

## Science is Sound Investment

Acting President Justice Shahabuddin has echoed the sentiment of most people, particularly the scientist community, by wishing there had been an Ekushey Padak for contribution to science and technology.

However, the lack of a Padak is small-fry compared to the woeful lack of funds for research work. Investment in basic science, whether by the state or the private sector, is evidently a low-priority area. It is difficult, if not impossible, to understand why science has remained such a neglected area, 20 years after independence.

It is often said that Third World countries such as Bangladesh simply cannot afford the huge sum of money necessary to build a scientific research establishment of any consequence. It is better, so the argument runs, to utilise the fruits of research work done elsewhere. This may sound attractive and cheaper, but is of value only in the short-term.

The development of an indigenous knowledge bank, a reservoir of technological skills, through the creation of a well-funded and efficiently administered research programme, has now become imperative. The government may well be the biggest source of investment funds, but the entrepreneurial class has a crucial role to play in such a development since it will be the principal beneficiaries of the end-product of research.

Equally important, the research work would naturally aim to develop technological skills appropriate to the special needs of a rural, developing economy.

At present, considerable amount of research work is going on at various universities around the country. However, the effort is taking place in virtual isolation due to lack of funds and exposure. Lack of a sound marketing policy has meant that results have not been sufficiently communicated to industry.

What is required at present is a joint effort by research scientists, businessmen and government agencies to put science on the national agenda. While it is vital for the private sector to set up funds for research, it is important for scientists to develop a sense of entrepreneurship and market their work to industry. For its part, industry should also develop a scout mentality and seek out local innovations. As well as funding general research work, industry should look to establish a close working relationship with research institutions, particularly the universities.

The media's role is a highly significant one here. It needs to shake out of its current inertia and provide greater exposure to national scientists and scientific activity. It is necessary not only to bring public awareness to the need for scientific research, but also to arouse popular interest in science in general.

In the final analysis, science and technology remain the most viable vehicle of economic development. To paraphrase Nobel-laureate Professor Salam, the developing world cannot afford not to invest in science.

## Killing the Proverbial Goose?

This piece of news from Brahmanbaria has little in it which is new. It entices one to paraphrase Tolstoy's observation about happy homes being very boringly uniform and unhappy ones being different in so many ways — albeit conversely. All our sad tales are so familiar and uniformly dispiriting and going on and on for so long!

The news is about potters of Nabinagar, Sarail, Kasba and Sadar upazilas of the district leaving their centuries-old ancestral profession. This has been going on for many years and throughout Bangladesh. But that does not rob it of newsworthiness by any measure if only because it underscores for the umpteenth time the social and cultural disaster we are living for every moment of our existence — and because it registers one further stage of our decay as a society. Society can be this foolish only if it has lost its ways to care for itself. And this society — our society — is said to be highly organised with all kinds of associations and collectives and institutions of age-old wisdom and endurance — all of it having at its apex a supreme thing called a state nannied, as is usual in the civilised world — by a government. When we look at the withering potters and dwindling fishermen and ungroomed environment, a serious suspicion creeps in as to whether all this is a fable to lullaby the grown up children such as we into a sense of carefree well-being that masks all idea of what's truly happening to us.

Look at any one of the water pitchers — so much celebrated in our songs and poems — and there will be no need for any elaboration. The wheels turn lakhs of them every year. Look at the workmanship, the finish, the shape. The functional as well as aesthetic elements have been honed and married to each other by millions upon millions of skilled hands over thousands of generations — and the stamp of all that is on every piece of this particular kind of water vessel called the *kalosh*. It is only the top that is done on the wheel. The bottom half is just joined, in a pronouncedly visible seam, to it by an incredibly delicate day-long hand-hammering. The vessel must not only be perfectly waterproof — water neither to get in nor to go out except through the mouth — but it has also to have such strength as to hold and carry at least 15 litres of water and not give in. On top of it the bottom half has to be microscopically porous so that through constant evaporation the water inside keeps refreshingly cool.

