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. We are well aware that Friday's meeting was but the first step and that there are many tricky issues that remain to be addressed. Yet we welcome this initiative of the PM and thank all the leaders for responding to the urgent need of restoring academic atmosphere in our universities.

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. Rivalry between student organisations are now expressed in gun battles fought out in broad daylight lasting over hours with the law enforcing bodies looking the other way. The violent outburst resulting from seat allocation by the Jagannath Hall authorities is the most recent of many examples, indicating that the affairs of the universities are totally out of control. Earlier a student organisation was able to take physical control of Chittagong University and keep it from functioning properly for about six months. Such blatant violation of the law of the land cannot be permitted any more.

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. In a way the solution is more simple than it may appear at the outset. In reality there are only a few student parties that are capable of indulging in armed violence on the campus. If student wings of the leading political parties are forced to surrender the arms in their possession and some of the known culprits are put behind the bars, then violence will virtually disappear from the campus. Then will come the task of maintaining that peaceful atmosphere. Strict security measures will have to be adopted at the students' halls where gangsters and anti-social elements live illegally, occupying seats allocated to genuine students. In this regard university authorities may consider setting up University Security Squads who will be empowered to detain miscreants and hand them over to the police. Historically university students resent police entering the campus. It may therefore be far useful to set up university's own security. Such practice is common in universities in Europe, USA and in the Southeast Asian region.

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 reported in The Daily Star, the government is actively considering new legislation to punish those who create terror on the campus. We believe such legal measures are needed and it will receive the support of all.

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. So quality will have to be given back its central place in our education. For this not only the students but also the teachers will have to do a bit of soul searching. The fact cannot be ignored any more that our university teachers themselves are often unable to meet the high academic standards that are necessary to produce worthy graduates and master's degree holders. Some sort of evaluative mechanism of the performance of teachers - like number and quality of publications - should be introduced to bring the concept of accountability of teachers back into vogue.

We eagerly await concrete actions as a followup of Friday's meeting.

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. The voice belonged to Andre Malraux, a giant among even the formidable community of intellectuals in France. Malraux's voice spoke not only for his own, but for the conscience of all France, indeed all Europe

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. Today's France, and its culture, is a product of that heritage.

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. Today, the works of Bengalee poets and authors such as Sharat Chatterjee are studied and researched at the Sorbonne, the most prestigious seat of learning in France. France has always shown a willingness to promote Bengali culture and the French public has never been slow to re-

spond favourably. 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. The language barrier, which works as the most serious obstacle to any people-to-people contact, does pose a problem, particularly for Bangladeshis wishing to acquaint themselves with French culture. But judging by the number of people learning French in this country - some 2,100 students enrol every year at the two Alliance Francaises in Dhaka and Chittagong - individuals at every level of society are putting in some sincere effort to bridge that gap. Governments apart. it is this cultural, free interaction between peoples that will eventually shrink this world sufficiently enough for us to begin thinking of man-

kind as a singular whole.

POVERTY ALLEVIATION PROGRAMME

Government—Donor—NGO Interface

not be attained only through assisting the rural poor to small time farming or mint-scale nonfarm 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. The main reason is the limitation of traditional technology. But introduction of better technology requires an altogether different programme which may divert resources and leave the most poor group of the development process. This again is not a desirable state of affairs. Poverty programmes must find a place in the development plan. However, too much of external assistance creates such a high degree of dependency that the economically marginal individ uals/families subsequently become unable to get along without it. This is dysfunctional to the longer term economic and social development goals. This dependency coupled with the technological divide keep the poor caught in the poverty trap. Therefore, resource allocation for longer term devel-

careful choice of priorities. 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)

opment projects and the im-

mediate poverty removal pro-

grammes must be based on

bound. It lacks flexibility in operational terms. Simultane ously a government servant's dutilulness is usually bound to his need for the job. Additionally, low salary and ab sence of any other positive motivation, e.g., reward for extra zeal or effort beyond the need 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 pervastve 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. Examples are the private enterprises exploiting labour, evading taxes, selling low quality goods (even food and medicine): politicians who shift allegiance overnight; students who forcibly collect contribution and use firearms: a

by ASH K Sadique switch over to non-government organizations (NGOs) for institutional support were but obvious and logical conse-

ments at the initial period 1950's).

ernment's NGO Affairs Bureau and those who are not. But the first type of organizations are the ones that are now commonly identified as NGOs. There are the NGOs who receive foreign assistance for their activities.

