

# It Takes Two to Do the Nuclear Tango

by Rula El-Rifai

**Amid the clamour over the nuclear weapons programme of Iraqi President Saddam Hussein, Israel's role in raising the nuclear stakes in the Middle East has gone largely unnoticed. Yet Israel, one of Iraq's avowed enemies, began developing its nuclear weapons arsenal in the Fifties and by most accounts has long had the region's only stash of nuclear warheads. Israel's role in provoking the region's arms race can no longer be overlooked.**

## Palestinian Rights

As perhaps should have been expected, the first two days of the Madrid conference on the Middle East were characterised by an Israeli display of intransigence, and indignation from the Arab side. A fairly poor start, but it was a start nevertheless, without anybody walking out any stage.

The Palestine Liberation Organization declared in 1988 its acceptance of United Nations Security Council resolutions 242 and 338, thereby implicitly recognising Israel's right to a secure existence. United States Secretary of State James Baker clearly thinks the resolutions point to a land for peace arrangement. So do the Arabs. What is the problem, then? The problem is Israel's version of what constitutes its security needs, as was evident from Shamir's speech at the conference. But an even bigger problem appears to be posed by the increasingly demonstrative divergence of views on the issue that should form the core of the conference agenda: Israel's security of Palestinian rights? Shamir would have the world believe that Israel's security was the only thing that mattered which could only be guaranteed by "secure boundaries" combined with an unqualified undertaking by the Arab world not to threaten it.

The reality on the ground, however, is somewhat different. Unfortunately, President George Bush in his statement to the opening session of the conference, went some way to lend credence to the Israeli position by continually referring to security, while saying very little about Palestinian national rights. He preferred instead to talk about "fairness" in territorial arrangements. Bush talked about "give and take", even though since 1947 only the Arabs have given and the Israelis taken. The Palestinians have given up their old dream of recovering the whole of their homeland lost in 1948, and accepted Israel's right to exist within its pre-1967 borders. At the same time, Israel has been busy annexing the Golan Heights and carving out nearly a third of Lebanon in the name of security, without a hint of any "give". However, at this juncture of the process, we have little choice but to assume that Bush's statement was designed primarily to keep the conference on the rails by not upsetting the Israelis too much.

President Bush's comment about territorial "compromise" being essential for peace would also seem to be a departure from UN resolutions which did not refer to any compromise but to withdrawal from occupied land. Our memory is still fresh with George Bush's thoroughly uncompromising stance on implementation of UN resolutions concerning withdrawal of Iraqi troops from Kuwait. Thus we are a little baffled at seeing the same president stressing the security needs of an aggressor state, without laying equal stress on the rights of the aggrieved party. Realistically, we perhaps cannot expect a US president to be as tough on Israel as he can be on an Arab aggressor, but we can and certainly should expect Bush to impress upon Tel Aviv that the real issue at Madrid is Palestinian rights, and not Israeli security.

Nobody has ever doubted that Israel's security concerns — like that of any other state — are legitimate. But we cannot accept any legitimisation of occupation of other people's territory. There can hardly be any peace in the region until justice prevails and Palestinian right to statehood is established. And peace is the best and only guarantee Israel can have for its security. It is primarily the responsibility of the Arab delegates, the co-sponsors of the conference, the US and the Soviet Union, to define the agenda more clearly to Israel. If we are to move from Madrid on to other venues to negotiate over more specific bilateral and multilateral issues.

## Unusually Good Music on Air

There was a particularly showy — not really attractive — and expensively spread out advertisement in the main newspapers of the nation for almost all of the last week. The less than 70-word ad took up 24 column-inches of space, sufficient to display words ten times that. A very out of the way thing it came out to be. What had it to advertise so wastefully?

There comes the real charm of the thing. It is the Director of Programme Planning of Radio Bangladesh inviting listeners to a very improved, both qualitatively and technically, fare of pre-mid night musical session on the radio. The 45-minute session would nightly be devoted to solo performances of Tagore and Nazrul songs, Folk music, Devotional songs or songs from the olden days.

