

Lessons for Bangladesh

It is now almost axiomatic to emphasise that Bangladesh cannot progress without large-scale application of technology to its industrial and agriculture sectors. Again, it is repeated again and again by experts, local and foreign, that unless the country controls its population growth, raises the level of literacy and promotes emancipation of rural women, we may just drift into stagnation.

There can be no two opinions on the validity of this prognosis. However, it is helpful to have reconfirmation of these views from the World Development Report 1991, published by the United Nations. The report, just published, includes an exhaustive article on the subject by noted expert, Ansum Maddison, part of which appeared in this paper yesterday.

While going over the familiar ground relating to factors which make or hinder economic progress in a developing country, Mr Maddison offers a number of observations which, we are afraid, have not received enough attention from our own development experts. One refers to the success of a number of countries in Asia, such as Japan, South Korea and Taiwan, in overcoming limitations imposed by the lack of their natural resources and, in the process, outpacing resource-rich countries like Australia and Argentina. Mr Maddison rightly attributes this success of the Newly Industrialised Countries (NIC) in Asia to the use of technology, high literacy rate, low population growth and, last but not the least, to the accumulation of capital in the private sector.

These are the main items on the accepted agenda for progress in Bangladesh. Unfortunately, there are several problems which continue to hinder the implementation of our policies in these fields. For one thing, there is lack of coordination in the execution of policies by various development-oriented agencies and ministries. There is also a lack of linkage between the private sector and technical institutes, with the result that the kind of training provided by these institutes may not always be exactly what the business houses want. Again, there is no denying the fact that a much-needed rapid expansion of technical education in this country cannot and should not remain the responsibility of the government alone. The country's manufacturing industry here should step up its efforts to strengthen the base of the country's technical education, to promote its own Research and Development (R&D) activities and to involve itself in, say, female education and population control.

Much depends on how much resources the private sector is able to use for such activities. In this context, Mr Maddison has rightly emphasised the need for accumulation of capital in the private sector. Judging by a series of problems facing the private sector in Bangladesh, ranging from the increase in the number of sick industries to the continuing uncertainty in the banking sector, we are indeed in a gloomy situation. Herein lies the need for urgent actions which should revitalise the concerned sectors, put a fresh lease of life in privately-owned industries, resolve the problems in the financial world and establish a mechanism for consultation among involved quarters. Unless such actions are taken, our appreciation of views expressed in the World Development Report will remain only an academic exercise.

China, India and the NPT

China's decision to sign the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), while having little impact on Beijing's nuclear capability since it already has a massive atomic arsenal and intercontinental delivery systems, is significant in two other respects. The NPT prohibits signatory countries from exporting nuclear weapons know-how as well as expansion of existing stockpile (if there is any at the time of signing). China has long been suspected of supplying nuclear weapons technology to such Third World countries as Pakistan, Iran, Algeria and others. Whatever the truth of the allegations, China will be treaty-bound not to undertake any exports.

More important perhaps, the Chinese decision represents a radical shift in Beijing's policy which has always regarded the international inspection provision in the NPT as tantamount to unwarranted interference in a country's internal affairs. Beijing's change of heart signals not only a change of policy on inspection, but also points to a willingness, previously non-existent, to make itself a party to the global debate on nuclear disarmament. Chinese participation in disarmament talks is essential since Beijing is the world's third largest nuclear power, particularly at a time when the top two in the nuclear league, the United States and the Soviet Union, have finally taken the initiative to start to reduce the number of warheads and missiles each possesses.

The Chinese decision cannot but have a significant impact on the nuclear drive in the region as well. India, which exploded a nuclear device back in 1974, has steadfastly refused to sign the NPT, saying its nuclear programme was for peaceful purposes only and therefore did not need any supervision. But the suspicion has always been that India's nuclear programme was undertaken as a direct response to the threat it perceived coming from China. But with China now putting itself in the mainstream of global nuclear control, India will have less of a logical ground on which to base any further refusal to sign the NPT. Furthermore, New Delhi has recently made its intention to sell nuclear reactors to third countries known.

