Dhaka, Tuesday, February 5, 1991

### **Undue Haste in Aid** Suspension

We have noticed, with some concern, an undue haste on the part of some donors and aid agencies in holding back aid that has been committed to us. Recently the World Bank has suspended lending operations in the power sector, which may cause a major disruption in the external aid receipts in the near future. As reported in this journal, the World Bank has already made it known that it would not fund the programmes in the said sector if the "agreed actions were not taken"

We have an interim government in place. The Acting President has committed his administration to the crucial task of holding a free and fair election; thereby putting the country's move towards democracy on a firm footing. No one can be insensitive to the critical time through which the nation is passing now. Lesser still can anyone be insensitive to the tremendous pressure that our fragile economy has come under following the outbreak of war in the Gulf. Under these circumstances suspension of external assistance can only make the condition of our economy worse and the task of

transition toward democracy more difficult. It is our strong view that whatever aid has been so far committed should be disbursed. We feel that it is not fair to deprive us of external assistance that has been committed to us because of the failure of some department or part of the government in fulfilling conditions set up under circumstances which were quite different than what exists now-nationally, our transition towards democracy and internationally, the transition towards chaos, meaning the Gulf war.

In the national context, the suspension of external assistance in one specific sector by the World Bank can very easily send a wrong signal that may affect other sectors of the economy and other donors and aid agencies. A wrong linkage between suspension of aid and the fall of an autocratic government may be made in the minds of a section of the public. A point can be made here that all sorts of new ways and means were contrived to give aid to east Europe in their struggle from authoritarian regimes to democracy.

We share the concern of the donor agencies in better utilization of the aid and more efficient functioning of department and agencies that receive aid, such as the Power Development Board. We also support their call for greater accountability of the aid money. In this regard we would like to assure our donors that with the transition towards democracy, we can expect to have greater accountability from our government, not only for the aid supported projects but for all aspects of the government. To the credit of the interim government some actions have already been taken to bring more discipline into our economic activities. The formation of 29 Task Forces by the Advisor for Planning is a step in this direction. The work of these Task Forces will work as policy alternatives for the elected government.

Awaiting all this, we strongly feel that our economy should not be put under further strain with the suspension or withholding of aid that has already been committed to us.

### **Island of Literacy**

The town is very small, by sub-continental standard. It has a population of less than a lakh residents. Yet in so many respects it has become a most remarkable place in the whole of a region that accommodates roughly a thousand million people. For one thing Kottaym has become the first town in India to achieve universal literacy. It is a safe guess that by so doing the little Kerala town has become the first illiteracy-free town in all of the sub-continent.

But the achievers of that town were circumspect enough not to put all their faith in reaching one single target alone, however important — in this case universal literacy. They bound it up with a general development in awareness, personal and public hygiene and promotion of saving, traffic sense, physical fitness, reading habit etc. The race for all-pervading literacy was also tied up with campaigns mounted against smoking and alcoholism and drug addiction. Perhaps the best in the package - after literacy, of course - was enjoining upon every individual a share in the task of greening the town. We can hazard a guess here that the literacy programme - although it involved reaching a rate of 86 per cent which was already there to a hundred per cent due but addressed to be fulfilled in a matter of only and exactly 100 days - could hit the target on time because it was so packaged with others.

Literacy has always been a very popular issue with our various kinds of leadership. It never became an important one with the masses who plod on with maybe 80 per cent illiteracy. The proof of this lies in the fact that it hasn't moved very significantly to less disquieting figures in the last three/four decades, notwithstanding the undependable claims made by this or that government. There has been more politicking and propaganda centring on literacy than any actual conversion to it. With the proverbial seats of enlightenment in Vikrampur and pockets of high learning strewn althrough the timelessly old East Bengal - Itna in Kishoreganj, Goila in Barisal, Kotalipara in Faridpur to wit — the wonderful Bengalee legacy of scholarship and intellectual refinement somehow got stuck in mire some half a century back. And in the last five decades we couldn't take ourselves out of that bog by even a small measure. The Kottaym heroes have a point here to teach

Another very edifying aspect of the Kottaym achievement was that their success came more by way of social and popular action than through government activism. That is one thing very rare to come by in today's Bangladesh. Everything here has to wait for government initiative and support devoid of popular participation.

