Dr Nazma Yasmin Haque, who also holds a PhD degree from the Philippine University

The college has all three faculties of Humanities Science and Commerce. The founder has introduced award system to encourage teaching profession, which



Entrance (above) and main building of Dr. Fazlul Haque Girls' College



appears to be a new phenomenon in the context of Bangladesh's educational environment. Awards amount to 50,000 taka annually. The library of the college is quite rich with nearly 6,000 books, and also various journals, magazines and newspapers. In comparison with other colleges in villages laboratory for the

science faculty in this college is impressive indeed.

In most of the privately owned colleges there has been a tendency to appoint lecturers on donation basis. A lecturer as probationer is required to pay donation to the tune of, say, eighty thousand to one lakh taka and for the post of Principal one lakh to two lakh taka to the management of the college. In that case, merit and capability supposedly do not count much in the selection process. But the management of Dr Fazlul Haque Girls College is an exception in this respect. The selection of teachers is made on the basis of academic qualification and through interviews by a selection committee comprising representative from National University, principal of a government college and professors of respective subjects selected by National University and president of the governing council of the college. There is hardly

In the villages girls are lagging behind in education because their parents lack in money. Many girls are married off at teenage. It is difficult to pick up good girl students. Teachers also get frustrated when a good student leaves the college before completion of education. Either the girl student joins primary school as teacher or is given in marriage. Sixty per cent of the rural population is landless and remains unemployed for nearly half of the year. They could hardly think to keep their children at schools or colleges for a reasonable period. This being the economic scenario Dr Fazlul Haque Girls' College offers scholarships according to merit for students of BA BSc, and BCom classes. I would like to conclude by quoting the founder "Our vision is to fulfil the goals of academic achievement, social responsibility and personal growth of the girl students." Fair and god enough. But we have such personalities elsewhere of the country, too. And this act of philanthropy needs to be emulated there, too. After all, as said, education is the backbone of a nation!

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HSC result and non-functioning colleges Diagnosing the ills is imperative

examination has not shown any spectacular improvement over the previous year's in spite of the fact that government and unctionaries in the colleges made efforts to rise above the dismay of the past. The percentage of pass this year in the newly introduced grading system was 38.43 and conspicuously only 20 students out of 501,507 in government and nongovernment colleges got GPA 5, the highest grade attainable ranging between 80 and 100 marks Astoundingly, 15 of them are from the colleges in the metropolis. Shockingly, only 32 thousand examinees out of 1,92,713 successful candidates in the whole country got 60 percent and above marks People are inclined to think that there must be something awfully wrong in the system of education in the colleges that throws away 62 percent of the students into oblivion. It's most shocking to learn that not a single student came out successful from 95 colleges in the country and the percentage of pass in 915 colleges was less than 20.

The performances of the colleges in Rajshahi Board is appall ingly bad and much to our dismay and embarrassment, the performances of the non-government colleges far away from the metropolis continue to show a worsening trend. This has made us ponder and reflect on the future of the country its politics, its economy and prosperity. Ironically, most of these colleges showing such disgraceful performances were built to project the image of the political parties in power and appointment of teachers were made on the recommendations of the political stalwarts and not on merit. These teachers often were not in attendance. Those who were on the job were rarely teaching. On the student front, absenteeism was chronic. Students were busy with politics that would help boosting image and ideology of the party he belonged to. And their political masters have employed them whole time in the college campus to serve their interests at the expense of studies. Our analysis has further

revealed that students, mostly from the rural areas of Bangladesh, are coming for higher education in colleges with a very poor background at the primary and secondary level of schooling. They haven't learnt the basics and the worst situation is they have hardly any proficiency in English. There has been an alarming liquidation of old schools both at the primary and secondary stages that once proto hundreds of students born of poor parents. Faced with the resource crunch some of these schools and colleges are struggling for survival. But these institutions do no longer have committed teachers and bright students on the roll. Leaving aside the hundreds of schools which are too many to be named here, the most reputed colleges like Comilla Victoria College, Sylhet MM College, Barisal BM College, BL College, Khulna; AM College,

These institutions with a rich legacy ness.' That he has started recruiting teachers in the school not on merit but on down payment! Well, this is not the only case. More school and college governing bodies in collusion with local leaders have switched over to 'business'. Not surprisingly, if a person struggling with poverty has to procure a job with kickbacks mostly by borrowing from other sources, he must be on the lookout for recovering it by means fair or foul. The ongoing scenario of corruption at the educational institutions and educational

duced a talented pool of students. started what they say 'school busi- securing 90 percent marks is no big 1,92,713 students coming out deal. It is guite natural that against successful this year, many instituthe backdrop of the appalling performances of 915 colleges, whatever may be the reason, students will not feel inclined to get admitted to these colleges either at the HSC or degree level of studies. Parents are disillusioned and worried about the future of their children as most of the schools and colleges outside Dhaka are in a shambles due to one or more reasons. As an instance, the olight of the 150 year old Satkhira PN High School points to an invisible liquidation and abysmal neglect

The ministry concerned must constitute a fact finding committee comprising principals, committed and experienced teachers of reputed colleges entrusting them with the task of making an on-the-spot survey regarding functioning of these colleges, their lapses, deficiencies, eligibility of the teachers, available infrastructural facilities, teachers' attendance, student absenteeism and last but most important of all, political meddling in the college administration.

