

Doctors Will Turn from Sickness to Health

by Dr Sanjiva Wijesinha

A Pledge from Hasina

We welcome the statement of Sheikh Hasina Wajid, the Awami League leader that, if returned to power, her party would develop income-generating projects for women to help them attain self-reliance. Addressing a delegation of Jatiya Mahila Samabayi Samity (Association of National Women's Co-operative) on Monday, she rightly pointed that there could be no real progress in the country, without the development of half of its entire population.

There is nothing unusual about this statement, except its timing. Coming as it does some six weeks before the parliamentary election and that too from the chief of one of the two major contenders for power, the country should treat the statement as a promise and commitment, indeed as a pledge. The Awami League leader can now leave it to the planners in her party to work out the details of the commitment in specific terms.

One of the most significant changes in development thinking in the last 30 years -- or in 20 years or so in this country -- is the growing recognition of the role of women in the efforts to transform society. The change began with the non-Government Organisations (NGOs) and was belatedly taken up by the World Bank, the UN agencies and finally the "donor" government agencies. At first, many made their commitment only as a lip service -- many still do -- before involving themselves in some genuine women-related projects.

In many countries, the traditional development process which is dominated and controlled by men has made women's position worse: they have lost some of their original status, rights and protection, without gaining new jobs, rights and privileges in return. Until recently, development pundits even in industrialised countries often failed to see the complexities surrounding the role of women in development, while in many developing countries, there was a tendency to equate modernisation with exclusive progress of men. We like to think that with the change in development thinking, this outdated approach will become a thing of the past in the Third World, including in Bangladesh.

Here, in this country, there has been some progress in women-related development but only in a few selected areas. In this respect, the Green Bank has played a pioneering role in recognising women, especially in rural areas, as major participants in the institution's lending exercise.

The gradual expansion of the Bank's activities is certain to raise the level of women's presence in projects which are funded by this organisation, even at the decision-making stage.

Another example of the effectiveness of the women's role in development is provided by the growth of the country's garment industry. It is true, as some critics say, the industry went after rural women primarily because they provided the cheap labour. However, having earned their place in the workforce of Bangladesh, women in the garment industry or in other industrial plants, may not have to wait long to win the same rights, privileges and wages as traditionally enjoyed by men.

The next elected government of Bangladesh should not only look at the specific areas of women's grievances but also make a comprehensive study of the role of women in our society, preferably with the assistance of women activists. It is through such a study that the administration would know what kind of income generating projects can be undertaken for women and fully appreciate the critical link between female education and reduced population growth. Such a study will mark a new beginning in the long process of making our women take their rightful place in development.

A Task for WASA

No makeshift measures can provide an answer to a major, multiplying problem. And when it is to the drainage in the sprawling metropolis -- it demands to be an all effective, deathless machinery of size, by all counts. For an expensive area, it should be believably expandable.

This responsibility for Dhaka remains with WASA (the Water and Sewerage Authority). But, as reports go WASA has no specific budget for this specially mammoth task. Meeting the requirement by diverting funds from other scheduled heads obviously entails a lengthy administrative process. The effort thus is marred to a definite extent by delay, and also, understandably, by fund shortage. Moreover, WASA doesn't have a workforce, the most vital instrument, earmarked for the purpose. Obtaining them on deputation from other departments is another big punctuation in the way of making the answer effective. Even, more naturally, they may not be made available at time of need.

By all means the metropolis of Dhaka will keep growing for years, encompassing more areas and raising the skyline. The task of keeping it free of unwanted waterlogging and its drains from overflowing the filth will no doubt acquire an enormous proportion. Over the past couple of decades Dhaka has registered a faster, and in most cases, unplanned growth, neither conforming to the capacity of existing infrastructure nor extending that to the envisaged requirement. But, albeit, the development is welcome. The gap remaining, in the haste of the abrupt achievement have to be bridged now, by any means.

Experts, both local and from abroad have suggested solutions -- some seemingly too lofty for a resource constrained country like ours. But whether too expensive mechanised or moderate manual or a mixed one, WASA has to adopt the system, or innovate one effective, to address the problem in its totality. WASA is assigned with the responsibility of redressing the particular difficulty of the citizens. But then steps are imperative before the enormity of the problem outstrip the competence of the authority.

QUOTES

The beginning of every war is like opening a door into a dark room. One never knows what is hidden in the darkness.

