

ADP implementation

Business as usual

LATELY, the whittling down of the Annual Development Programme (ADP), FY 2005-06, worth Tk 24,500 crore by eight percent has hogged news headlines. Development professionals wonder why must something featuring annually with routine regularity claim that much of media attention. We have to admit they have a point, to which we come later.

But then the government's reasoning for slashing or downsizing an ADP might differ from one year to another, at least euphemistically speaking. This time it is put down to resource scarcity caused by overspending on petroleum coupled with less-than-expected revenue collection from July to February, FY 2005-06. Subsidy to the Bangladesh Petroleum Corporation (BPC), what with the oil price hikes at the consumer level, is one ostensible reason for the ADP cutback. Yet, this is arguable on the premise that the excise duty from oil imports did flow undiminished into the government coffers anyway. As for the revenue collection deficit, the shortfall is actually in relation to the targets set. It seems that a modest growth has been achieved in terms of revenue as compared with the figures in the corresponding periods of last fiscal.

Last year, the ADP size projected at Tk 22,000 crore had to be reduced to Tk 20,500 crore. At the end of the year even that figure could not be utilised.

So, going by the history of ADP implementation in our country, it's almost certain that even the current ADP, in its reduced form, will not be fully utilised. In the early part of the financial year, tendering and procurement processes took a big chunk of time. Then came the inefficiency of implementation machinery. The third factor of delay is attributable to a certain category of projects that couldn't be implemented during the rainy season. Since weather is a potential impediment, a high degree of planning discipline, backed by political will, is needed to help offset any straying of projects out of season.

We have seen under-utilisation of fund allocations to different ministries. And, when they would be pressed for expediting it, the quality of fund use often falls. So, the issues are not so much fund mobilisation as they are under-utilisation and implementation failure.

Political interference and bureaucratic red-tape are equally to blame for implementation shortfalls. Aid disbursements are sometimes delayed as well.

Interactive efficiency and development commitments are the stuff of which breakthroughs are made.

Extremists slipping away

Track them down immediately

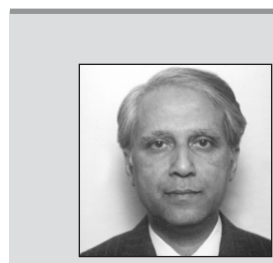
WE share the concerns of the political watchers regarding the extremist elements of nearly 26 other religion-based outfits in the country who still remain untraced. At the moment all eyes are focused on the members of Jamatul Mujahedin Bangladesh (JMB) whereas hundreds, perhaps thousands, of trained and motivated activists of parties like Harkatul Jihad, Hijbud Towhid, Harkatul Jihad Al Islami, Jagraata Muslim Janata Bangladesh, World Islamic Front for Jihad, Jaisey Mohammad etc are roaming the country under various guises. While all the attention and efforts now being directed towards highlighting the arrests of the JMB kingpins these elements are using various tactics at their disposal to evade arrest by the police and other agencies.

It is indeed a cause of concern that the security intelligence and police dragnet have been narrowed down considerably to catch only the remaining members of JMB while ignoring the equally dangerous extremist elements of other outfits. In this connection citizens also want to know the outcome of the grilling of Mufti Hannan, the mastermind of Harkatul Jihad, who has been taken on remand for a record number of time. Why other members of the same outfit have not been tracked down by now remains a puzzling question. Incidentally, Harkatul Jihad is considered the oldest extremist group in the country that has many bombings and killings to its credit.

Many political analysts are apt to construe that the political cost of tracking down these elements might prove too high. Such notion, if at all entertained, would be very much misplaced because the people want them behind bars. If the religiously motivated extremist elements are not stopped on their track now, it would be difficult, if not impossible, to hold also the elections in a peaceful manner. There is the likelihood that these die-hard elements will create disorder around the polling booths in a bid to sabotage the election.

Therefore, we urge the government to have the law enforcing agencies expand their dragnet so that none of the activists of the outlawed parties may slip through.

India only takes note of Bangladeshi concerns



MUHAMMAD ZAMIR

ONE of the disadvantages of writing on fixed days is that you have to wait to express your views. You are in a queue. The other disadvantage is the great possibility of some one else already having said what you wanted to state. Nevertheless, any analysis exists within a spectrum.

This visit of Prime Minister Khaleda Zia should have taken place years ago, in the beginning of her term of Office. On more than one occasion I have written about the need for the political leadership of both Bangladesh and India sitting down and exchanging views. I have stressed on the need for political will to resolve differences. There is no other way. Unfortunately, this approach has come late.