While that is an internal matter, we still have to say that if India's programme is a peaceful one, and if the reactors it will sell abroad are incapable of producing weapons-grade uranium as New Delhi claims, then there should not be any reason why India cannot open up its nuclear installations to international inspection. India may even wish to see a clear sign from Beijing that it is willing to talk reduction, as a means of reassuring New Delhi, before signing the NPT. But either way, India ought to now show a willingness to consider signing the NPT and make its own contribution to global peace and stability.

ISSUES connected with human ecology and environment have

become subjects of intense discussions in view of the fact that in our efforts to increase the standard of living, we have been denuding the non-renewable resources of nature and disturbed its ecological balance such that we are now faced with new problems — the Greenhouse effect, acid rain, ozone depletion, degradation of land, pollution of air and water and a global change of climate, which could threaten our very existence. While developed countries have their own problems, Bangladesh, with its special geographical features with high density of population and natural disasters, is struggling to meet the basic necessities of life of its population. What is required is a sustainable and balanced development, where ecological considerations play an important role, but of a different kind from those of developed countries. The have-wants want a fairer distribution of resources.

Keeping these in mind, the Commonwealth Heads of Governments Meeting (CHOGM), in their last meet at Malaysia in October, 1989 issued a Declaration known as "Langkawi Declaration on Environment", which provided for a Programme of Action. The same meeting recognised the important role that Commonwealth Human Ecology Council (CHEC) could play in this regard.

Charged with this responsibility, and also as a consequence of the successful Ninth Commonwealth Conference at Edinburgh, CHEC revitalised its programme and took active part in the expert group meeting on a Rain Forest Project, covering a large area in Guyana, convened by the Commonwealth Secretariat, and concluded that ethnobiology and human ecology were central to the realisation of sustainable development.

The recent programmes of CHEC all over the Commonwealth are centred round Education and Training (India, Australia, Fiji, Barbados, Sierra Leone and Canada), Grassroots Development Programmes (Bangladesh, Kenya, India and Guyana) and other special programmes including information technology, health and study of eco-balance. CHEC programmes are now being extended to Sri Lanka, Pakistan, Malaysia and Mauritius. In fact, its activities have now gone beyond Commonwealth countries and CHEC has a consultative status with UN organs. In recent years, there has been increased collaboration with UNESCO on education and environmental ethics, thus un-

VANCOUVER LOOKS AT BANGLADESH

Call for Broader Participation in Ecology Planning

By Dr Anwar Hossain
Star Guest Columnist

derlying commonality of human cultures and values.

The Vancouver Meeting on Human Ecology and Environment, held in the last week of July, has been the culmination of the recent series of activities of CHEC to prepare an action report as a follow-up of the Langkawi Declaration of CHOGM. Selected participants from all over the Commonwealth held threadbare discussions, first generally and then in three Groups on (1) Grassroots Levels of CHEC Involvement, (2) Education and Social Development, and (3) Special Projects and CHEC's relations with international organisations. I had the privilege of chairing the first group, while the final session was presided over by Professor James Maraj. As usual, the ever-present Zena Dayash had the last word.

The Committee on the grassroots level appreciated the programmes of Bangladesh, Guyana and Kenya and recommended the extension

of the concepts of people's participation and developing self-reliance at the micro-level to other Commonwealth countries. It felt that activities of CHEC should have various media presentations, including posters and films. Following a new theme presented earlier at the plenary session by Professor J Manrakhan, Vice-Chancellor, University of Mauritius, the Committee emphasised that CHEC should encourage research on the optimisation of human condition and well-being, in relation to the carrying capacity of the environment. This may, of course, vary from country to country. Like all other Groups, we strongly felt the need for institutionalising CHEC, with a formal structure and assured funding.