—Hitler
On the eve of invading Russia

In the first few years of the 21st Century predicts Dr Michael Crichton, physician and best-selling author of The Andromeda Strain, "a climber of more than 65 years will stand on the summit of Mount Everest."

At the beginning of our own century, such a claim would have been beyond the bounds of credibility -- but today, mountaineers are so certain about it that their speculations are not whether Crichton's prophecy will come true, but when and by whom it will be fulfilled.

Such a prediction exemplifies the tremendous advances modern medicine has made, not only in preserving life, but also in preserving health.

A thousand years ago, man's life-span was much shorter than it is today -- and Shakespeare's seven ages of man were compressed into a much shorter period, with the lean and slipped pantalon appearing by the time a man reached his 60th birthday.

Today 60-year-olds expect to be doing the things their grandfathers could only dream of -- running marathons, climbing mountains and exhibiting the sexual stamina of 20-year-olds. There are now far more human beings surviving hale and hearty to reach their 70th and 80th birthdays than there were a century ago -- and they all expect not to achieve second childhood but to remain as fit as young adults all their lives.

Tremendous advances in curative medicine have made this phenomenon possible. Antibiotics such as penicillin and its descendants such as the third generation cephalosporins have made most bacterial infections easy to deal with. Laboratory-made drugs are now available to replace the missing hormones in common deficiency diseases like diabetes and myxoedema.

Mass immunisation programmes have ensured that more children survive -- and coronary bypass surgery has ensured that the

A medical revolution is unfolding before our eyes, drawing on the most advanced modern technology and the wisdom of tradition cures. In the 21st Century, the doctor's role will change from treating sickness to enhancing health, from killing germs to improving immunity, from repairing and replacing worn out parts to preventing damage.

activities of old age do not necessarily have to be restricted by a failing heart.

Even the old saying that the quality of life depends entirely on the liver no longer holds true -- because one can get a new liver transplanted, along with replacements for corneas, kidneys, hearts and lungs.

Curative care, however, has its limits. Bypass surgery and angioplasty cannot make one's heart as good as new, and a transplanted heart needs life-long immunosuppressive therapy to prevent the body rejecting the foreign organ.

Modern diagnostic aids, surgical techniques and chemotherapy have allowed us to accurately localise and remove cancers -- but we are gradually coming round to the view that cancer is a generalised disease, and merely cutting off one head of the monster is no guarantee that another head of disease will not pop up elsewhere in the body.

In dealing with the major killers of 20th Century industrialised society, namely heart disease and cancers, the most effective cure is prevention -- and the most effective prevention is a change in lifestyle.

In ancient China, a physician was not paid by his patients for every instance of seeking treatment, as is done today, but instead received a monthly remuneration from each patient only if the patient remained healthy.

In modern society too, we are seeing the

physician taking on the role of health adviser instead of merely being a mechanic whose task is to repair a defective machine when it starts malfunctioning.

Science has provided us with increasingly accurate diagnostic aids ranging from simple X-rays which improved diagnosis but exposed a patient to high doses of radiation, to CAT scanners which provide a sliced, three-dimensional view of the body, to non-invasive methods of visualising such as ultrasound scanning and nuclear magnetic resonance imaging. Consequently, treatment too has become more precise.

Surgery will probably become less prevalent as the 21st Century dawns -- and less dependent on the scalpel. We have already seen prostate glands removed transurethrally, without requiring an incision into the abdomen.

And whereas a hundred years ago most patients with stomach ulcers underwent operation and had half their stomachs taken out, today, most patients with peptic ulcer are treated with drugs to diminish acid production, coupled with advice regarding diet, stress management and lifestyle changes.

Kidney stones can be shattered by immersing a patient in a water bath and focusing high frequency sound waves on the stone, while knifeless brain operations using lasers to coagulate bleeding aneurysms and hitherto

inaccessible tumours are no longer limited to the realm of science fiction.

New techniques of microtechnology are being developed such as biosensors inserted under the skin to deliver a precise dose of a particular drug at the appropriate time and tiny machines (rather like the shrunken down submarine in the Sixties' science fiction film *Fantastic Voyage*) which, injected into the circulation system will course through the blood vessels cleaning the inside of one's arteries.