It's not an item we can do without. Indeed, each and every item that comes out of our potter's villages are household necessities required by the 20 million-and-odd families excepting the few urban ones perched high above and buying everything abroad. And still the men and women behind and around the potter's wheel must die or quit to save their souls. We are almost literally killing the proverbial goose of the golden eggs. How and why?

In this age of environment consciousness let us remind ourselves that only our poor potter's wares are supremely biodegenerative — the greatest virtue for any commodity — and very amiably hygienic. And after all that must our poor man and his working family perish. Only because he is very badly placed socially as well as economically — an unbeatable illustration of all — in canibalistic exploitation at the deprived level of our society.

Potters leaving their wheels and going out to beg — is possibly the direst of omens. Shall we not heed? And in time?

THE repeal of the apartheid bills now being debated by South African MPs has produced a new buzzword in parliamentary circles. "Community rights" has replaced the term "group rights".

At the opening of the debate in what is expected to be the last white-dominated parliament the official argument is that "majoritarian rule" — as Constitutional Minister Gerrit Viljoen has named it — is not the only route to a non-racial democracy.

The community issue was first raised by the Solidarity Party, the majority in the House of (Indian) Delegates, on the eve of President F.W. de Klerk's opening of Parliament February 1. It argued a Bill of Rights would not give enough protection to minorities — not as races, but as cultural groups.

One demand, for instance, is an entrenched right for the children to be taught Hindi and other Indian languages at school.

The government, on the other hand, argues that a new constitution must safeguard different communities that have "shared values and lifestyles." It used this argument to explain its opposition to the idea of a constituent assembly that the African National Congress (ANC) wants created as the body to draw up a post-apartheid constitution.

An election campaign for such an assembly would, according to Viljoen, lead to every party taking castron positions to win votes and the constitution would be more or less dictated by the majority party, thus excluding other parties and groups from making meaningful contributions. "Democracy doesn't consist of majorities alone", he says.

# New Idea in South Africa: Separate Communities

Arthur Maimane writes from Johannesburg

*The debate is now going on in the South African Parliament on the repeal of the Acts which entrench apartheid. One development that has emerged is an apparent change in government thinking whereby the concept of group areas is now to be replaced by ideas for the protection and separation of communities. The new constitution, it argues, must safeguard different communities that have "shared values and lifestyles."*



GERRIT VILJOEN  
Majoritarian rule

Foreign Minister P. W. Botha is certain that the National Party can be the majority party because it already has "vast support" from African, Coloureds (persons of mixed race) and Indians. He assured

journalists, however, that the true Nationalists would not be swamped by these recruited communities.

The right-wing Conservative Party was lambasted in the joint chamber by Energy Minister Dawie Viljoen for refusing to have anything to do with the reforms, whatever the bait of community protection.

De Viljoen said the realities of South Africa are experienced and understood "in different and contrasting ways" even within the white community. The country in which he lived "and the South Africa inhabited by the Conservative Party are two totally different worlds."

In his own contribution to the community debate, he said people could "find each other on the basis of common values, standards and norms, a political dispensation where minorities and majorities are not determined on the basis of race and colour, but by virtue of common values."

Minority rights would be protected "and the abuse of power by the majority (would

be) prevented through non-racial, but nonetheless powerful and incontrovertible constitutional democratic measures."

The unanswered question so far is who these minorities are — or will be in the non-racial future. The National and Solidarity parties insist that "community rights" — as de Klerk termed it — is not an ideal that is simply another name for "group rights" or plain, old-fashioned apartheid.

These communities would not be classified by race — repeal of the Population Registration Act will see to that — but they would define themselves by their shared values. As de Klerk told parliament, "certain human needs may continue to be met in a community context without coercion, without discrimination and without apartheid."

Another unanswered question is whether the final Bill of Human Rights — the government and ANC have their separate models, which are said not to differ too much — will outlaw discrimination by any community that insists its val-

ues and standards are quite different after the scrapping of the Group Areas Acts.