Politically, both Bangladesh and India desire a stable South Asia. They both believe in certain fundamental factors poverty reduction, gender empowerment, expanded areas of bilateral cooperation -- particularly in trade, commerce and foreign direct investment. Both these countries have democratically elected governments who have reaffirmed more than once their opposition to terrorism. They have shared bonds of friendship that eventually led to the emergence of an independent Bangladesh. India also wants a 'strong, stable and prosperous' Bangladesh so that turmoil from her small neighbour does not spill over into her north-eastern flank.

There has unfortunately been also the other factor -- mutual suspicion. On one hand, India has continued to allege that numerous people of Bangladeshi origin have entered India illegally and that Bangladesh

has given sanctuary to militants operating in India out of Bangladeshi territory. On the other hand, there are many in Bangladesh who point fingers to the fact that India till today, has not only not resolved the issue of full implementation of the 1974 Indira-Mujib Agreement, but has embarked on unilateral withdrawal of water from several rivers flowing into Bangladesh, causing harm to the environment and sustainable development in agriculture and fisheries.

possibility of any major breakthrough.

It is always better to call a spade a spade.

Both India and Bangladesh have strategic concerns. They unfortunately also have an extremist domestic clientele fringe forever eager to find faults. Consequently, each step requires careful consideration.

For all intents and purposes this was a goodwill visit. In terms of protocol, all the factors were pres-

young educationists argue that freedom of movement of goods is as important as the freedom of movement of people in search of work.

Such discussions in Dhaka have also suggested that Indian entrepreneurs should be asked to invest on a greater scale in the consumer industry in Bangladesh, so that employment can be created and also goods manufactured for eventual export to the Indian market. In this context, they have proposed that such industry could be set up

convinced that such a project will not affect water-flow. It is important that on urgent basis, technical experts from both countries should sit together to discuss this issue.

It is understood that the Commerce Ministers of both countries will be discussing as soon as possible not only implementation of SAFTA but also possibility of FTA. They are also expected to move forward with regard to measures for removing the trade imbalance through greater adjustment of para-



Let Mr. Advani come with his intelligence resource personnel and also representatives from Indian civil society. Let there be transparency whereby the Bangladesh side can also incorporate representatives from their civil society. Let joint teams go and investigate the so-called terrorist camps. Let land-sat imagery be used for this purpose. If nothing is found, then, Mr. Advani should be asked to apologise to the people of Bangladesh.

The trading community and economists within Bangladesh have also pointed fingers at the burgeoning trade imbalance in favour of India.

Consequently, Bangladeshi took special interest in this visit of Khaleda Zia to New Delhi. The popular wish list was long. Some thought that such a visit would automatically open all the doors and resolve existing problems. There was also a great deal of optimism given the fact that Prime Minister Manmohan Singh had just visited Bangladesh a few months ago as leader of the Indian delegation to the SAARC Summit held in Dhaka last year.

However, there is bound to be frustration when expectations are built up and results do not seem to tally. I hold the government responsible for this. It would probably have been wiser for our Ministry of Foreign Affairs to have suggested before the visit that this was more of a courtesy visit and a formal undertaking as Chairperson of the SAARC process. It could have also been underlined that the Bangladesh Prime Minister would be raising certain outstanding issues. It might have also been stressed that there was very little

respect was shown to Begum Khaleda Zia not only because she is the Prime Minister of Bangladesh, but also because she is the current Chairperson of SAARC. Some have written about the fact that she stayed in the same hotel suite that was used for the US President earlier. This was obviously done not to equate her with Bush but more from the practical standpoint of ensuring security. Nevertheless, it was killing two birds with one stone.

Reports have indicated that the Indian leadership on more than one occasion, has re-affirmed the need for greater communication connectivity. They have also suggested that 'physical connectivity will bring connectivity of the mind.' The connectivity that is however being sought is controlled connectivity -- not the freedom to move across borders and pursue economic ends as happens within the European Union. It is this which is not easily understood by farmers in some bordering villages of Bangladesh who have lost their livelihood due to lack of sufficient water for irrigation and have watched Indian goods flood the domestic market of Bangladesh. I have attended some seminars in Kushtia and have heard

near the border in Sylhet, the north-west and the southwest of Bangladesh. They have argued that if such manufacturing is undertaken by Indian industry, then the Indians will not have to limit entry of Bangladeshi goods on the plea of existing tariff and non-tariff barriers. Such an approach is probably simplistic, but then, it could be examined more carefully, with particular emphasis on joint investment and joint participation. Mizoram has already expressed keen interest to import all manufactured products from Bangladesh given their quality and price advantage.