The Group on Education and Social Development emphasised the need for a clear

and comprehensive statement on the principles and concepts of human ecology to preface any strategic plan in this area of CHEC's activities. The Group recommended education and training at four levels: (i) Training of decision and policy-makers (this task could be undertaken by Commonwealth of Learning) (ii) Research and training at the Universities (iii) Education in the school system (iv) Education (non-formal) in the Community.

In the first three cases, CHEC can play a catalytic role. It was in the area of non-formal community education that CHEC could be pioneering innovative teaching and learning methods simultaneously. The social development can take place if CHEC takes actions like (i) Field studies (ii) Case studies (iii) Problem-based programmes and (iv) Use of different delivery media.

The special studies Group confined their attention to the problem as to how CHEC can take active part in the Guyana Rain Forest Project, which has now become an international project, probably to be coordinated by the World Bank. The Group felt that the CHEC-sponsored Amerindian Institute could be set up outside the internationally-organised framework.

The final session supported the recommendations of the various Groups and opined that environmental issues are integral to the quality of life in human development. It was noted that the unfolding environmental debate was taking the dimension of a reconsideration of the issues affecting the economic relationship between the developed and developing countries. There was, however, agreement that all countries, under ecological pressure due to different reasons, should take effective remedial policies on a global perspective. The consensus was that CHEC should play a vital role in bringing about harmonious relationship between human ecology and environment, not only in Commonwealth Countries, but also internationally and one of the best CHEC action would be to bring technology and ecological knowledge to the

doorsteps of common man in the rural areas, through action programmes (as in Kenya and Bangladesh) such that both social and nature's equilibrium are maintained.

It was strongly felt at the Vancouver meet that Commonwealth Human Ecology Council has gone a long way under the singular leadership of Ms Zena Dayash and it is time that an institution is built up for effective continuation of CHEC's ideas, plans and activities, not from charitable funds but by way of regular contribution by CHOGM. Perhaps a Commonwealth Human Ecology Centre can be set up, to be governed by the pioneers of CHEC movement and a formal structure is evolved. The Vancouver Conference, in its final session on 31st July, 1991, undertook the programme of preparing a strategic plan for CHEC for the next five years. If CHOGM places CHEC on a stronger footing in its next meeting at Zimbabwe, then such a structure and plan of action for CHEC can be examined by the Commonwealth Secretariat. In the meantime, CHOGM could ask CFTC (Commonwealth Fund for Technical Assistance) what actions they have taken on environment following its directive in Malaysia in 1989. I would strongly recommend Bangladesh Delegation to take an active part to strengthen CHEC not only due to historic reasons but in its own interest. I shall now briefly describe one continuing and one planned CHEC programme of Bangladesh, which would reflect its vital importance towards the development of the country.

Bangladesh Programme
Programmes of self-reliance sponsored by CHEC-Bangladesh have attracted wide attention in the Commonwealth. I would like to specially mention the town development efforts of the people of Shahjadpur, situated east of Gulshan and south of Baridhara on a self-help basis. Under the banner of Shakti Unnayan Samity (SUS), sponsored by CHEC-Bangladesh, the residents of this urban settlement, consisting a good proportion of service holders (57%) and business people (28%), resisted the ever-changing policies of Dhaka Improvement Trust (DIT),

while the population continued growing. The people took up development and social works themselves, taking the help of experts. They widened roads, brought many civic amenities to their areas and even did earth-filling work required for most of the low-lying roads. Their latest effort is the preparation of a model town plan in an area consisting of 30 acres of land, which is most threatened for acquisition by the Government/DIT. The scheme is a glowing example of what a dedicated group can do, and make sacrifices too, in settlement planning. The residents even broke some of their own houses to make room for wider roads and had already suffered a loss of 15 lakh taka. Even DIT has now appreciated the plan.

Many civic facilities now exist and very recently, WASA started installation of water supply line within the plan framework. The plan has also earmarked areas for a health clinic, park, community centre and graveyard. I would urge the local political leaders to examine the plan and its implementation on a self-help basis and, if satisfied, extend the concept to other urban, or even rural, areas.

