in the interest of the enter-

prise. Such conditions are

considered pre-requisite and

essential in the best interest of

the country. However, here a

Dhaka, Friday, July 5, 1991

Censorship in Rangpur

Something quite insidious has been unearthed in Rangpur recently. Through an office circular the Assistant Post Master General (APMG) of Rangpur Head Post Office ordered the letters and goods, both incoming and outgoing, of 11 political leaders belonging to AL, CPB, JP, Jamaat and Gonotantrik Party and 12 heads of organisation, to be diverted to the Superintendent of Police for censorship. The APMG, who has been later transferred to Rajshahi within a day's notice, claimed that he issued the order under the instructions from the Ministry of Home Affairs.

The Prime Minister, who concurrently holds the Home Ministry portfolio, replying to a question on the issue raised by Opposition member Mrs Motia Chowdhury, informed the House that she did not know about this affair. The PM reiterated her government's total commitment to fundamental rights and the rejection of any form of censorship as policy.

Begum Khaleda Zia's democratic credentials are strong enough for us to accept her position that such a thing could not have happened with her knowledge, leave alone consent. But whether she knew it or not, if the original instruction did originate from the Home Ministry as claimed by the Rangpur APMG, then as the minister in charge, she will have to bear the responsibility of what has happened. Such shouldering of responsibility is a basic democratic tradition, and the faster we get used to it the more beneficial will

be our practice of democracy. The numerous questions that the postal censorship incident has raised in the public mind can only be satisfactorily answered if a thorough investigation is conducted into this incident. So far we have had two versions as to the origin of the order: one that it came from the Home Ministry; and the other that the order was issued by the Post Master General. In both versions the poor fellow at the lowest level - the Rangpur APMG - only carried it out. So why punish the 'messenger' and transfer him from his post; and that too in such a haste, within 24 hours? Is it the impression that he did this on his own?

Bureaucracy as we know it, both in the ministry and in the postal service, is not in the habit of taking initiatives of any kind, leave alone such an unusual and controversial one. The fact that the victims were all political leaders, raising the question of political victimisation of some sort makes it even less likely that the bureaucracy did it on its own.

What had happened at Rangpur is a very clear violation of the fundamental rights of citizens. Surveillance on movements of political figures, censoring mails and tapping of phones were common practices of the past autocratic government. We want none of it, ever again. In special cases where State security necessitates it, prior court order or some such judicial procedure must be followed.

We welcome the government's initiative to order an investigation into this unfortunate incident. Before any misunderstanding should take root in the public mind, the government should come out in the open with all the necessary facts, and do so without any delay.

Of the Caesarean Section

Some notions have a way of attracting adherents. Without there being any dependable survey on the matter, anyone would tend to suggest that youngsters of today are taller than their counterparts of yesteryears - their parents to begin with. And you will find hordes to agree and suggest furthermore that today's boys and girls are a lot smarter too - at least in appearance and bearing. Such beliefs are so widely subscribed to that it is quite futile to point out that there has been no foundation to these by way of objective scientific observation. A study in the matter would be meaningful only if it can prove that the facts are otherwise.

One of such beliefs, derived no doubt from personal experience and observance but nevertheless uncorroborated by scientific investigation, is that more babies are now born of the caesarean section than, say, even thirty years back. This should stand to reason. With the exit of the traditional midwives, beginning with the towns-people the society as a whole is going to doctors wielding forceps and scalpels and called obstetricians. Delivery by the caesarean section may be as old as Macbeth's nemesis, but in the absence of such skill with our midwives, the obstetricians' entering the scene has very naturally prompted a spurt in such births. Even very responsible people say that caesarean section births are growing exponentially from decade to decade. First-hand personal experience would tend to corroborate the belief. The explanation for that is found in believing that more and more obstetricians are not keeping their patients' confidence and in utter disregard to their Hippocratic oath are reaching for the scalpel too soon in order to earn extra sums of money at the earliest. This may be totally unfounded for most cases of caesarean section and may even be outrageous from the practising surgeon's point of view. But perhaps all of them are aware of such a belief going around.

And now here turns up a case where three obstetricians have been made to compensate a fouryear old's paralysis unto death from neck downwards by paying a fine of 20 million dollars. The court that turned the verdict said the injury was done through a 20-minute jostling with the forceps which all but smashed the baby's head. The news comes from Beverly Hills, the California film resort.