If in 1947 there were 30 million illiterates in colonial East Pakistan, that has swollen to more than 80 million in the independent state of Bangladesh of the nineties. This is possibly the highest concentration of illiteracy in the world more than 1400 to the square mile. It is time for us to look madly for a way out. And Kottaym holds a beacon light for us.

N theory at least, the first meeting between African National Congress (ANC) vice-president Nelson Mandela and Inkatha leader Chief Mangosuthu Buthelezi in Durban should have signalled a major breakthrough in efforts patch up one of South Africa's most better political conflicts, which has already

claimed more than 4.500 lives. In practice, it represents the untangling of just one knot in the country's most intractable political battle.

When fighting between ANC supporters and members of Inkatha in the towns around Johannesburg was at its peak last year, not a day would go by without someone calling for a meeting between them.

With the daily clashes between township residents and Inkatha-supporting migrant workers claiming a horrific toll in lives, such a meeting came to represent for some the only

possibly solution. It was easier said than done. Buthelezi has always claimed that a special friendship exists between himself and Mandela. And from the time that the ANC veteran was released last February. Buthelezi made no secret of his desire for Mandela to offer him public acknowledgement.

The two men were supposed to address a joint public meeting in Natal province. where the Inkatha-ANC conflict has faged on for nearly eight years.

Then Inkatha supporters staged a massive attack on ANC areas in and around Pietermaritzburg, the region's second largest city. And Mandela, who had called on his supporters to "throw their weapons into the sea", was taken round the burn down homes and shown the refugee camps and felt compelled to urge his supporters to stand their ground and fight.

It has long been a perception in ANC and other quarters that Inkatha has systematically used violence to extend its

ESPITE a sluggish start.

could surge to new

sea-farming in Indonesia

production levels in the 1990 -

if scientific breakthroughs

achieved in the past decade

a coastal area of approximately

5.8 million square kilometres.

strung around 13,000 islands.

As the lush postcards dis-

played in Jakarta hotels show,

stretches of coastlines are of

breath-taking beauty. This area

was a rich natural source of

diverse marine organisms, in-

cluding fish, cockles, mussels.

oysters and seaweeds. It pro-

vided food and income for lo-

experts have noted, the key

word is "was". There is trouble

waters led to a serious deple-

tion of their resources", says a

report made for the UN Food

and Agricultural Organisation

(FAO) and the UN Develop-

ment Programme (UNDP).

This severely affected the

livelihood of small-scale fish-

munities.

still rising.

ermen and rural coastal com-

in a report on a just-ended

four-year project of the FAO on

sea-farming development in

Indonesia. The UNDP chipped

in US\$ 2.3 million for a first

The project seeks to help

farm the coastal waters of In-

donesia as a new source of

food. It also explores ways to

create new jobs for a popula-

tion that, in 1990, had already

reached 189.4 million-- and is

came to realise in the early

1980s the need to urgently

develop sea-farming. The need

was exacerbated by the ban of

Indonesian policy leaders

phase of the project.

This assessment was made

But as the ever-pragmatic

"Heavy exploitation of these

cal artisanal fishermen.

in this tropical paradise.

Indonesia is endowed with

are effectively used.

# The Roots of Conflict Between Mandela and Buthelezi

by John Periman

In South Africa, many obstacles still lie in the path of peace between Nelson Mandela and Chief Mangosuthu Buthelezi. The fact that the conflict between the ANC and the Inkatha Movement is holding up the talks that really matter — those between the government and the nationalist parties - could drive the two groups together. Hopeful signs include the call by the ANC for a "Patriotic conference" in March that would bring all anti-apartheid forces together to work out a common platform.

political base, particularly after the unbanning of the ANC and the pre-eminent position given to it in negotiations with

the government. For that reason, there was a strong feeling that Buthelezi should not be rewarded by Mandela and the ANC by offer ing him public acknowledge ment. That attitude hardened from late August when the Inkatha-ANC conflict spread to the industrial heartlands in the Transvaal, turning into a national problem.

The problem was made all the more intractable by constant accusations that Inkatha was being helped by elements in the police force - a claim never convincingly rebutted.

The anger at Inkatha has not necessarily abated. Yet the indication that high-level talks between the ANC and Inkatha could go ahead came from their branches in Natal, the people hit hardest by the conflict. In December, all the regions of Natal reached consensus on an approach to talks with Inkatha.

Buthelezi would get his meeting with Mandela, but it would not be one-on-one. Each would be part of a delegation, and the sole purpose of the meeting would be to solve

the conflict, not to reassure Buthelezi of his place in the black liberation struggle.