Labour Party leader Allan Hendrickse said at a press briefing that the government was pushing this line to mollify voters it could lose to the Conservative Party which is the official opposition and is bitterly against any reforms to end apartheid. People looking for such protection, he said, "are the same people giving a poor reflection of those norms and standards" — like the Conservative Party did when it walked out on de Klerk after he had announced the repeal of the Acts.

Hendrickse said he did not wish to live among these people because he had little respect for their values and lifestyles. The Nationalists and Solidarity also sound a similar note on their proposals for "broadening input into the government" during the negotiations for a post-apartheid South Africa.

Solidarity wants the present Cabinet dissolved and replaced by one that represents all par-

ties prepared to negotiate the new constitution — a "super-cabinet" including Africans, even though they still have no vote.

When he opened parliament, de Klerk put it differently, declaring that "consideration may be given to certain transitional arrangements on the various legislative and executive levels to give the leaders of the negotiating parties a voice in the formulation of important policy decisions."

Pik Botha insists that there was "no need to persuade the National Party to change" and introduce the current reforms, which have made "the prospects better than ever before" for a consensus on the non-racial new constitution.

The party, he says, has known for years that apartheid was doomed. It was "not realised overnight." But, he claims, plans to reform the country were slowed down by international sanctions that reduced economic growth, increased unemployment and contributed to the soaring crime rate.

A warning that white communities may not welcome sharing their values with other race groups came out of a statement to parliament by Louis Pienaar, Minister of National Education. He said they would have to make financial sacrifices to fund post-apartheid South Africa and the size of classes in previously all-white schools. — GEMINI NEWS

ARTHUR MAIMANE made his name as one of the talented group of journalists who ran Drum Magazine in Johannesburg in the Fifties and Sixties. In Britain, he worked for BBC World Service.

# Asians Wanted, but Not Really

Ian McCrone writes from Queenstown, New Zealand

*Much of the resentment comes from the fear that once Asians take over, New Zealanders will be priced out*

GOVERNMENT policies aimed at securing big investments and rich migrants from Asia are now causing doubt and unease among New Zealanders.

On one hand, New Zealanders need the wealth and skills Asians can offer. On the other, they resent what they see as foreigners "buying up" their homeland at bargain prices.

This fear that once New Asian owners take over, New Zealanders will be priced out of facilities they have come to regard as their "heritage" is responsible for much resentment.

There is also general envy of the way foreigners can produce cash to buy properties New Zealanders cannot afford because of the high interest rates they would have to pay on money borrowed to finance a deal.

A third cause of irritation (to all but the sellers) is the way Asian investment in select city housing areas and tourist resorts pushes up property prices beyond the reach of most local buyers.

Only in recent years has New Zealand admitted, let alone encouraged migrants from Asia. Since 1984, when the Labour Party came to power, investment barriers have been scrapped. Efforts to attract wealthy and skilled overseas Chinese have supplanted the traditional intake of new blood from old Britain.

The strains have now started to show, and can be illustrated by a series of recent incidents in Queenstown, this small scenic tourist resort town in the South Island's southern lakes region.

The local district council happily approves new multi-million-dollar golf course developments, one designed by New Zealand's best-known

golfer, Bob Charles, for foreign financiers. It is awake to the potential of tourism.

But it finds it can do nothing with central bureaucracy to help a Taiwanese businesswoman—who has just bought a big Queenstown tourist hotel—get permanent residence in New Zealand.

She had the cash qualifications for admission—the equivalent of US\$147,500 to cover "settling-in costs." She also had expensive plans to extend the hotel, and publicise New Zealand in Taiwan. But government immigration officials in Wellington rejected her on the ground she lacked business experience.

This attitude was echoed at Cabinet level about the same time. Just before the general elections last October, the Minister of Conservation, Dr. Peter Tapsell, vetoed the sale of a top-line state-owned golf course at Wairakei, near Lake Taupo, to Japanese interests.