We can, however, say all caesarean sections are not as unnecessary as some would think. But all would perhaps agree that waiting a little longer than the 269 days and giving nature a chance or, if need be, inducing nature to do her job benignly is best of all.

When a country is governed by newly PUBLIC SECTOR ENTERPRISES elected government, they usually prefer to continue

Disinvestment can Offset Losses the existing plans and programmes. Then they by M. A. Baaquie

gradually restructure the administrative setups, introduce resorted to the creation of new policies and plans in permanent Corporations to go keeping with their manifesto. into business on ordinary mar-And those new policies are ket requirements. Some naturally framed in accordance those were, of necessity, with the public declarations brought into existence through they made in their political nationalisation of industries and trading houses left behind It has, however, particularly by the Pakistanis in 1971. been observed in some devel-

It is clear that the stability and discipline in the act efficiently and expedimarket and hence in addition to providing infrastructure, they also started to compete with the Private Sector to the mockery of decentralisation extent that they used to retail even grocery items. And the ernment employees are not end result was that while mentally prepared for that sort normally all those sectors used of duties; (d) They lack appro-

ies the Corporations had never been given due authorities to discharge their assigned responsibilities. It may be noted that the delegation of power to the management to decide on all matters except on major policies was never there. (How government wanted to bring could then they be expected to tiously to smoothly administer the enterprises?) Responsibility without authority is a and delegation; (c) The gov-

any sign of re-thinking as to how to salvage these national losses. By simply avoiding these losses we could have been able to save annually large funds to offset, all by ourselves, even cataclysmic devastations. And possibly we did not have to stretch our begging bowls every time there was a natural

These establishments, no doubt, sustain a sizeable number of our work force. But that cannot be an argument not to arrest the rot that is eating up our meagre resources. It is only a healthy concern that can

bring benefits to its workers.

emphasis that to save the national assets, offers of only ones

those who have the expertise, experiences, resources and the management cadres to successfully contribute to the GDP may be considered. Head office staff of these Corporations should be treated to have been distributed to all the operating units on the basis of persons employed. While the unimportant, small and

medium size enterprises be sold out and the less important denation alised/disbanded/disinvested, the important and complex ones be made into public lim-

ited companies or fully au-

It is to be realised that while it may take three to five years for a new industrial unit to make any cognisable profit, for losing concern it does not take more than a few weeks to accrue that through its shutting down because the stoppage in recurrence of losses then becomes an economical profit.

to contribute substantially to priate training and experience the government sector was Jute Mills Ltd, the largest of its kind in the world, which used to pay hundreds of crores of taka to the national exchequer, is these days always in the red by practically the similar amounts which means a double negative result.

Causes for poor performance

Why it is so? What are the causes for such devastatingly poor performances?Some of the reasons are: (a) Government is generally inflexible. They are only expected to enunciate policies in respect of industrial and commercial developments which are to be carried through by the private sector; (b) As autonomous bod- there does not appear to be

the public exchequer in the for a kind of job which calls for form of duties and taxes etc. efficient management involving men, material, costs, loss and running into heavy losses profit which are vitally importhrough tant than mere continued opmismanagement, indecision eration of an enterprise; (e) and indiscipline. In addition to They seldom appreciate that huge recurring losses these production alone is not suffi-Corporations owe hundreds of cient; appropriate marketing crores of Taka to the financial and distribution are equally institutions, commercial banks important and (f) The governbesides the government ment employees have not been (Bangladesh) Bank, Adamjee inculcated with the spirit of the survival of the fittest (for the sake of quality productivity). On the contrary, one thinks that once in service, is assured continuity without any weightage to his performance.

We are well aware of the colossal losses being incurred practically in every public sector Corporation whereas each of those is supposed to earn for the government hundreds of crores of taka annually. Accumulated losses may have already gone much beyond hundreds of billions of taka, and we are still putting up with these huge losses to our national exchequer. But, at whose costs? The down-trodden and the badly suffering public? Yet

We should have approached the subject of generating employment opportunities with care, logic and viability rather that emotions. We should have followed certain norms and criteria in fixing up our national priorities and then selected the types and sizes of the projects according to their economic viabilities. We could have then satisfactorily achieved the primary objectives of developing our resources, provide jobs to our people and at the same time earn handsome revenue for the administration. Moreover, the bulk of employment must come from private industrial, commercial and service organ-

The government should find ways and means to get rid of units/ enterprises particularly responsible for bringing financial losses to the country. All such organisations with units, which have no or little direct bearing on public administration, should be immediately disposed of. Some may be outright sold out to suitable private offers. It is, however, very crucial to state here with

tonomous bodies. It may be realised that while it may take three to five years for a new industrial unit to make any cognisable profit, for an irreversible losing concern it does not take more than a few weeks to accrue that through its shutting down because the stoppage in recurrence of losses then becomes an economical profit.