In the second category there are many voluntary and philanthropic social, cultural and economic organizations who work at the grass-roots level within smaller geographical areas. They receive token (nominal) annual grants from the government. Their activities, however, are neither, monitored nor audited. They work totally independently.

have grown too big to run efficiently. They themselves have become bureaucratic. The resultant inefficiency is compounded by management in competence and lack of trained officials (some donors have instituted training programmes to take care of this situation): ii) the NGOs are fully dependent on the commitment and leadership of individuals, the original sponsors. In longer term perspective, this situation causes inherent organizational weakness and instability, especially for bigger NGOs : iti) not all of them are really voluntary and non-profit organizations. Donor fund is a principal source of

livelihood for some sponsors.

Some commercial NGOs are

exploitative of workers. How

they utilize the surplus (profit)

is not always manifest in their

reports; and iv) some have be-

come highly, almost fully, de-

pendent on foreign donations.

affecting the very basis of their

original mission of voluntary

philanthropic service to the

society, while some others are

sectarian in their group ap-

mood is receptive to the idea

of utilizing the services of

oping interpersonal frictions,

as NGOs are more careful about

it, because of their financial

Sacked Scla Molisa earlier

this year and undertook a fur-

ther portfolio reshuffle; (4)

Sent ultimatum letters to

The opposition Melanesian

Prokresif Pati, led by Sope,

and other critics have accused

the Lini government of cor-

senior cabinet colleagues.

Nevertheless, the prevalent

proach.

dependence and also because of the absence of social and hierarchical factors generating such frictions. The problematic point is choosing the right NGO to work with. One guide is their track record in properly executing projects. But this claim has to be reviewed carefully to ensure that the given fund actually benefited the target group and that the fund is fully used for them, not on substantial overhead expenses or in

maximizing profit for the NGOs. A useful solution is to finance the smaller grassroots level societies. But there are legal limitations to this, as all foreign donor funds must be channelled only through the Bureau registered NGOs. One way to resolve this problem is to finance those local societies through the registered NGOs which could be done by means of specific agreements on sharing the execution of

project and its fund.

However, due to many centuries of tradition, the people of Bangladesh (including politicians, professionals, also government bureaucrats) contimue to look up to the government as the major source of development activities. One should not expect to engineer changes too quickly or too abruptly, without causing serious political and social backlash. It has to be built up from below and within, not imposed externally it is wiser to morfvate politicians and government servants, instead of

The author is former Same forty, Industry and Deleve, Cost of Bangladesh and a former UNIDO adviser on industrial development for Asia-Pucific. He also served as Principal Secretary to the President Mr. Justice Abu Sayerd Chowdhury.

quences of the existing situa-While on this subject, one must also remember that government activities over the last 40 years have not been an unmitigated disappointment or failure. Many developments and progress in the agricultural and rural sectors have been achieved almost entirely by the government depart-(starting from V-AID in the

A substantial part of the

Disillusionment with government executed poverty programmes and rural development activities and switch over to NGOs for institutional support were but obvious and logical consequences of existing situation... Government-Donor-NGO interface has to be viewed in that context and a strategy developed to utilise the services of NGOs to the best advantage....

doctor who would neglect hospital patients in favour of his private clinic; a foreign consultant who finds the country easy ground for charging exorbitant fees for second rate performance: and the like Avoiding government officials will not necessarily mean losing contact with corruption

Basically the reason is the absence of public accountabil ity. 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. This suited well the self appointed rulers. Social and political corruption is their wherewithal for continuing in power.

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

blame for the fathure to reach the benefits of developments to the poor must be placed on wrong planning, mistaken priorities, obsolete strategies and external (World Bank et al) preferences and advice. As was pointed out by one eminent Indian economist and member of Indian Planning Commission that although India achieved all the physical targets in agriculture and food production, the poor remained poor, without adequate access to food. Bangladesh is an aggravated

case in point. 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. that is, making it achieve the primary mission of reaching the target group and at once ensuring cost effectiveness.