Gene replacement therapy, in which doctors can insert missing or defective genes into a patient's body, has recently been developed. While this technique is currently being used to treat cancer and rare enzyme deficiencies, some believe that eventually it could be used to boost hormone and enzyme production so as to retard aging and increase vigour.

Together with advances in medical technology that will prevent and treat illness, the science of Psycho-immunology -- which deals with the role of the mind in helping the body deal with disease -- will assume increasing importance.

Western physicians will take a leaf from the books of the traditional medicines men of 'primitive' societies, and conditioning the mind to think healthily will of necessity become an integral part of treatment for everything from allergies to transplants.

In the 21st Century, the doctor's role will change from treating sickness to enhancing health, from killing germs to improving immunity, from repairing and replacing worn out parts to preventing damage.

This transformation of the physician's role has already begun -- and we are seeing the dawn of an era in which human beings will remain fit and healthy even in what used to be called old age. — GEMINI NEWS

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Free Elections, and Hard Times, Ahead for Nepal

by Jan Sharma

A new Constitution is about all the good news from this Himalayan kingdom

King Birendra inaugurated Nepal's most resplendent era in its entire political history last November 9.

He promulgated a new democratic constitution that makes him a constitutional monarch and transfers sovereignty to the people.

The promulgation also added a new feather in the hat of Prime Minister Krishna Prasad Bhattarai and his centrist Nepali Congress. But that is all the good news from this Himalayan Kingdom.

The sad news is that the economy is in poor health, and the new political masters will have to struggle hard to make it recover.

The new populist leaders have blamed the disgraced "Panchayat" rule for "mismanagement" of the economy. The economic plank of the 30-year-old rule was based on the SAJHA (cooperative) concept which was, at best, a salad of communism and feudalism.

The results are anybody's guess. The monolithic rule collapsed last April for failing to respond to a pluralistic society. Sajha philosophy failed because

it obstructed the growth of a free market economy.

"We are trying to give a new direction to the economy," boasted Dr. Devendra Raj Pandey, Mr. Bhattarai's close ally and human rights activist who also is the finance minister. The challenges he faces are enormous.

A new government is yet to be elected in parliamentary elections scheduled for May.

And the oil price increase since the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait has had a crippling effect on the economy. Dr. Pandey predicts a US\$32 million deficit in fiscal year 1990-91.

He has stressed that undue influences on the choice of projects and technology can be eliminated when an accountable government exercises effective control over allocation decisions.

The externally assisted programmes will be truly rural-based, assuring a better fit between the aid program and development priorities of the country, he has said.

The average per capita income of US\$170, combined with a life expectancy of 52

years, infant mortality of 111 per 1,000 births and adult literacy of 35 per cent makes Nepal on the bottom list poor countries.

"No perceptible improvements have been made in the lives of the people despite 30 years of planned development with a heavy dose of foreign aid," says Nepal's position paper presented to Western donors in Paris last October.

Half the population, earning less than US\$60 a year, is mired in poverty. Landless and small farmers mostly compose Nepal's 18 million population. Arable land is already limited and productivity is low.

Increases in food production have been made because of favourable weather and the expansion of cultivated land by clearing forests. Industry makes tiny contribution to the gross domestic product.

Money and capital markets are underdeveloped.

Unfavourable weather conditions have taken the blame. Growing imbalance in government income and spending, and in exports and imports, have increased high inflation and fiscal deficits.

Dr. Pandey has proposed a wealth tax to raise US\$75,000. This is perceived to be a case of double taxation. But stakes are high: the revenue is tiny, its application expensive, greater chances of corruption and business seriously hampered.

With major political parties preaching Fabian socialism, capital flights have increased from Nepal to India. Export businesses are being relocated in India due to a negative business climate like labour unrest worsened by the wealth tax.

Western donors led by the World Bank are mounting pressure on the government to

raise domestic revenue to meet growing development expenses. The revenue has continued to decline, and unless supportive measures are undertaken, development efforts will continue to suffer.

Nepal's trade deficit has increased from US\$100 million in 1979-80 to US\$500 million in 1987-88. Export of traditional food items has declined with carpets, ready-made garments, tanned skins emerging as promising new exports.

Despite slogans for self-reliance, foreign aid continues to play a dominant role in Nepal's economic development. However, Western donors have been urging Kathmandu to make an effective use of the aid money.