Regrouping the units for disposal

To start with, the government may regroup all the public sector Corporations and their operational units into the following categories: (a) immediate disposal. (b) conversion to public limited companies. Preference may be given to the employees association/society, provided they have the means, like any other bidders, to pay off the required amounts. The government may retain equity participation. The private or public limited companies taking over any of these concerns must be given the unfettered legal rights, powers and due authority to reorganize in any manner they would like

word of caution may be added that even if the government owned majority shares, unless its agencies are willing to stop interferences in matter of policies, plans, employment and pricing etc these newlyformed companies are also likely to meet premature deaths as losing concerns. The appropriate ministry/ department/directorate should be geared up to properly monitor the performances of these public limited companies where they have equity participation. (c) To be kept under close observation and scrutiny regarding their operational performances for the next three years. The ultimate objective should be also to turn these into private sector ones in due course of time. All the remaining industrial, commercial and service organisations in the public sector excluding Biman. Railway, Radio, TV, Electricity. Water and Shipping should be placed under this category. If any of these are found not showing any positive and decisive signs of improvements, that should also be quickly disposed of as under (a) or (b)above. Since the government and the people may not be pre-

pared to absorb shocks on large scale disposal/ denationalisation/disbandment of all the public sector non-essential Corporations, their gradual phasing out may be taken up. Of course, ultimately and as the long-term perspective plans for our country, the government should consider and be prepared and take necessary measures to hand over also the essential public utility services to autonomous bodies to be created in the future fully autonomous in real sense and spirit. More than one company may be allowed to be floated by the private sector in any of these fields. Such a move will ensure better quality products and services at reasonable prices through fair competition and proper utilisation of available resources.

Crusading "Crackpot" Puts Himself up for FAO Top Job

Dennis Craig writes from Rome

A man who was a senior FAO official for many years has set himself up as the conscience

of the UN organisation. He says it has lost credibility and that he is a candidate for the job of

secretary-general when it comes up in 1993. He believes many others could do the job better,

but that his candidature will force international debate on the FAO's future. Otherwise,

Na letter to Britain's Queen Elizabeth, copied to senior politicians, 54-year old Briton Raymond Lloyd has announced his candidature for the post of director-general of the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO). The \$ 105,000-plus a year job will be balloted in 1993 among the

campaigns.

oping countries that the au-

thorities attempted to realise

all those stipulated broad-

based policies by directly

managing mills, factories and

trading houses by the govern-

ment instead of leaving those

to the private sector. But we

may be reminded that when

we try to do everything by our-

selves, we generally end up do-

ing practically nothing. The

implementing authorities

should have involved the gov-

ernment only to provide land,

power, water and communica-

tions and create financial insti-

tutions. The government

should not ordinarily go into

any production, unless that is

heavily capital intensive and

much beyond the financial ca-

pacities of the entrepreneurs.

A government is not a business

house and as such it cannot be

expected to be fully geared up

to undertake any duties other

than public administration. It

should only lay down policies

and ensure, through co-ordina-

tion and effective control, that

the objectives are realised to

made temporarily to overcome

any emergent situation, though

only in some exceptional cir-

cumstances. For example, in

extreme scarcity of any essen-

tial commodity or its sky rock-

eting price or disruption of

essential service facilities, the

government usually intervenes

through introduction of ra-

tioning system and /or invok-

ing price control act or disci-

plinary measures. But what we

experienced in our country is

quite different from that. The

government in a hurry and

probably without realising the

long-term economical effects,

Deviations to this may be

their desired standards.

158 member states. Despite almost universal derision from FAO's membership and senior staff, who describe Lloyd's candidacy as "frivolous" and "crackpot", a few believe it could have wide

repercussions. As one diplomat put it: "If Lloyd can get a member state to endorse his attempt, he will be a genuine candidate. As such, the accusations he has been making to a limited audience for many years will be in

the public domain. "The media, and consequently governments, will have to take notice of the seemingly scurrilous charges that he has been making for years against Director-General Edouard Saouma. This could open up a can of worms and prove very healthy for FAO and indeed the whole UN systemin the long term".