After all, employment generates stakeholders and creates stability.

Our Foreign Minister has suggested that there will now be movement forward with regard to sharing of water resources. One hopes that the next visit of the Indian Water Resources Minister will not be limited to mere protocol. An interim agreement has to be found with regard to the Teesta. Similarly, the concerns with regard to the Tipaimukh Dam will also have to be addressed more effectively and transparently. Water experts in Bangladesh are not completely

tariff and non-tariff barriers. This is indeed a pious wish list.

We have only six months left of this current Administration. We will then be moving into uncharted waters during a controversial caretaker Administration, which will have no authority to undertake policy decisions. Given this paradigm it is difficult to understand how appropriate steps can be agreed to within this short span of time. I am sure the Indian government understands this dilemma and will not be overly enthusiastic in its endeavours. Consequently, they will have been polite and current efforts have been described as being positive. I suspect that they will wait and see what emerges from the next general elections in this country. They will then pursue future steps. That is understandable.

No analysis would however be complete without reference to the comments made by the controversial Indian Leader of the Opposition Mr LK Advani. He has reflected the entrenched opinion in heartland of India and also the views expressed on more than one occasion by the BJP leadership and some members of the Indian bureaucracy. It is good that he has done so. It is to be

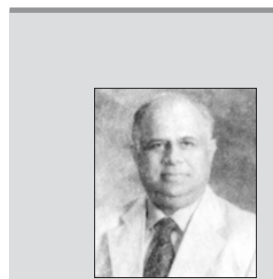
equally welcomed that our Prime Minister has invited him to visit Bangladesh and to see for himself the so-called training areas of militants. Let Mr. Advani come with his intelligence resource personnel and also representatives from Indian civil society. Let there be transparency whereby the Bangladesh side can also incorporate representatives from their civil society. Let joint teams go and investigate the so-called terrorist camps. Let land-sat imagery be used for this purpose. If nothing is found, then, Mr. Advani should be asked to apologise to the people of Bangladesh. Such a step can only enhance the security of both sides.

In the meantime, Indian authorities should use their massive intelligence resources to identify from which points across the border drugs, explosives and arms are entering into Bangladesh. There must be a crackdown and soon if terrorist activities are to be tackled efficiently.

One thing is clear after the visit of our Prime Minister. She has at least been able to raise certain outstanding issues. India has also acknowledged that differences exist. The next constructive step on the part of our Prime Minister should be to give an open-ended interview to an Indian Television channel where she could express her aspirations and views to the Indian population. This she could do not only as Chairperson of SAARC but also as a believer in positive engagement with India. She does not give television interviews, but then, what better than now. This will also help to clarify her vision in resolving outstanding issues within Bangladesh.

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Rescuing fact from fiction



IKRAM SEHGAL
writes from Karachi

PAKISTAN'S economy is on the move, and why not? We are a geographical cross-roads country blessed with (primarily) an agriculture economy and increasingly finding our industrial bearings. In the high-tech and services sector we are poised to take a quantum leap forward. We have a long coastline waiting to be exploited and a vast hinterland that can be developed for agriculture. The stock market is overvalued but not by much, the present benign govt attitude is of "letting a hundred crooks bloom" in the hope that the benefits of the booming economy will "trickle down" to the masses, the players who control the market and manipulate the "corrections" are not about to be corrected. Take NAB's hasty withdrawal from investigating sugar shortages! It is in the political arena that we are badly mired, reliance being placed on corrupt elements who will pocket the goodies of "trickle-down" economics themselves rather than allowing it to filter down to those who really need succour. Such chameleon loyalty does not mix well with the image of honesty that Gen Pervez Musharraf brought with him when he came to power. They are the ones who need

Musharraf's patronage, it is not the other way around. They cannot (and will not) deliver for anyone except themselves.

The honesty and integrity of the first few years of the Musharraf regime were assets best symbolised by the incorporation and activity of the National Accountability Bureau (NAB). NAB started to go off at a tangent with "plea bargaining" and "voluntarily return" abominations, establishing a horrible precedent. During Muir Hafeez's time as

well to bring back the Bugti exiles in comparison to that developing in other areas of Pakistan if remedial measures are not taken immediately, most urgently in Sindh. Punjab has more or less the similar problems, for many reasons the situation is far more acute in Sindh and fraught with danger, not only to the Musharraf regime, but to the country.