The term NGO should normally refer broadly to two categories of organizations, viz. those registered with the gov-

The attitude among the public and government funetionaries towards NGOs is mixed. In both these etreles there is a recognition of the role of these NGOs in development activities, based mainly on five factors, namely : i) flexibility in operational procedure ; ii) supplement government effort by finance and organization; iii) their participatory approach in reaching the target group without the need to conform to any fixed (e.g. government type) regulations: iv) the personal commitment of the sponsors/leaders of these organizations to public welfare which is unlikely among government officials; and v) the voluntary participative grassroots organi zations are viewed as bases for stable and healthy growth of democratic institutions in the

country. On the negative side the following arguments have been voiced: i) some of these NGOs

these NGOs to reach the social and economic goals of the na seeming to force them. Funding NGOs seems an easier way out for foreign donor agencies in order to avoid the intricacies of government bureaucracies. It is easier to interact with NGOs with lesser possibility of devel-

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 na-

tion's leadership. Prime Minister Walter Lini has sacked four more key ministers, anger-

HREE New Zealanders and two Frenchmen who migrated to Vanuatu 20 years ago and carved out prosperous new lives have become pawns in a political power struggle in this South Pacific country. They have been given notorious

orders without reason. The two French have already left, but the New Zealanders are fighting for the right to stay in their adopted

"green letters" - deportation

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

Peter and Ailcen 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. A hard-working builder, Peter Wilson established a successful construction business employing about 80 ni-Vanuatu

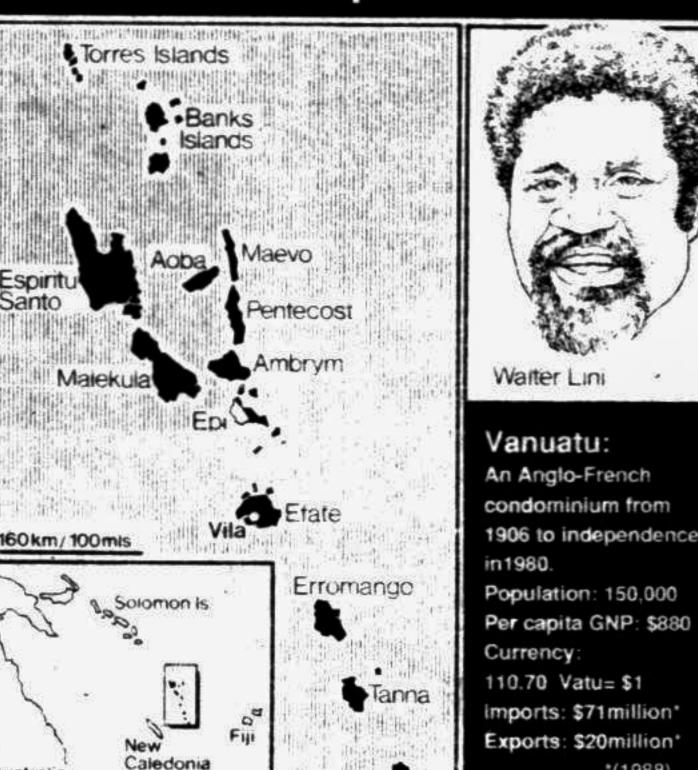
workers. Peter Colmar, the third New Zealander, went to Vanuatu when he was 17. In two decades he has created a business on the northern island of Espiritu Santo with interests that include cattle farms, abattoirs, cocoa and coffee plantations and processing plants. He employs

about 500 ni-Vanuatu. Colmar's ni-Vanuatu wife, Madeleine Valele. recently honoured with a

chiefly title, Molitamata. 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. They were given a month's notice to abandon their homes and interests. They don't know why.

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.

ing many in the party. The political upheaval, arbitrary deportation of foreign-born resignation dents and allegations of corruption threaten the stability of the Pacific's youngest nation, there Lini's troubled paradise



Aneityum

The deportation cases are

embroiled in a leadership

struggle being waged around

Lini. The New Zealand-edu-

cated prime minister and

country since its indepen-

dence from joint British and

Anglican priest and is

regarded as the father of the

nuclear-free and independent

Pacific movement and a strong

advocate for Kanak indepen-

dence from France in neigh-

Since surviving an at-

tempted constitutional coup in

1988, Lini has been under

growing pressure. When he

flew to Sydney in early May to

Article 64 (1) of the national

bouring New Caledonia.