Lloyd has circulated a series of newsletters over the past 10 years among senior politicians, civil servants and opinionmakers throughout the world. FAO has ignored the contents.

not try to get Britain's nomination because he has lived more than half his life in other coun-

some states, such as the dissatisfied US, may pull out.

He says: "Over the years I have made important friends in a number of countries at every level, from heads of state to influential civil servants.

"Nomination don't have to be in until March 1993, so I have two years to present my proposals. It will be the first time in nearly 50 years of United Nations history that someone campaigns publicly on a platform of issues, initially as an individual and not as a government nominee".

Lloyd was an FAO official unacross the economic spectrum til 11 years ago. He quit voluntarily because, as he put it in his letter, "I believe that for the foreseeable future I can make a greater contribution to human progress from outside the UN system than inside it...

"I feel I can enhance the

work of colleagues remaining

inside by opposing rather than by going along with certain current decadent trends."

While he worked for the FAO he was looked on as something of an oddity by most colleagues. He stood aside from their claims for higher salaries, pension rights, dutyfree and other privileges.

Instead- and on this there is accord, even among his greatest detractors- he dedicated all his energies to combating the war on want and hunger. He instructed the FAO payroll section to send most of his salary to selected development projects.

Among many schemes he initiated which are now annual international events, such as donating a day's wages or the price of a meal to the world's hungry, was the only one launched in FAO's 45-year history to generate its own funds.

This involved the sale of coins and medals bearing the

FAO logo and message. Lloyd administered it for 14 years, making FAO nearly \$3 million profit for investment in smallscale development projects.

Despite his candidature, Lloyd does not see himself as the future director-general. In his first campaign letter, issued from the London flat where he has run self-financed campaigns for more women at senior levels in the UN system and for the reform of FAO, he

"I can think of many persons more able, more experienced, or more good for governments to nominate.... I hope my campaign will challenge governments to nominate such persons, or such persons to seek nomination. any case, my campaign should oblige other candidates to take, or refuse to take, a public stand on the issues."

Among these issues are restraints on abuse of power by future directors-general (including standing for public

office while an FAO staff member); purging the FAO staff of members who have been senior members of a government which has murdered or tortured its civilian opponents; higher standards of professional competence; and financial accountability.

science of FAO, Lloyd says he will not hesitate to use nay ammunition he possesses to restore its credibility and in-Lloyd compares the way

As the self-appointed con-

Saouma has "sold FAO out" to repressive regimes with the way the 1939 Secretary-General of the League of Nations, Joseph Avenal of France, tried to sell the League to the Fascist powers.

Lloyd says:"That he did not do so was due mainly to the integrity of another League official, Sean Lester of Ireland. A similar person is now needed

Possibly none or no more than one or two FAO member states will believe Lloyds is that person. The rest may be forced to concede reluctant respect for a man who has

chosen to hoe a lonely furrow. **GEMINI NEWS** DENNIS CRAIG has worked for three UN agencies over 22 years and is a specialist writer

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.

RAYMOND LLOYD

A growing number of states

want to prevent Saouma being

re-elected. They believe that if

donors, including the US,

can get a member state to

nominate him, although he will

would leave the FAO.

he is, a number of major

Lloyd is in no doubt that he

VIP taxpayers, roads

Sir, I endorse the view expressed by Mr M Zahidul Haque in his letter published under the caption "VIP tax payers" on June 21 in your paper. Though our per capita income and GDP are the lowest in the world, some of our fortunate (or corrupt) officials and businessmen have made a place in the list of the rich people. We have already VIP residential areas — in Dhanmondi, Gulshan, Banani and Uttara. Now if the same class is separated in the list of tax payers by introducing VIP tax payers' list, I am afraid, God forbid, if there be any revolution on class basis they will be vulnerable to that, not to speak of how much it adds to superiority-inferiority complexes !

The previous autocratic Government's action in declaring certain public thoroughfares as VIP roads is against the very principle of "Fundamental Rights" guaranteed under the Constitution. It has infringed the right of rickshaw-pullers and their pas-Article 27(Equality before law),

the British Queen can use are published in all major public thoroughfares and is subject to traffic law, no one in this part of the world is a monarch and needs a VIP road.

M Saleem Ullah Advocate Motifheel C/A, Dhaka.