The second example that I would like to cite and I had proposed to the Vancouver Conference, is a new project highlighting the importance of eco-system balance. The idea was born out of a concern for the ecology of an area known as Chakoria Sundarbans, along Moheshkhali channel north of Cox's Bazar, where a mangrove forest was replaced primarily by shrimp ponds. A satellite study by SPARRSO scientists has revealed the destructive effects of this development. During the last cyclone, due to lack of initial protection which used to be given by the mangrove forest, the entire area, along with the shrimp cultivation, has been wiped out. A chance has now been given by nature to make a fresh appraisal of the eco-system of the area which will protect the environment and meet human needs of habitation and economic activities as well. A proper planning and action programme in this area could help preparation of an optimum plan of action for the entire coastal areas of Bangladesh. If Bangladesh Delegation to CHOGM comes up with such a proposal (as the President of Guyana did for their rain forest area), and get the approval of such an eco-system plan for world's largest mangrove forest area, then CHEC can organise the initial studies required before a large sum, already in hand for eye clone reconstruction, is utilised properly, maintaining the needs of both man and nature.



CHINA In Northern Shaanxi province, trees have been planted to halt advancing dunes. Worldwide, massive amounts of productive land became wasteland each year.

THE continuing downward trend in Indonesia's population growth seems to be confirmed by the results of the country's latest national census.

The 1990 census, conducted by the Central Bureau of Statistics (BPS, the acronym of its Indonesian name), registered a total population of 179,321,641 for Indonesia. This represented an annual average growth rate of only 1.97 per cent since the last national census was undertaken in 1980. The total Indonesian population recorded 10 years ago was 147.1 million.

Between 1970, when another national census was undertaken, and 1980 the Indonesian population grew at an average rate of 2.32 per cent annually.

Population growth rates varied province-by-province, reflecting more migration patterns rather than changes in birth rates.

West Java, for example, overtook East Java as the most populous province. East Java's population grew from the previous 29 million to 35 million. The west's population, on the other hand, rose from 27 million in 1980 to 35 million in 1990. This population surge was found to be mainly due to the spillover of the population of the neighbouring capital city of Jakarta.

More and more people working in the capital are now relocating to areas outside the city. Thus, new satellite communities have sprung up around the capital, particularly in the province of West Java. These include the communities of Kawaraet to the west, Depok to the south, and Bekasi to the east.

The fastest growing pro-

Indonesia

Shifts in the 'Spread' of Population

Warief Djajanto writes from Jakarta

Development staffs in Jakarta are now busy updating their plans in the light of the 1990 national census findings, which include further evidence of a reduced population growth rate

— from 61.91 per cent in 1980 to 59.99 per cent in 1990.

The average number of members of a household dropped from 4.9 to 4.5 in 1990 nationwide. In cities, the drop was from 5.2 to 4.7 while in villages it was from 4.7 to 4.4.

Urban population grew at an annual average rate of 5.36 per cent whereas rural population growth was 0.79 per cent in the past 10 years.

In his 1991 budget speech recently, Indonesian President Suharto said the census results showed the great human resource potential Indonesia has to develop as "quality capital assets" for the continuity of national development.

What begs attention, he said, is the importance of taking steps for the more even spread of the population. He pointed out that Java, with seven per cent of the country's land area, has 60 per cent of the national population.

"This requires sustained activities in transmigration and the development of economic growth centres outside Java," the President said.

The demographic statistics gathered by the latest Indo-

nesian census will keep the planners busy at the national development planning agency or Bappenas.

One major issue they are

expected to focus their attention on is the need to get more people to move to underpopulated provinces in eastern Indonesia. Though the eastern part of the Indonesian archipelago is underdeveloped, it has many untapped natural resources, particularly mining and marine resources.

But a major task to be completed, in order to encourage both investors and migrants to the area, is the building of infrastructure — roads, harbours, power plants and phone

lines.