His colleagues in the Labour government had earlier approved the deal. It provoked a public outcry from golfers fearing they would no longer

be able to afford the green fees, from Maoris (ever alert to their land rights) and from the public at large, alarmed at a growing number of land sales to foreigners.

The Japanese are getting the greatest amount of criticism. Old animosities die hard.

Older generations of New Zealanders remember the threat of invasion the Japanese represented in World War II, although submarine activity in New Zealand waters and a few floatplane reconnaissance flights were as far as they got.

Last November, a group representing more than 700 New Zealanders interned during the war nearly half-a-century ago, sent the Japanese government a US \$ 20,000 compensation claim for each prisoner or his surviving family.

Another controversy which brings Japan into the focus of resentment is that many hectares of native beech forest have been turned into wood-chips for Japan's pulp and paper industry.

## "Curry Munchers"

conciliation over the refusal of a Tauranga moteller to allow them to cook curry in their unit.

The proprietors defended their stance on the ground that the smell of hot spices lingered for a week and made the rooms difficult to let to others.

An official of the local motellers' association commented that a ban on cooking curries was a justified condition of occupancy and had nothing to do with race. —Depthnews Asia

resorts, they usually go for the higher-priced residences. They pay cash rather than get onto the multi-mortgage treadmill of most young New Zealand homeowners.

Asian tourists are worth more than Australians, Europeans or Americans in money terms. Japanese spend the equivalent of US \$119 a day, Singaporeans US\$79, while some other Asians get by on as little as US\$37.

But this does stop "No Japs" graffiti being plastered on a proposed Opotiki (North Island) tourist complex—being funded by Japanese developers.

And in the highly-popular hot springs and Maori cultural resort of Rotorua, some souvenir shopkeepers are claiming Japanese tour operators will starve them by making exclusive deals with Japanese-owned businesses in the town.

But New Zealand cannot ignore Japan, its second largest trading partner (after Australia). The new national government elected last October plans to send a senior minister to Tokyo this year to strengthen the bond.

Japan bought just 10 per cent of New Zealand's total exports in the year ended last June, mainly aluminium, fish, wool, kiwi fruit (Chinese gooseberries) and beef worth US \$15.6 billion.

Foreign Affairs Minister Don McKinnon says Japan has grown to be an awesome political power and has a formidable record for long-term purchase and ownership of raw materials all around the world.

"We therefore have to get closer to that country and have a better understanding of it because of the sheer economic impact it can on a nation such as ours and others in the South Pacific." —Depthnews Asia

## WHAT OTHERS SAY

### Carrying out the UN mandate

All leaders and observers agree that the United Nations has found its real authority to carry out the vision of world peace and stability as enshrined in its Charter. The institution remains the same as it was founded more than four decades ago, but its role and power have been overshadowed by brinkmanship associated with superpower rivalry and the Cold War. As the international scene underwent a unique transformation after the emergence of Mikhail Gorbachev as leader of the Soviet Union, the mood at the UN also started to change from confrontation to cooperation. As Mr Gorbachev and the Reagan and Bush administrations joined hands to promote disarmament and resolve regional conflicts, the process found the kind of sustenance about which the world's idealists had only dreamed for long. And as orthodox communism collapsed under the pressure of popular aspirations in Eastern Europe and the Berlin Wall came tumbling down, the concept of a new world order became a tantalising reality. Suddenly, the international community discovered the UN as a perfect framework and its Charter as a solid basis on which to build that order.

The emerging parameters of detente were, however, soon put to the test as Iraq's Saddam Hussein shrewdly picked his moment of opportunity to invade Kuwait. But he chose disastrously. The contours of the new order were not at blurred as he had evidently calculated: the world reacted fiercely and unitedly. No less than 12 resolutions were passed in the UN Security Council in a few weeks and with near unanimity. For once, Moscow joined Washington and other powers to vote together in condemnation of aggression, annexation and expansionism.