IT Return: A request to NBR

Sir, The common individual tax-payers are often confused to the Income-Year or Assesment Year from which changes in Income-Tax mea

sures, announced through the National Budget, are applicable. Besides, changes in the slab/rates of Income-Tax, are not included in the budgetspeech.

The Finance Minister, in his budget-speech of 12 June '91, introduced several changes in the existing Income-Tax provisions. The Income-Tax payers Individual category will have to sengers as well. It has hit submit their Income-Tax Returns for the Income-Year Article 28 (Discrimination on 1990-91 (Assessment Year grounds of religion etc), 1991-92), to the tax authori-Article 36 (Freedom of move- ties from 01 July to 15 ment) and Article 40 September 1991. To enable (Freedom of profession or oc- them to prepare their returns cupation) of the Constitution correctly, the National Board and as such the action is ille- of Revenue (NBR), would do gal. The present government well to issue clear guidance, must rescind the order, if any, through press release and declared the VIP press notifications immediately on the following basic We must remember when points and ensure that, these

> English and vernacular dailies: (1) Whether withdrawal of 15% Surcharge on Income Tax will be effective for Income-Year 1990-91 i.e. Assesment Year 1991-92:

> (2) Whether lowering of investment allowance from Taka two lakh to Taka 1 lakh, will be applicable to Income-Year 1990-91 (Assessment Year '91-92) or to Income Year1991-92 (Assesment Year '92-93);

(3) What are the new slabs/rates of Income Tax. made by way of rationilisation,

as announced by the Finance Minister ? Whether the new slabs/rates of Income-Tax are payable for Income Year 1990-91 (Assesment Year '91-92) ?

A H Khan Dhaka.

Status of Banani

Sir, The government is determined to develop Banani as a model residential area. But it is regrettable that its residential status is being grossly violated by the practice of housing travel agency and manpower export offices in a number of strictly residential buildings. For instance, now some 15/20 houses on Road Nos. 6,8,11 and 17 of C and D blocks are vibrant with such businesses attracting thousands of people everyday. Imagine of the tranquillity and privacy preferred for a residential area in the crowd, continuing from morning till late in the evening !

To facilitate works in such businesses microphone and video are indiscriminately used. Even some vehicles are transformed into shelters for visitors, who in the absence of toilet facilities use the open spaces to the extreme suffering of the neighbours. The neighbours not only have to suffer a polluted environment, and their female inmates keep themselves in a virtual selfconfinement, but also face

threats from 'defence groups'

formed by such traders, when

they raise any protest.

According to base deed allowing ownership to a plot in Banani, RAJUK can take action against anyone setting up a commercial office in the residential area and evict such offices from residential buildings. However, in the past, RAJUK could not do its duty despite serving notices, perhaps due to its "inability" under the then autocratic regime. But now? The present democratic and benevolent government must do something to save the residential status of Banani and to the relief of its genuine residents.

Abul Hossain and Abdul Mazid Banani Bazar, Dhaka.

Persian Gulf

Sir, Every nation has a pride and respect for its culture and heritage and it is also the duty of others to respect the sentiment for better, mutual understanding between the nations. Iranians regard the name Persian Gulf as inviolable.

It is a matter of concern that Bangladesh with her historical policy of respect to other nations' culture and heritage allows its media specially its press, TV and radio to publish and call the Persian Gulf as Gulf only. It is known to all for many years that there was campaigning by some coun-

tries trying to replace the name of Persian Gulf by Arabian Gulf and calling it just by Gulf was their initial effort

on international organisations.

towards future achievement. As an Iranian student studying in Bangladesh, I request all concerned authorities to study this important matter sympathetically which causes pain in all Iranian hearts.

Syed Rahim Ashnakhah BUET, Dhaka.

Municipal tax

Sir, The Dhaka City Corporation tax commonly known as municipal tax, varies widely even on houses that are identical in all respects and are on same or similar locations or, surprisingly, in the same compound! Even a twostoried building owner has to pay more what is levied on a three or four storted house in the same locality. Moderate finishings and floor spaces are compared to luxury fittings and more floor space occasionally, and the owner has to pay

Under the above backdrop it would be just and appropriate to engage several civil engineering consultants to fix the municipal tax based on location, floor area, finishing content, rent probability etc. and relieve the tax payers of illogical burden.

Sadik Alee

Maghbazar, Dhaka.