

POVERTY ALLEVIATION PROGRAMME

Government-Donor-NGO Interface

A Very Encouraging First Step

The Prime Minister and the leaders of all 40 political parties deserve our commendation for the initiative they have collectively taken to solve the problems of violence and disruption in our educational institutions.

Among the problems identified by the leaders, as reported in the daily press, the one that deserves our immediate attention is that of armed violence on the campus.

While we applaud the leaders for their collective declaration to eliminate violence from campus, the sincerity of their words will be tested when they will have to put their decisions into actions.

The problem of session jam can be tackled once the university's classes can be held without interruption. Here cooperation from parent bodies of student parties is vital.

As our universities became violence prone and the sessions kept getting interrupted, our educational standards fell drastically. Today the university graduates we get, are often refused employment on the ground of their severe incompetence.

France and Bengali Culture

Back in 1971, when Bangladesh was fighting with its back to the wall for its very existence as a cultural and political entity, a voice rang out in Europe, decrying Pakistani genocide and championing Bangladesh's right to be free.

That a French intellectual should have spoken out for the plight of the Bengalees was perhaps not a surprise. Even before the storming of the Bastille on July 14, 1789, which ushered in the era of democracy in Europe, intellectual development in France had embarked on a glittering journey which eventually took it to heights rarely scaled since the days of the Greek city-states.

Bangladesh has benefited immensely from the cosmopolitan character the French acquired as a result of their intellectual development. Relations have grown over the centuries to the point where today Bangladeshi artists and other cultural figures are perhaps better known in Paris than any other European capital.

In the early part of this century, two Calcutta sisters named Aru Dutta and Toru Dutta impressed and delighted the Parisian intellectual community with their French poems. That was not the beginning nor the end of French fascination with Bengali culture, but merely a highlight.

The people of Bangladesh have been equally enthusiastic to get to know more about France, its people and way of life. An increasing number of people are travelling to France to conduct researches and study for higher degrees.

POVERTY alleviation can not be attained only through assisting the rural poor to small time farming or mini-scale non-farm commercial operations. Helping the rural poor by means of programmes viz. credit, counselling, training, etc. can only reduce the level of poverty, not eradicate it.

This logically raises the problem of choosing the appropriate institutional framework for reaching the target group (the poor) in order to minimize the incidence of leakage and misdirection of resource. The government machinery is manifestly procedure (rules and regulation) bound. It lacks flexibility in operational terms.

The two French have already left, but the New Zealanders are fighting for the right to stay in their adopted country.

The legal tug-of-war is an embarrassment for Prime Minister Walter Lini. He is facing his toughest political hurdle after sacking four more of his cabinet ministers in the country's on-going power struggle.

Peter and Aileen Wilson, now in their 50s, arrived in Vanuatu from New Zealand in 1971 — the same year the country's pro-independence party, Vanua'aku Pati, was born.

Peter Colmar, the third New Zealander, went to Vanuatu when he was 17. In two decades he has created a business on the northern island of Espiritu Santo with interests that include cattle farms, abattoirs, cocoa and coffee plantations and processing plants. He employs about 500 ni-Vanuatu workers.

Colmar's ni-Vanuatu wife, Madeleine Valeic, was recently honoured with a chiefly title, Moltamata.

The lives of these four and their families are in upheaval. Peter Colmar and Peter Wilson were last September served with deportation orders sent by Prime Minister Lini.

Although they are fighting the deportation orders through the courts, and are supported by several influential ni-Vanuatu politicians, their future is uncertain. No official reason has been given for the action and even senior cabinet ministers say they don't know what it is.

of job bound activity, further act as demotivating factors.

There is also a lot of talk about corruption and this is not limited to government servants. This has become a pervasive social phenomenon, continually eroding the basic moral and ethical values. This is evidenced in most individuals and institutions who have access to resource or power of decision over resource and patronage.

Basically the reason is the absence of public accountability. Successive autocratic governments have continually raised the level and the breadth of corruption. The autocracy influenced inclusion of heterogeneous and untrained elements into the civil bureaucracy ushering in corruption in rather an organized way.

Be that as it may the resultant disillusionment with government executed poverty programmes and rural development activities and the

switch over to non-government organizations (NGOs) for institutional support were but obvious and logical consequences of the existing situation.

The attitude among the public and government functionaries towards NGOs is mixed. In both these circles there is a recognition of the role of these NGOs in development activities.

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Government-Donor-NGO interface has to be viewed in that context and a strategy developed to utilize the services of NGOs to the best advantage...

The author is former Secretary, Industry and Defence, Govt of Bangladesh and a former UNIDO adviser on industrial development for Asia-Pacific. He also served as Principal Secretary to the President, Mr. Justice Abu Sayeed Choudhury.