The unusualness of the message as a subject of newspaper advertisement surpassed even the freakish look of the insert. No one remembers the radio authority taking out paid advertisements in newspapers to inform its listeners of anything, howsoever important. The newspapers, on their own, publish radio programmes. And they equally avidly publish any announcement relating to programme as part of their service to readers. Then why this big and very disturbing rounds of advertisements in uninviting Bengali and with mis-spelt words?

This can patently be a case of some over-enthusiastic functionary getting beyond his waters in his zeal to catch first the eye and then the ear of the listeners. That's too bad to be endurable. But perhaps a whiff of tragedy also wafts down from the wasty ad. It is common knowledge that there are more radio listeners in Bangladesh than there are newspaper readers. The element of tragedy lies in the fact that even after that the radio has to go on to newspapers to get at its listeners. Why? Because the radiowallahs feel, they know it in their guts, that it is a losing battle they are fighting against television. From a defeatist mentality they have resorted to splashy newspaper advertising. But it is not a fact that people all over Bangladesh keep their TV sets on all day long, for the simple reason that there is no telecasting during the day. Daytime announcement of the radio's late-night sessions of improved music would have covered far more people than all the advertisements taken out ever could.

It remains now to be seen if the merchandise so advertised is worth all the money spent on its touting. If the music turns out indeed to be unusually good then may be part of the wastage could be thought of as somewhat atoned for.

In the flurry of attention paid to Iraq's nuclear weapons programme, most commentators have overlooked the role Israel has played in heating up the regional arms race in the Middle East.

It is now clear that Iraq's President Saddam Hussein has energetically sought to develop nuclear weapons; recent revelations have removed any doubt that before the Gulf War at least, he was much closer to achieving his goal than anyone realised.

Largely overlooked, however, is the role that Israel has played in fanning Iraq's desire to acquire those nuclear arms. Surely that desire must have had something to do with the fact that one of its greatest foes in the region already had the ultimate weapon.

Whether, or why Israel needs nuclear weapons is not the issue here. Nor is it proper to suggest that Iraq's nuclear weapons programme was driven only by fear of Israeli capability. As his decade-long war with Iran and invasion of Kuwait amply illustrated, Saddam has never lacked enemies in the region.

But Israel's nuclear capability should be part of the discussion about Iraq's plans. Indeed, Israel's weapons are a major destabilising force in the region.

Israel, which refuses to sign the Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty, has the most advanced ballistic missile force outside the five acknowledged nuclear powers and is thought to possess between 100 and 200 nuclear warheads.

Experts agree that Israel's high level of nuclear expertise has almost certainly allowed it to develop warheads small enough to be delivered on missiles which can travel up to 1,500 kilometres.

Col. John Speight of the Center for Defence Studies at King's College in London points to a link between Israel's warheads and Iraq's longing for nuclear capability: "Iraq felt technically inferior to Israel," he says. "Iraq felt at a disadvantage and started relying on chemical weapons hoping one day to match Israeli nuclear capabilities."

The United Nations inspection team sent to Iraq following the Gulf War concluded that if the Iraqi regime had had access to enough weapons-grade material such as enriched uranium, it would have

been some 18 months away from possessing an implosion device similar to the bomb dropped on Nagasaki. That conclusion was based mostly on estimates of the pre-Gulf War situation.

There are three ways to produce enriched uranium: electromagnetic separation, centrifugal enrichment and chemical enrichment. It was discovery of Iraq's centrifuge production facility at Al-Furat that so shocked the West and resulted in a flurry of media attention.

The Al-Furat facility was not previously known to the West and went unscathed during the United States-led coalition bombings of Iraq. UN documents said it would have been ready to produce 500 centrifuges — devices used to enrich uranium — annually by early 1986. To produce the 25 kilograms of highly enriched uranium needed to build one nuclear warhead would require 1,600 to 2,000 centrifuges.