While the regime can hardly be expected to carry out wholesale

controversial, corrupt and inefficient leaders, without mass support, to rule over Sindh. Given the sound urban base of Coalition partner MQM having mass grassroots support because of the middle-class background of their leaders, the tragedy is that in the PML stables in Sindh there is a paucity of credible leaders who can deliver. MQM is risking its reputation for middle-class honesty by associating with such people in the Coalition.

Gen Pervez Musharraf must

those loyal to each and every regime before Musharraf, will also be "loyal" to whomsoever comes in the future? The President has a number of means to check out (and cross-check) the real truth (and also why the person/s affected by the bad-mouthing was so victimised). Can any leader afford being cocooned from the truth? That is tantamount to committing leadership suicide!

There is merit in Pervez Musharraf staying in power for the foreseeable future but increasingly there is a perception that he is not as well informed as he was a couple of years ago. The Pervez Musharraf one knows will not be fooled by a rosy picture that colours his judgment, he will certainly modulate his stance to suit what is good for the country if he gets the correct facts put before him. It is not the duty only of the intelligence agencies to present him the factual situation but that of Musharraf's sincere friends and supporters who have a vested interest in his staying in power to apprise him of the ground realities, sooner rather than later. They must brave the risk of "shooting the messenger who brings bad news" syndrome so that Pervez Musharraf can take the right decisions he is capable of, not only for his own good but that of the country.

Ikram Sehgal, a former Major of Pakistan Army, is a political analyst and columnist.

AS I SEE IT

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Chairman, NAB this became institutionalised. What happens if a burglar decides to give back the goods he has stolen? Will the courts free him? NAB's reputation was further compromised during the run-up to the Oct 2002 elections when the need to break up the political parties became the imperative of the hour.

Musharraf's personal reputation for honesty has generally survived with the common belief that political objectives cannot be fulfilled without overlooking corruption among political followers. This significant naivety is common to all leaders of military background, they sincerely believe that as long as they themselves remain honest they can conveniently overlook corruption among their politicians in pursuance of the greater national objective, inculcating democracy as required

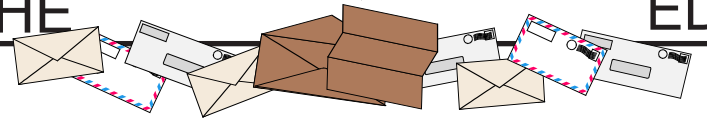
corruption is under control for the most part, it is in the provinces, with or without PML rule, that corruption is endemic.

What is the present equation availing in the country? Expressed simply, the nation is economically resurgent but headed into a possible political quagmire unless corrective actions are taken. While Waziristan is the major problem, military and economic initiatives must go side by side, to a lesser extent in two (out of 26) districts (Bugti and Marri) of Balochistan. The danger in FATA is that we are fighting against time, tribesmen must not be alienated further, blood cycles have long memories among the Pathans. In Dera Bugti force is required to first restore the rule of law and remove the State within the State, the government has done

political surgery given that elections are only a dozen or so months away, or maybe even less, shuffling of political personalities in Sindh is necessary so that the general public perception is changed and the masses start to have confidence in governance. Despite the success of the law enforcement agencies against terrorists, and to a lesser extent against petty criminals, organised crime is very much alive and flourishing, with criminals given patronage by political parties. The situation in the urban areas is worse than what it was three years ago, in the rural areas it is horrendous, near anarchy. This lack of security, pervasive corruption, nepotism, etc are the cause of extreme frustration among ethnic Sindhis, this is ultimately laid at the doorstep of the federal government which has put

come up with a winning formula for Sindh. When the urban mass party is with him, he simply has to leverage his asset of honesty in Sindh through an ethnic Sindhi who is clean (and not controversial) as Chief Minister. The problem is that motivated interests have successfully bad-mouthed ethnic Sindhis loyal to him (and who have the ability to deliver). The subtle bad-mouthing is an art perfected by the silver-tongued who depend upon PR attributes rather than any ability to achieve their own status and position. Pervez Musharraf is smart enough to understand that those who flatter him publicly do so for a deadly purpose so that he becomes dependent on their "loyal" services. The track record of such people are no secret: will it be any surprise if

TO THE EDITOR TO THE EDITOR TO THE EDITOR TO THE EDITOR TO THE EDITOR



Letters will only be considered if they carry the writer's full name, address and telephone number (if any). The identity of the writers will be protected. Letters must be limited to 300 words. All letters will be subject to editing.