At the same time, an Inkatha conference resolved to call for a "great peace pact" expressed concern that the violence was impeding progress on the talks that really mattered - between opposition forces and the govern-

The decision to meet in Durban was a breakthrough. but the prospects for peace in Natal and elsewhere are still bound up with a host of other

Some positive forces are at work. Earlier in January, the ANC called for an all-party conference to work out a blueprint for a constituent assembly and an all-party conference. This would be preceded in march by a "patroitic conference" calling together all anti-apartheid forces to look for a common platform.

Inkatha have been invited to attend - whether they do so remains to be seen. Buthelezi is wedded to the idea of a highly federalised system of government for South Africa. creating a virtually autonomous state for Natal and securing his power bases there and probably ensuring continuation of the conflict.

The ANC call is still a powerful factor in the equation. For a start, it should begin to allay fears among other opposition groups that the ANC seeks some kind of exclusivity for itself in talks with the govern-

It should also ensure that talks with President F.W. de Klerk's government stay on course. The combination of violent clashes with Inkatha and a worsening of relations with the government at the end of last year left the ANC out on a dangerous limb. particularly as their efforts to consolidate their own base had not been altogether successful.

With talks on track and a wider range of political groups drawn into them. Inkatha would be under pressure to seek accommodation within that process. That would surely mean reining some of the more violent tendencies of its supporters.

Other factors could undo the peace process. Attempts to find an all-embracing solution to the conflict have failed before. Where local peace initiatives have borne fruit, it was

usually because one side so comprehensively crushed the opposition it could afford to eafl a truce. Commitment to freedom of expression and as sociation remains tenuous.

The first problem is that violence is now deeply entrenched in the Natal region. and elsewhere too. That is reflected in many ways, not least in the language used by both sides. For instance, an Inkathacontrolled squatter camp in Inanda near Durban has been given the name Emshayazafe. which means "hit him until he

In that context hard questions are being asked about the ability of the leadership to impose decisions made at meeting like the one in Durban on their members, who are, after all, the people doing the

Neither side is fully convinced the other really wants peace and mandates given to leaders to conclude agreements are often extremely conditional.

In addition, this conflict has spawned vigilante, groups. gangs and warlords, many out

side any organisational discipline. Their actions, which may be motivated by banditry and nothing else, has the potential to fuel conflict.

Such groups are capable of masquerading as either ANC comrades or inkatha members.

A third crucial factor is the conduct of the security forces. Their impartiality is critica it has not, as yet, been guaranteed. This is exacerbated by the fact that lnkatha has iff power base in the government. of Kwazulu, one of the ten homelands created by apartheid's architects to stave off majority rule.

Inkatha, in effect, controls the Kwazulu police force there by its access to firearms. Kwazulu's law-makers have recently scrapped three key provisions proscribing the carrying of dangerous

Perhaps the biggest obstacle to any peace process is the legacy of apartheid, both in the creation of power bases like the Kwazulu government, and in depths of deprivation many people in Natal live under. The area between Durban and Pietermaritzburg is one of the fastest growing urban areas in the world.

Thousands of people live squatter settlements where access to fresh water, land and transport are reason alone to fight. At its root, the clash between inkatha and the ANC is as much a battle over scarce resources as it is a clash of contesting political views.

That root cause can only be addressed with the creation of a new society. And the creation of that society, sadly is set back a little further each day that the conflict drags on. -GEMINI NEWS

JOHN PERLMAN is a journalist with the Weekly Mail of Johannesburg.

WHAT

OTHERS

## Breakthroughs Boost Sea-Farming Promise

by Nestor R Cervantes

trawl fishing. This was a frantic attempt to revive depleted fish

"Consequent reduction 'in fish production and employment opportunities aggravated the already depressed socioeconomic status of the rural coastal communities". the FAO /UNDP report says. Scafarming was seen as a way to help fisherfolk to snap out of their plunge into poverty.

into a major industry

Thus the Indonesian Gov-

ernment asked the FAO and

UNDP to establish a National

Sea-farming Centre in Lam-

pung Province in the mid-80s.

Three sub-centres were set up

in Lombok. Riau and Ambon.