Furthermore, environmentalists have warned that economic expansion must not be achieved at the cost of damage to the ecology and local cultural heritage, particularly in the easternmost and largest province of Irian Jaya. Nevertheless, in spite of the constraints, it is expected that eastern Indonesia will figure more and more in the government's development agenda. As the census shows, of Indonesia's 27 provinces, seven have already more than five million people, including Jakarta which has a population of 8.2 million, and all of these provinces are in the western part of the country.

— *Dephneus Asia*

OPINION

Appointment of Company Directors

Section 16 of the recently enacted Bank Company's Act 1991 provides that no person shall remain as director for more than six years continuously.

The question has arisen whether the period during which a person was a director before the 24th of February 1991, that is, the date on which the relevant ordinance came into force shall be taken into consideration in calculating the six-year period prescribed in the section. Many persons have been the directors of Banking Companies for a great many years, and have thus converted the Banking Companies into their private properties. The obvious purpose of this newly enacted statutory provision is to put a stop to this unholy practice. But the interested persons have now come out to protect their vested interest by twisting and misinterpreting the law, by procuring opinions from here, there, and everywhere. These procured opinions are said to have enunciated the proposition that the above provision of the newly enacted Bank Company Act is prospective, and not retrospective. In other words, the period during which a person was a director before the enactment of the new law should not be included in the six-year period. They would like to say that any person who will now be elected as director cannot remain as director for more than six years. In other words,

the six-year period will be counted from the date of his appointment as director after the enactment of the Bank Company Act 1991.

The above interpretation of the Sec 16, is, in our view, absolutely fallacious. Firstly, it frustrates the very intention behind the statutory provision, which is to stop the self-aggrandisement of some powerful persons. On the other hand, it would appear from the preamble of the Act that it is not altogether a new law, but a law which repealed and re-enacted the Banking Companies Ordinance 1962, with modifications. On the other hand, sub-section 2 of section 123 of the newly enacted law provides that in spite of the repeal of the Banking Companies Act of 1962, all acts and things done under the repealed ordinance shall be deemed to have been done under the newly enacted Act.

law. If the new law had been prospective only, then no person who had been elected as director before the 24th of February 1991 could continue as director after the enactment of the new law.

It is therefore, clearly evident that the period of directorship of any person before the coming into operation of the new law must be taken into consideration in counting the six-year period. In other words, a person who has been a director for five years before the enactment of the new law can continue for one year only and cannot be re-elected.

To hold otherwise will be tantamount to wiping out the entire past history, in fact, wiping out the Banking Companies Ordinance 1962, forgetting the preamble of the new law, as well as sub-section 2 of section 123 of the said law; which, in our view, is preposterous.

In view of this above point of law, we think it is incumbent on Bangladesh Bank to exercise its power under section 15(1), Bank Company Act 1991 and to issue a directive to all Banking Companies to hold general meetings to elect the new directors in compliance with the restrictions created by section 16 of the Act.

Engr Mohammed Dawood Khan

The writer is a founder sponsor of Islami Bank Bangladesh Ltd.

To the Editor...

"Foreign films on TV"

Sir, My attention is drawn to the letter under the above caption published in your daily on the 5th instant. It is known to us all that Film Censor Board or BTV or Radio Bangladesh does not allow any cinema or drama or act to be telecast or broadcast where immorality, crime, adulteration of food, etc are any how glorified and eulogized. But with the passing of time these organizations perhaps have changed their moral standard or turned oblivious to our social need. Only a few days ago

BTV telecast a drama where a newly married second wife conspired with her brother and a fake "doctor" to murder her step daughter, which ultimately failed and the conspiracy was unearthed that landed her brother and the "doctor" to jail. The wife who was the

main conspirator instead of getting punishment happily reunited with her husband and step daughter.

I hope this has not escaped the attention of BTV for taking corrective measures in future. Zaved Hasan Kalabagan, Dhaka.

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.