Aged 48, he is a former

French rule in 1980.

Vanua'aku Pati have led the

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. Conditions were harsh and many died. Australia deported the survivors in 1906.

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

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 broad-

cast, 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

undergo tests after a mild

heart attack, he sent ultima-

tums to four ministers and

seven political secretaries -

pledge loyalty or face dis-

Vila on June 26 he forced a

When Lini returned to Port

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 deporation 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)

functioning in Bangladesh as a branch of BCCI (Overseas) Ltd which is incorporated in the island of Grand Cayman in the Caribbeans. As a precondition for opening a branch in Bangladesh, BCCl had to obtain banking licence from Bangladesh Bank and had to bring in US dollar 200,000.00 as initial capital as per Bangladesh Bank rule then existing, before commencing its operation in the latter half of 1976. Though it was a branch operation, BCCI in Bangladesh. unlike other foreign banks here, had all along been managed by Bangladeshi staff excepting for the first country Manager who was a Pakistani --but he was here for a brief pe-

clean-up of the administration. Deportation orders against foreigners were condemned as undermining the national economy Grace Molisa protested over the deporation orders against Wilson, and also against the two other deportations, those of Frenchmen Claude Boudier and Roberto Albanez.

ruption and have called for a

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

- GEMINI NEWS

OPINION

BCCI Bangladesh — Some Thoughts

Bank of England has stabbed BCCl 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. BCCI became their competitor and took away a chunk of their (big British and American banks') business - particularly of the third world countries. Most of the banks (including some central banks) of the third world countries opened their accounts with BCC, London and other financial centres. Perhaps many of these banks shifted part of their balances from British banks to BCCI. causing, no doubt, their annoyance and anger. Their jealousy at BCC's pehnomenal growth their annoyance and anger coupled with the alleged Zionist clique to kill BCC, a bank owned by a Muslim family of Middle East and representing the third world countries. deliberately and most nakedly brought the bank to liquidation world-wide. If this is not a conspiracy, what else is? Now let us think about BCCI

in Bangladesh. BCCl had been riod.

For the subsequent years. the bank's capital requirement in relation to its deposit lia bilities was met every year

from out of its profits and the balance profit was used to be remitted out to its head office in US dollar with prior approval of Exchange Control Department of Bangladesh Bank. The question is, did the initial capital of dollar 200,000.00 keep the bank alive all these years? Certainly not. How, then did it live -and live well, for such a long time.? Whose money was at stake in BCC business in Bangladesh? It is the money of the Bangladeshi depositors and Bangladeshi wage earners abroad, Their money made BCQ a big name in banking, finan cial and business circles of the country. BCC Bangladesh has no external liability. It has sufstantial assets in banks abroad in hard currencies. For all practical purposes, BCC in Bangladesh had always been a 100 per cent lexcepting for the initial capital of US dollar 200,000 00 as aforesaid, against which substantial amount of US dollar has been remitted to its head office as profits during the last 14 years) Bangladeshi enterprise managed 100 per cent by Bangladeshi staff with resources put in by Bangladeshis at home and abroad. it would, therefore, appear

to be in the fitness of things that Bangladesh Government start negotiations with Bank of England and liquidators of owners of BCCI (O/S) Ltd for acquisition of BCC Bangladesh and merger of the same with some other local bank (preferably with a nationalised bank) as soon as possible, in the larger interest of our country's banking system. In doing so, some losses may have to be taken or absorbed by the Government which in my opinion, is worth taking in greater economic and public interests. Bangladesh Government should also take urgent steps to realise the foreign currency balances of BCCI Dhaka and other Bangladeshi banks with BCCI London and other places.

M A Shahid Banani, Dhaka.

to the title or... 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 costal 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 introduc-

Mirpur Road, Dhaka

Choudhury Zaman

Code of conduct Sir, The post of Attorney

General is provided under

haviour of Attorney General Mr. Aminul Haq with the accused Mr. H.M. Ershad (Expresident, 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 report-

Will you stop?" etc. in presence of the honourable judge, lawyers, journalists and observers unwarrantedly tentamounts to violation of the national Constitution - provided

edly using such words as "You

Constitution and carries national and international importance. But the conduct and be-

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 shut up ! Will you sit down? 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