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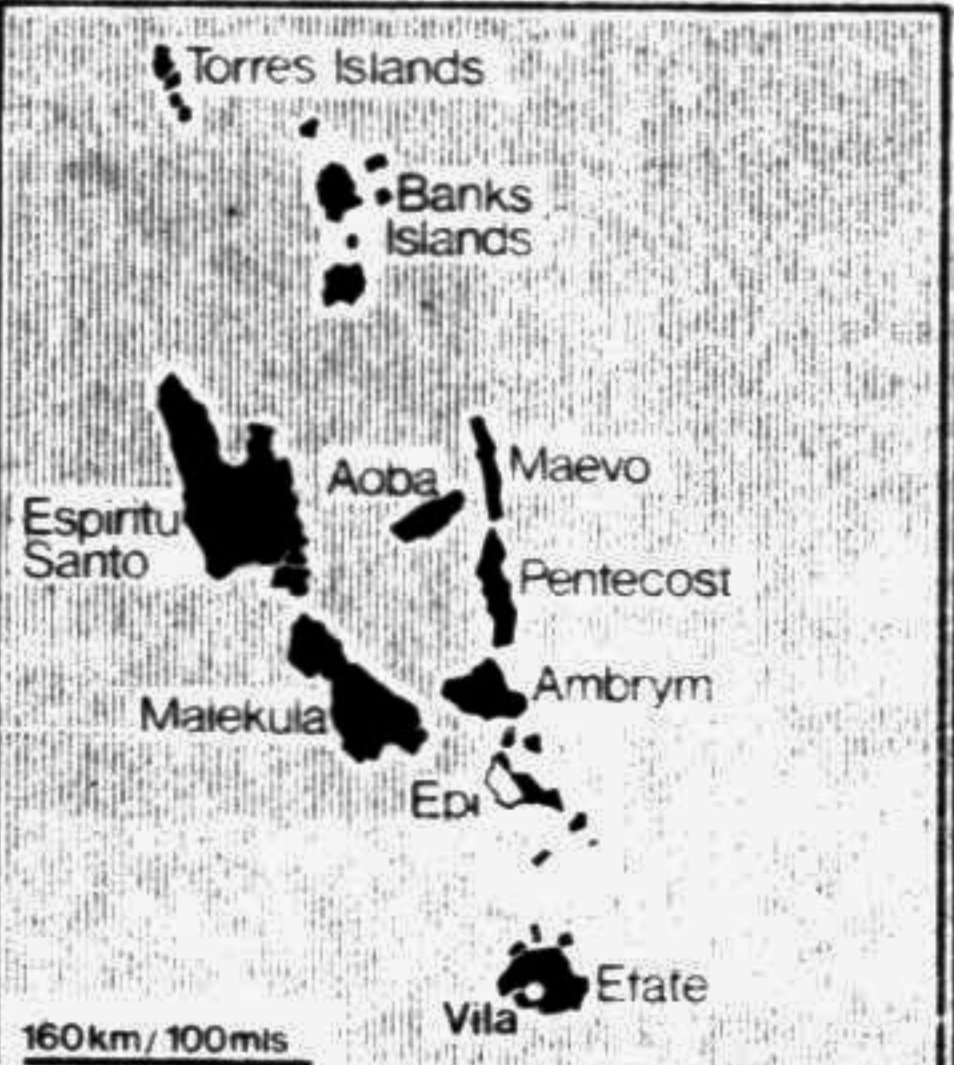
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Foreigners Used as Pawns in Vanuatu Crisis

David Robie writes from Port Vila

After 11 years in power, Vanuatu's ruling Vanua'aku Pati is deeply divided over the nation's leadership. Prime Minister Walter Lini has sacked four more key ministers, angering many in the party.

Lini's troubled paradise



Vanuatu: An Anglo-French condominium from 1906 to independence in 1980. Population: 150,000. Per capita GNP: \$880. Currency: 110.70 Vatu = \$1. Imports: \$71million. Exports: \$20million (1988).

However, it is widely thought in Vila that the deportations could be because Colmar and Wilson are regarded as a business threat to a leading Vietnamese businessman said to be associated with the prime minister.

Legal sources describe the cases as "blackbirding in reverse". This is a reference to the so-called blackbird trade between 1863 and 1904 when some 40,000 ni-Vanuatu were abducted to work on the canefields in Queensland.

Today, this nation of 82 islands has a population of 150,000.

The deportation cases are embroiled in a leadership struggle being waged around Lini. The New Zealand-educated prime minister and Vanua'aku Pati have led the country since its independence from joint British and French rule in 1980.

Age 48, he is a former Anglican priest and is regarded as the father of the nuclear-free and independent Pacific movement and a strong advocate for Kanak independence from France in neighbouring New Caledonia.