Mobile phone companies and BTRC

The mobile phone companies in Bangladesh are doing businesses without giving any licence fee, which is not possible in other countries," said Saifur Rahman reportedly. Well they were able to do so because of our weak regulatory systems.

Where was our BTRC? After knowing the fact that Pakistan gave licence to Warid Telecom for \$291m, why Bangladesh gave licence to Warid for only \$50 million? What was the secret behind it?

If now we call "BTRC weak regulatory system" then why we need it? Sayeed Rahman

On e-mail
Anything is possible

in this country!

There is a common perception amongst us that everything is possible in this country. On 23 March 06 two criminal cases have been filed against Shahin Sultana Shanta who suffered serious beating and humiliation during 14-party's protest on 12 March 06. The allegation against her is extortion of money and theft. Any conscious citizen would conclude that it's a planned move to harass Mrs Shanta who wanted to seek justice against the humiliation. Case of extortion and theft against her only bears testimony to the fact that one can almost do anything if in power.

Asrafuzzaman
Tejgaon I/A, Dhaka
SSC English paper

Few days ago our SSC examination commenced and already English 1st paper and 2nd paper exams are over. In both the papers there lies some confusions regarding question no. 10, which is "Fill in the blanks without clues". As there are no clues any word that makes sense can be used for each of the blanks, but in all the test papers and books the same solutions are given, albeit there are other words as answer. So, it has become a problem for us, the SSC candidates of English medium schools who have used the word correct in sense, but different from those solutions. Therefore, I request the examiners of Jessore Board to check the scripts basing on suitable word even if it is different from the common solutions. Twaseen

Phultala, Khulna

Honest candidate to make us free from evil force!

It's a crucial time to build our country by selecting honest candidate for the next general election. No doubt this will eliminate most of the corrupt politicians -- which is of course immensely beneficial for the nation to wards building a prosperous Bangladesh. We need a leader -- who is honest by himself so that he can think and carry out honestly his responsibility. All sane citizens of Bangladesh should raise this demand for honesty irrespective of party throughout the country so that the political parties have to execute it. We want to get rid of the corrupt

politicians.

We should revolt to save our identity and existence from the blemish. MS Hussain
Buckinghamshire, UK

Views on the postal service

Reading the article on the sad state of the postal service in Star City (March 29th issue) I felt that the depiction was not entirely fair. In my experience, I have always received impeccable service from the post office.

I applied to the US for admission this year and needless to say I had to send lots of recommendations and tax documents. I don't think everybody knows this but there's a service called the EMS (Express Mail

Service) provided by the post office which is a guaranteed service (i.e if the mail is not received you can hold the post office responsible) and will deliver your mail within delivered five days and the cost is very minimal. Documents that cost me about Tk.500 by the EMS would have taken four to five times that amount by DHL or other private courier services. And that would have been absolutely impossible for me to afford. Even the regular foreign mail service is extremely reliable. It will take no more than two weeks to deliver, and that I think is very reasonable for eighty bucks. I would also like to say that not a single of the thirty or forty pieces of documents I have send over the last two months to various states around the US have been missed. Yes, there was a time when I too winced at the sound of the GPO,

"What? That old place?" But I stand corrected. GPO, you rock! Shammi Shawkat
Chittagong

Our home in the air?

Thank you for your timely editorial about Biman Bangladesh. The airline is blot on Bangladesh, giving the world a rather misleading image of it as a poor and backward country. Unfortunately, palliatives like rooting out corruption are only part of the solution. Wholesale reforms are needed at almost every level: beginning from trimming bloated employment roles, replacing incompetent management and the lack of a sensible business plan.

And given the financial dire straits the airline is in, it is in no condition to purchase new aircraft even though it

desperately needs them. The best short-term solution, in my opinion, is for Biman to park its entire DC-10 fleet and lease modern Airbus or Boeing aircraft for its long-haul fleet. Biman should also explore leasing short-haul aircraft to ply domestic and regional routes.

Only when Biman has returned to a sound financial footing should it consider purchasing aircraft.

Niraj Agarwalla
Boston, USA