Indonesian experts, working

with FAO technicians, cobbled

together a wide-ranging pro-

gramme of work. It covered

fish hatcheries, development

of broodstock and fry produc-

tion to feed research, pearl

phase, the FAO reported can-

didly that the take-up of local

seafarming development had

constraints. These included:

novelty of the industry, inade-

quacy of public support, lack of

investor confidence, shortage

of suitable fingerlings, short-

ages of capital investment and

inaccessibility of markets.

The FAO pinpointed several

At the end of the first

oysters and seaweeds.

been "slow".

The FAO report, however, spotlights several breakthroughs. They could lay the foundations for the sustained growth of sca-farming into a major industry.

Scientists at the National Seafarming Centre, for example, induced scabass to spawn in captivity-- a feat Thai fish ermen also were duplicating at the same time.

Breakthroughs could lay the foundations for sea-farming's take-off

The Centre today produces

150,000 seabass fry per

month. This makes seabass a

good potential candidate for

pond and netcage culture.

More significantly, techniques

developed are well accepted by

fish ponds in Lampung. West

Java, Central Java, East Java

and South Sulawesi have been

converted into seabass ponds.

achieved with golden snapper

and grouper. This achievement

consolidated the development

of netcage culture for marine

miracles in establishing an in-

dustry, FAO technicians warn.

The project has begun to ad-

dress long-standing problems

such as recurring shortage of

fingerlings. In previous years,

this shortage severely re-

stricted finfish culture devel-

There are no overnight

finfish in Indonesia.

A similar breakthrough was

About 300 hectares of milk-

Raising fingerlings is a slow process. Culture facilities and life support systems of the hatchery at the National Seafarming Centre in Lampung. are limited due to lack of government funds.

Technicians also lack experience in nursing scabass fry. This resulted in high mortality of fry. Survival rate, at the start, was a startling I per

cent. This has now improved

to 46 per cent-once techni

facilities were improved.

cians gained experience and

minimised use of trash fish, as

feed, for finfish culture opera

tions. They tested, in collabo-

ration with scientists brought

in by FAO, a wide variety of

compound feeds. But further

scientific work is required be-

fore feeding regimes based on

non-trash fish can be em

ployed on a regular commer-

success in generating private

sector investment, especially

for small and large-scale finfish

farms were engaged in finfish

culture when the project

ended. Of these, 43 were

netcage operators in Riau. The

rest were netcage and pond

About 60 private finfish

The FAO reported modest

cial basis.

culture.

Indonesian scientists also

Lampung, Bangka, West Java and Medan. Fourteen farmers received a total of 428,500 seabass fry for their culture Seaweed farming of the eucheuma variety is now well

operators spread throughout

established within the private sector on the islands of Lampung. Bali. Nusa Tenggara Barat and Nusa Tenggara Timur. Seaweed production can be

increased rapidly. It needs simple technological inputs and low capital investment. It is also labour intensive-which could tap into the large labour pools in Indonesia's fishing villages.

But if Indonesia wishes to compete with other eucheuma seaweed producers - such as the Philippines. Canada and Chile-- it will have to introduce a grading system with trade cooperation. This would enable it to meet international standards set by companies dominating the world market.

A substantial national operational budget would be required to maintain the equip ment provided by the UNDP funded project. The government was urged to consider providing an additional budget for the operation of the Na tional Sea-farming Centre and subcentres to meet this de-

Indonesia also needs a policy that could prevent future conflict between seafarmers and those who use the sea for other purposes. Specifically FAO recommends that Indonesia reserve 15 per cent of its coastal areas to be set aside for seafarmig. This would come up to about 8.7 million hectares - clearly a rational use a limited resource. Depthnews Science

pays homage to them.

Salam, Barkat, Rafiq, Zab

bar - so many great names

in golden letters in the an-

nuls of our history.

which forever are written

At one minute past zero

hour (midnight) on the

21st of February, along line

of barefoot processionists

wearing black badges would

come to the Central Sha-

to the martyrs of the great

Language Movement of

1952. The Central Shaheed

Minar would be full of floral

wreaths of various colours

and combinations. As if

they silently say, "we re-

member you and pay re-

spect from core of our

month starts, a number of

programmes are chalked

out by various organisation

to remind us of our rich

cultural heritage. This time

it is likely to be more so

since it coincides the vic-

tory celebrations and the

march for democracy to-

wards the much sought

Let us mingle the spirit

However, as soon as the

hearts".

heed Minar to pay respect

SAY

Energy: Get Serious Now

The Bush administration now enters its third year with? out a serious national energy policy. The war in the Middle East, having to do in part with oil, only underscores the lack. National energy demand is not among the things the administration has shown itself willing to attack.