Mymensingh; Edward College, Pabna; Carmichael College, Rangpur and SN College, Dinajpur all now exist with faded glory. Coming back to school level

education, there is no denying the fact that unless a student has his basics built at the school just before completing SSC, he can never fare well at the higher level. But these school level teaching, infrastructural deficiencies like dilapidated buildings or absence of any building and classroom in most schools of rural Bangladesh are indications of the rot that has affected the growth of education or, to speak more bluntly has eaten into the vitals of the nation. In most non-government schools and colleges qualified teachers or teachers with initiative, dedication and commitment hardly get a job. Rather they are often replaced by politicians' friends, cronies and family members whose only interest is collecting their salaries and looking after family business or remaining engaged in other income generating missions In recent times another sinister move is in the offing. Local politicians and high-ups in the school and college governing bodies are allegedly taking money from the job seekers without any consideration of the eligibility, merit and compe-

tence of the candidate Reports have it that a landownerturned shrimp factory owner at Satkhira had built a school on their parental land close to their residence to perpetuate the memory of his late mother. Reportedly, his late father amassed vast properties in Satkhira mostly by questionable means. Now one of the sons has

administration calls for an in-depth probe and analysis. While the country is agog with lofty schemes of building infrastructure for development and leaders are making great fuss about image boosting national identity, economic emancipation and development, the educational structure in the country is

crumbling down. John Ruskin, the great social thinker believed that education was "not teaching the youth the shapes of letters and the tricks of numbers and leaving them to turn their arithmetic to roguery and their literature to lust but giving them training which make them happiest in themselves". Because we have failed in orienting the students and giving them a sense of direction in the pursuit of learning and character development, the nation now is mired in crisis of overwhelming proportions. Because of our monumental failure to guide them and motivate them with the spirit of learning, sacrifice and commitment, our youth population in the country are highly disillusioned. It is because of our failings as teachers as well as leaders that they could neither discover their innate faculty nor prepare themselves to face life's challenges with equanimity and inevitably they are sliding into a realm of frustration and

Neither at home nor at the institution a youth is enrolled, has he been told that he is living in a period of tremendous confusion of values both in public life and at home. Gone is the laid back image of colleges as places of fun and freedom. It has been replaced by a frightening

competitive battle where even

of the academic institutions, the very baseline from where action programmes relating to poverty alleviation works of the country could have started.

Dhaka to get their wards admitted favourite for all classes of people whether one can afford it or not. Undeniably true, almost 90 percent afford their exorbitant tuition fees. Our experience suggests that such English medium schools with offer of bright prospect and dazzling future have already sprouted in the nook and corner of Bangladesh with or without approval from the government. This has put the conventional when we plan and talk about bringing about reforms and strengthenpoor and most neglected and the other for the affluent can hardly meet the national goal and objective. Pathetically true, in such a situation the future of education in funds crunch, low salary structure compounded by the non availability of competent teachers and enthusiastic students have hit the rural schools hard lowering quality of

desh Bureau of Educational and Information Statistics) there are 10 Public Universities, 150 Honours Colleges, 13 Medical Colleges and 4 Institutes turned Technological Universities in the country with the capacity of accommodating 2 lakh 65 thousand students. But with

Most people are trying to rush to into English medium schools, hot of the people in Bangladesh can't schools in the sideline. In a situation ing our educational base, two streams of education, one for the the country appears to be grim as According to BANBEIS (Bangla-

tions will be crying for students and most of the seats will remain unfilled. Most appallingly, many colleges outside Dhaka will not have a single student to admit Shockingly it is only in our coun-

try that education remains so much ignored and so much neglected when everything else is moving up in speed. But no entrepreneur either at the private level or government sponsored appears to be willing to invest in meaningful education in the countryside. Undeniably true for Bangladesh to forge ahead, the thrust has to come from the less privileged sectors of our society spread in the countryside. If schools and colleges outside Dhaka do not function, the vast majority of our youth forces in the rural Bangladesh will remain mired in abysmal depth of ignorance, poverty and indignity Understandably the rest 12 crore people living outside Dhaka can't make their way to Dhaka for education, for job and livelihood and if they are doing so the capital city wil simply crash.

Reports have it that the educa-

tion ministry will be issuing two years' notice to these nonperforming and non-functioning colleges with subsequent with drawal of MPO unless these colleges show any spectacular improvement in their performances in the public examinations. But this measure will not be enough to stem the drift or slide. The ministry concerned must constitute a fact finding committee comprising principals, committed and experienced teachers of reputed colleges entrusting them with the task of making an onthe-spot survey regarding functioning of these colleges, their lapses deficiencies, eligibility of the teachers. available infrastructural facilities, teachers' attendance, studen absenteeism and last but most important of all, political meddling in the college administration. The ministry should take corrective or punitive measures on the basis of this report. This might inflame those involved but at the same time spur others to do better. With potent combination of patience, sheer determination and enforcement of strict discipline, a principal of a college or a headmaster of a school can bring back glory to an institution. But one thing must be ensured that "the political masters must keep their hands off the academic institu-

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