Since surviving an attempted constitutional coup in 1988, Lini has been under growing pressure. When he flew to Sydney in early May to

undergo tests after a mild heart attack, he sent ultimatums to four ministers and seven political secretaries — pledge loyalty or face dismissal.

When Lini returned to Port Vila on June 26 he forced a showdown. He sacked four key ministers — Foreign Minister Donald Kalpokas, Home Affairs Minister Iolu Abbil, Land Minister William Mahit and Trade Minister Harold Qualao.

In a national radio broadcast, Lini said he had dismissed Kalpokas and Abbil for breaching the country's official secrecy laws when they publicised a confidential letter in which they called on Lini to resign.

Key party officials have been trying to avoid a serious rift that could damage Vanua'aku Pati prospects going into the general election due in November.

On a visit to the United States in 1987, Lini suffered a stroke which left his left side partially paralysed. Nevertheless he steered the country through the devastation caused by Cyclone Uma and then weathered a bitter leadership challenge from former party secretary-general Barak Sope after the Vila riots of 1988.

He reportedly began losing his grip on public affairs in 1989. And the situation has deteriorated in the past six months, culminating with his recent heart attack.

Critics cite "irregular" decisions such as Lini's deportation orders against Colmar and Wilson after declaring last July on the 10th anniversary of independence that the era of expulsions was over. In addition he: (1) Sacked his private secretary, Grace Molisa, when she expressed concern over the expulsions; (2) Stripped five top ministers of key portfolios and took them on himself in spite of his health; (3)

Sacked Sela Molisa earlier this year and undertook a further portfolio reshuffle; (4) Sent ultimatum letters to senior cabinet colleagues.

The opposition Melanesian Prokresif Pati, led by Sope, and other critics have accused the Lini government of cor-

ruption and have called for a clean-up of the administration. Deportation orders against foreigners were condemned as undermining the national economy.

Grace Molisa protested over the deportation orders against Peter Colmar and Peter Wilson, and also against the two other deportations, those of Frenchmen Claude Boudier and Roberto Albanese.

DAVID ROBIE, a New Zealand journalist specialising in Pacific and development issues is a former editor of Insight Magazine.

OPINION

BCCI Bangladesh — Some Thoughts

Bank of England has stabbed BCCI in the back. The way BCCI has been killed is unprecedented in the history of international banking. International banking, until BCCI's appearance on the scene, was the exclusive domain of big British and American banks.

Now let us think about BCCI in Bangladesh. BCCI had been functioning in Bangladesh as a branch of BCCI (Overseas) Ltd which is incorporated in the island of Grand Cayman in the Caribbean.

For the subsequent years, the bank's capital requirement in relation to its deposit liabilities was met every year

M A Shahid Banani, Dhaka

To the Editor...

Solar energy

Sir, I express my thanks to Mr. Rafique Tito for his letter on solar energy, published in your daily on June 13. Alternative and renewable energy is very important not only for present world but also for future world.

During the last Eid festival holidays, I visited one tea estate in Sylhet, where they are using solar electrical power system for irrigation and plantation purpose. The manager of that tea garden discussed with me different uses of solar PV system in Bangladesh. He informed me that in Bangladesh too, solar power system is being used for home lighting and medical purpose, like preser-

vation of life saving drugs in remote and coastal areas. He showed me different paper cuttings regarding the use of solar power system in Bangladesh.

I agreed with Mr. Rafique that government as well as the private sector should take initiative to accelerate the use of solar power system in our country. It is my opinion that solar energy should be subsidized by the government facilitating its successful introduction.

Choudhury Zaman Mirpur Road, Dhaka

Code of conduct

Sir, The post of Attorney General is provided under

Article 64 (1) of the national Constitution and carries national and international importance. But the conduct and behaviour of Attorney General Mr. Aminul Haq with the accused Mr. H. M. Ershad (ex-president, now MP) in the Court of Special Tribunal, case No. 7/91 State Vs. H. M. Ershad, on July 3 as published in the national dailies on July 4, threatening and showing cruelty to the accused reportedly using such words as "You shut up! Will you sit down? Will you stop?" etc. in presence of the honourable judge, lawyers, journalists and observers unwarrantedly tentatively to violation of the national Constitution — provided

under Article 35 (5) and the Code of Criminal Procedure under Section 342 of 1898.

The Article 35 (5) of the national Constitution states that "No person shall be subjected to torture or to cruel, inhuman or degrading punishment or treatment." The Code of Criminal Procedure under Section 342 (1) (3) of 1898 speaks that "The accused is to explain any circumstances appearing in the evidence against him at any stage of enquiry or trial may be taken into consideration by the court."

Helal Uddin Ahmed General Secretary, Manobadhiker Legal Aid Council, Dhaka