The point is that if the Security Council does not enjoy high authority and if it does not have the power to enforce its decisions, then it will remain a lame-duck body. What good is a decision if it cannot be implemented, and what good an institution if it cannot assert itself?

The argument will be that, in order to sustain its authoritative image, the UN and its Security Council must act uniformly and not seek implementation of their resolutions on a piecemeal basis. The resolutions passed in relation to the Palestinian issue and the Middle East conflict, for instance, must also be acted upon to maintain fairness and sense of justice. Absolutely correct. Those decisions must also be carried out and injustice wiped out. But it's only a question of priority which the world cannot ignore. The Kuwait problem arose at a time when events were moving in a direction where resolution of the Palestinian question would have become a political expediency. Once that aberration, that challenge is removed by settling the Kuwait tangle, the way would be clear to address the larger and older Middle East dispute. —Khalaf Times

## 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.

### Tribute to Salam

Sir, The tribute to Mr. Abdus Salam of the Observer (Star, Feb 8) is well deserved. Allow me to add a few lines on the genial soul.

The quietness and simplicity of genius is all-pervading — and rather invisible — like the air we breathe; whether it belonged to Einstein, at one level; or, to Salam, at another.

Salam imparted to the Observer a tone or atmosphere we have since been missing locally. His eccentricity was tolerable and benevolent; and his absent-mindedness disarming.

Looking back, it now appears that his moral courage was not only admirable, but formidable. I

vividly remember his pen-picture of Moulana Bhashani, then at the height of his popularity. In a brilliant and candid analysis, written in elegant style, he laid bare the true nature of this popular leader who could move millions with his oratory.

At a personal level, he used to encourage me as one of the regular small contributors during the '50s and '60s. Once I crossed swords with him on mathematics; in the rain, do you get less wet if you run, or when you walk slowly?

He carried his genius with a humility utterly overpowering. Once, in a huff, I stopped writing. One day he came down himself at my address to talk to

me; but, alas, it was my forwarding address. We never met.

Peace be upon you, Salam! A. Mawaz, Dhaka.

### Oranges and winter

Sir, Winter is a season when we get to see a variety of fruits in the market. Most prominent among them are oranges, both local and exotic.

Now orange, if one really relishes, is a fruit to be had, and at the same time it is good for health, particularly for the elderly and the children. It is rich with vitamins, so it is no doubt helpful for the body system.

Places like Sylhet grow this fruit in abundance. So there is, as a matter of fact, no dearth of this in winter. Some also come from our neighbouring countries too. But this is one product on which we do not have to waste our valuable foreign exchange.

It is a pity that with the end of winter, this fruit is

no longer there. Can't our scientists prolong its availability a bit?

Alauddin Rahman, Bogra.

### An appeal to the Acting President

Sir, We are a few helpless freedom fighters who have successfully qualified in the 9th BCS. Due to endless procedural hindrances in countersigning the FF certificate by the former President who was the chief adviser of the Muktiyodha Sangsad, we did not get an employment till today. Despite our repeated appeals the former President did not do anything for us in this regard. If anybody does not put his countersignature on the FF certificate even after that being successively recommended by the FF Central Council will you call it a justice? Obviously not. Now that these ordeals are over, we have put our best endeavours through holding of meeting and media representation seeking the

honourable Acting President's blessing and kind intervention for our immediate appointment.

But till now, we are in the helpless condition. Lastly, we are making a fervent appeal to the honourable Acting President to please help us to be appointed in the 9th BCS FF quota by waiving all that unnecessary preconditions of the past. Help us to get rid of the yoke of the unemployment at the earliest. As freedom fighters we look forward to be appointed against the reserved FF quota to the deserving posts and cadres. Your very kind and compassionate intervention and instruction will save us from further suffering.

We pray to the hon'ble Acting President: please save the qualified freedom fighters and their bewildered families.

P. Hasib Ahmed  
Roll No. D1-20203, on behalf of the helpless FF 9th BCS, Dhaka