Foreign aid currently finances 70 per cent of the development expenditures, but ratio of grant aid has declined from 75 per cent in 1979-80 to 30 per cent at present.

The Nepal Aid Group (NAG), appreciating the kingdom's return to democracy, pledged in Paris last October US\$1 billion for fiscal 1990-91 and 1991-92. "This forms

more than what we initially hoped to receive," Dr. Pandey said.

The Paris pledge is more than budget projections. The foreign aid commitment has increased from US\$30 million in 1974-75 to US\$270 million in 1987-88.

King Birendra promised in 1986 to provide six basic needs and services by the year 2000. They include food, clothing housing, education, health and security. Prime Minister Bhattarai has not publicly approved the plan.

The success of the basic needs programme would require Nepal to attain the GDF growth rate of 5.7 per cent during 1990-95 and 7 per cent during 1996-2000. The GDP growth rate for 1986-90 was 4.5 per cent.

Mainly because of the favourable monsoon rains and the resolution of the year-long trade and transit and impasse with India, Nepal's GNP is expected to rise by 3.5 per cent in real terms in 1990-91.

— DEPTNEWS ASIA

Down the city street, an elderly gent waits patiently for a gap in the traffic. Then, as briskly as his veteran legs will shift him, he starts crossing to the other side.

As if from nowhere, a van hurtles towards him, its horn blaring. "Out of the effing way, you stupid old plonker" the driver yells, proffering an obscene, single-fingered gesture as he tears past with inches to spare, on the wrong side of the street.

Not far away, screen star Maggie Smith is enjoying a romantic lunch-for-two in an exclusive showbiz restaurant. All is tranquil. Suddenly, a telephone begins to bleep like a suffocating banshee.

It bleeps. And bleeps. And bleeps. The wall-to-wall staff seem oblivious. Until the auburn-haired actress leaps to her feet and, at the top of her powerful voice, delivers the irresistible invitation: "Would someone answer that b---y phone." Someone does, and fast...

Scenes from a new feature film? Alas, no. This is the real thing -- London life in the year of gracelessness (1990).

A year when the ancient and once-respected motto

Can the Courtesy Gap be Closed?

by Nick Cole

"Manners makyeth Man" has become something of a joke. A year when that courtesy for which Britons have so long been renowned, began to look like a lost cause.

Enter the Polite Society, a voluntary association of persons committed to maintaining good manners... as the basis of everyday behaviour in human society.

Quintessentially English, it firmly but politely refuses to accept that courtesy is lost -- merely mislaid.

The Polite Society's mission: to combat "the thoughtless and malevolent influences now destroying our once-great country", while persuading graduates from the warthog academy of charm to be less selfish and more considerate.

"We believe that small acts of discourtesy are often the root cause of accidents, broken relationships, vandalism and crime", declares the society's founder, the Rev. Ian Gregory.

"Thus a wide commitment to restrained behaviour on the

road, in the home and in every other way could make a very great difference to the flavour of our national life."

A Congregational minister in the English Midlands, Gregory is also something of a prophet in his own land.

For as his admirable gospel of good manners has spread, the overseas response has proved more enthusiastic than the one in Britain.

In four years, he has received no fewer than 10,000 letters from all over the world. Every one has praised his initiative.

Yet "desperate" attempts to generate much-needed commercial backing in Britain, including approaches to 100 large companies, have so far failed.

"They think it's all rather nice, pat us on the head, then go away", Gregory sighs. The reasons for this make for an interesting reflection on corporate culture as well as national character.

With recession biting, and company collapses at their

highest since 1986, competition for corporate sponsorship has never been stiffer; finite sums are being chased by ever-widening circles of "good causes"; these notably include medical research, which is a growing number of altruistic-minded "barometer" firms are now moving to the top of their donations/promotional budgets.

Second, British management is re-adapting only with snail's-pace slowness to the concept of customer-oriented service. Some acute service with being servile: "The British are very, very sensitive about this", comments quality expert Professor Alan Dale, of Brunel University. "Service is meeting the needs of others."

Third, those managements which have introduced "customer care" programmes with politeness-training as a built-in feature, find them a costly investment, and hard to quantify in terms of short-run profits.

Curiously, smaller firms are more supportive of the Polite

Society. Some 400 businesses, from corner shops to hotels, which give discounts to well-behaved guests, have won awards under the society's "Courtesy Enterprise" scheme.