World supplies of oil and gas may be larger than currently thought; they still are finite, and the United States remains too dependent on others for fossil fuels. There is, of course, a need to try to increase domestic production and to shift to alternative fuels. There is, of course, a need to try to increase domestic production and to shift to olternative fuels. But there also remains a need to conserve, for the sake of the environment as well as the economy and national security.

There are two ways to induce conservation of oil and its byproducts: raise the price or regulate the use. The first is the more efficient, but both should probably be tried; the problem is that serious. Transportation is the likeliest though not only, place to find savings. The auto is the source of waste.

The budget agreement between President George Bush and Congress last fall included an increase in the gasoline tax of five cents per gallon. That was a small step in the right direction. There should be further increases once the recession is over. They would strengthen the government's finances, pay for other needed government programs and deter consumption. The regressive effects could be offset. No other energy tax would accomplish as much so simply. The companion proposals that have been made to require bet ter auto mileage would help as

The administration has resisted such steps on philosophical grounds—the view that markets are wiser than governments-as well as for the obvious political reasons. It has not wanted to impose the burden. The Energy Department has been at work on # national policy statement for a year and a half. The work continues in part because of internal disputes over curtailing demand, and it remains unclear what legislative form it may finally take, or when. Leaders of both parties in Congress have acknowledged the need for a balanced energy policy, but Congress will not produce such a policy on its own. Little will happen until an administration leads the way.

—The Washington Post.

Letters for publication in these columns should be addressed to the Editor and legibly written or typed with double space. For reasons of space, short letters are preferred, and all are subject to editing and cuts. Pseudonyms are accepted. However, all communications must bear the writer's real name, signature and address.

### **Natural disasters**

Sir, Recently one of our neighbouring countries was hit by a severe earthquake. The untold tragedies caused by these natural disasters or calamities are not unknown to us.

Our country has been more than once hit by tidal waves, cyclones of very large propensities. Thousands died or became homeless. The amount of aid or relief provided just could not be compared to the enormous damage done both in number of lives and quantum of property.

The saddest thing about these natural disasters are that they hit at a time most unexpected and therefore those affected being absolutely unprepared for it. simply become helpless victims.

Since such things are

out of anyone's control we have to bear it, but where necessary we must take as much as possible precautionary measures, as may be made available with the help of modern science and technology.

### Dulal Mojumdar, Feni.

Sir, It has been decided by the government, to close all shops at 7 pm to save

The curse of war

We do understand it is wise measure vis-a-vis the Gulf crisis. But there are people who have long office hours. It will be particularly difficult for them to shop, if anything is needed urgently.

Still we may have to abide by for austerity's sake. But war can never solve

any problem, rather it makes life more difficult, even if it's thousands of miles away. And this is perhaps just the beginning. We do not know what more difficulties will be coming.

We humans, though call ourselves civilized, we have not learnt the basic lesson of life: it is more courageous a task to preserve life han to destroy it. But war makes murder legal!

Aren't there more people than the warring ones to stop it? Roushan Ahmed.

Savar, Dhaka.

Winter vegetables Sir, Winter, is my

favourite season. Though many find it uncomfortable. it certainly provides a relief from the humid, hot summer and wet rainy days. Besides, in winter a variety of useful vegetables are available: namely cauliflower, cabbage, peas, tomato, radish, carrot, spinach etc. For those like myself, a

housewife, who has to think each day what different and interesting menu can be prepared for my husband and children the winter saves time and

energy, and offers so much of options. So thanks to it. Moreover, it is also a time when it is easy to go out at any time of the day, without bothering about the temperature or clouds.

So sadly do I say goodbye to winter.

Now, the point is whether we can grow some of the useful winter veg etables in other seasons too. I think it is not impracticable now when attempts to grow them in desert condition of the Middle East are paying off. We just cannot change the climate but, of course, to an extent, our condition.

> Jolly Akhter, Arambagh Dhaka.

ary has come, bringing with it the remembrance of those brave sons of the soil, who had laid down their lives for the cause of our very own language, Bengali. It was their supreme sacrifice which had made it possible to make Bengali, the National Language of the then Pakistan besides Urdu.

Sir, The month of Febru-

Every year the nation

'Ekushey' February

of "Ekushey" with the march. Milly Rahman, Bijoynagar.

after elections!