This involves giving consumers efficient service with a smile not a snarl -- and random checks by society officers.

Meanwhile, 40 schools have introduced "politeness" as a theme at morning assembly. Students are encouraged to observe the society's "Code of Courteous Conduct."

"The utmost consideration for other people's feelings", exercising "maximum self-control", avoiding bad language, and respecting women, old people and ethnic minorities, rank prominently in its requirements.

Gregory expresses strong admiration for Singapore's readiness to spend the equivalent of \$200,000 annually on a month of "national courtesy training" for members of the public.

And he warns: "We cannot go on behaving as we do. It's a curious paradox -- we are so skilled and creative in our technology and sophistication of lifestyle, but in terms of personal relationships we are neanderthal." — GEMINI NEWS.

To the Editor...

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.

Appreciations

Sir, I had the pleasure of going through the first issue of "The Daily Star" today and was quite impressed by its presentation.

My heartiest congratulations goes out to you on this momentous occasion of joining the media scene in Bangladesh as an independent voice.

I hope the paper will successfully champion the cause of truth and justice without fear or favour

through bold journalism. I wish the paper and all those associated with it, success in the endeavour to reflect and mould public opinion without prejudice through objective presentation of facts.

Mohammad Ebraheem Al-Najran, Ambassador of Kuwait.

Sir, Congratulations. Your first issue looks pretty good and radiates promise. You are fortunate that the Star

appears at a time when the nation has started breathing air of democracy and is getting ready for a free and fair election.

I am sure your paper will greatly benefit from the coveted freedom now being enjoyed by the press. The objectives you have set for yourselves are lofty but attainable and will surely spur you and your colleagues to achieving great heights.

We wish your paper a bright future.

Enamul Haq, Director General Press Institute of Bangladesh.

Sir, As a Bangladeshi who has lived abroad for a number of years and returned to his home town, Dhaka, I can't say how

pleased I am that at last we have a quality newspaper, The Daily Star.

Finally, we have an attractive English daily worthy of our English educated public who along with everybody else has sacrificed so much for the birth of our nation, and recently for a democratic system of government.

Good luck to you all and may your high standards be maintained.

"Well Wisher" Parallel Govt. in Burma

Sir, The declaration of a parallel government in Burma -- National Coalition Government of the Union of Burma (NCGUB) -- is certainly a step forward towards fulfilment of the hopes and aspirations of

the people of Burma, provided that enough has been learnt from the past.

Fortythree years have elapsed since Burma attained independence from Britain on January 4, 1948: So far fruits of freedom could be enjoyed neither by the masses nor the minorities in Burma, who had mainly joined the Burma Union with the hope of safeguarding their fundamental rights.

It is important that there should be genuine efforts in fulfilling the legitimate rights of all people irrespective of caste, creed and colour. Otherwise democracy is and peace in Burma would be as elusive as before.

Dr. Mohammed Yunus, President, Rohingya Solidarity Organisation



Haiti: How the Army Voted

"Papa Doc" Duvalier is dead and his son "Baby Doc" in exile, but elements of the Tontons Macoutes, the gangster force by which they long misruled Haiti, have lingered on. Here lies the significance of the coup launched recently by Baby Doc's former interior minister, Roger Lafontant. Barred by his Duvalier past from running for president, he nonetheless had returned to the island to find a way back into power.

The provisional president, Ertha Pascal-Trouillot, did not feel confident enough to arrest him for alleged political violence, but Jean-Bertrand Aristide, who was elected Dec. 16, had promised to do so when he takes office on Feb. 7. So Dr. Lafontant rallied a small band and seized the palace Sunday.

What happened then amounts to the best news for democracy in Haiti in decades.

Dr. Lafontant, an obstetrician, claimed the December elections had been fraudulent. Such a claim might have won some credence in years past. But the December elections had been closely monitored and then certified by the National Democratic Institute for International Affairs and other organizations in the hemisphere. And the coup was nothing more than a crude power grab.

If this failed coup was in fact the Duvalier's last hurrah, that leaves Haiti still labouring under immense burdens. The Tontons Macoutes may have been reduced, but the structures and habits of democratic government remain to be built, and Haiti remains the poorest country in the hemisphere.

The United States gave timely encouragement to the democratic forces during the coup period and must be prepared to play a substantial part in the country's revival.

— The Washington Post