The UN team also found two electromagnetic separation plants in Al-Sharqat near Baghdad and Tarmiya in northern Iraq. Production had begun in Tarmiya last year and was expected to reach full annual production of 15 kilograms of highly enriched uranium within 36 months. The facility in Al-Sharqat had been built but still lacked equipment. Both plants were severely damaged during the Gulf War.

A nuclear reactor in Tuwaitha, south of the Iraqi capital, was also identified as part of Iraq's nuclear-weapons programme. Inspectors discovered that it had an electromagnetic facility which could have produced three kilograms of enriched uranium a year, had it been continuously functioning at full capacity for at least two years before the Gulf War.

In a paper written for the Nuclear Control Institute, weapons expert Carson Mark

says the UN team failed to note that even with small amounts of highly enriched uranium, Iraq would still have lacked beryllium, a material required for atomic explosions. Others noted a lack of skilled technicians who could design and build warheads.

Andrew Duncan, an analyst with the International Institute for Strategic Studies in London, says: "We give too much prominence to what the UN team finds... With one or two exceptions, most of these facts were already known or suspected."

"Now after the Gulf War, they (Iraq) don't really have a capability at all," Duncan said. But he cautioned: "There is always the chance to restart the programme."

Israel's nuclear programme started years ago. The first detailed revelations about it came in 1986 from Mordechai Vanunu, a former Israel Atomic Energy Commission employee, who led information about the

programme to London's Sunday Times. Vanunu said Israel had material for between 100 and 200 atomic warheads and was working to develop thermonuclear weapons. Following those revelations, Vanunu was abducted to Israel by the Israeli secret service Mossad and sentenced in 1988 to 18 years in prison on charges of treason and divulging official secrets.

"Vanunu is like the UN inspection team," said Duncan. "He confirmed what was already known."

The Israeli nuclear programme started in the early Fifties under the country's first prime minister, David Ben-Gurion. With help from France, it built its first nuclear reactor at Dimona in the Negev desert. Considered a top secret military establishment, the facility has never been opened for inspection by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). Dimona is believed to include a reactor, plutonium separation plant, gas centrifuge and laser isotopic plants for the production of enriched uranium.

(Vanunu said Dimona had been producing 40 kilograms of weapons-grade plutonium for more than a decade — ten times more than the four kg needed to produce a warhead. He also said Israel had produced 170 kg of lithium 6 — enough to produce 35 thermonuclear weapons.)

By 1968, a secret CIA document had concluded that Israel was in possession of nuclear weapons. From then on, Israel jealously guarded its nuclear capability, going to great lengths to ensure that no other regional power became its match.

In June 1981 Israel destroyed Iraq's French-built Osirak nuclear reactor situated about 12 miles southeast of Baghdad. Israeli government officials said the reactor was nearly operational and would produce nuclear weapons for use against Israel. The French and the IAEA disagreed.

CIA reports from 1979 and 1980, quoted by the Washington Post ten years

after they were written, confirmed that South Africa and Israel had colluded on nuclear matters. "Israelis have not only participated in certain South African nuclear research activities over the last few years," the report said, "but they have also offered and transferred various sorts of advanced non-nuclear weapons technology to South Africa."

In 1985 Aerospace Daily, a US aeronautics industry newsletter, quoted unidentified military sources as saying that Israel had recently deployed Jericho 2 missiles, which are capable of carrying nuclear warheads up to 1,500 kilometres, in the Golan Heights and Negev desert.

Israel will not even admit it has such weapons, and repeats that it will not be the first country to introduce nuclear weapons to the region.

Particularly disturbing is that Western powers have made no visible attempt to curtail Israel's destabilising nuclear capabilities, while portraying Iraq's once-destabilising but now largely destroyed programme as a looming menace.

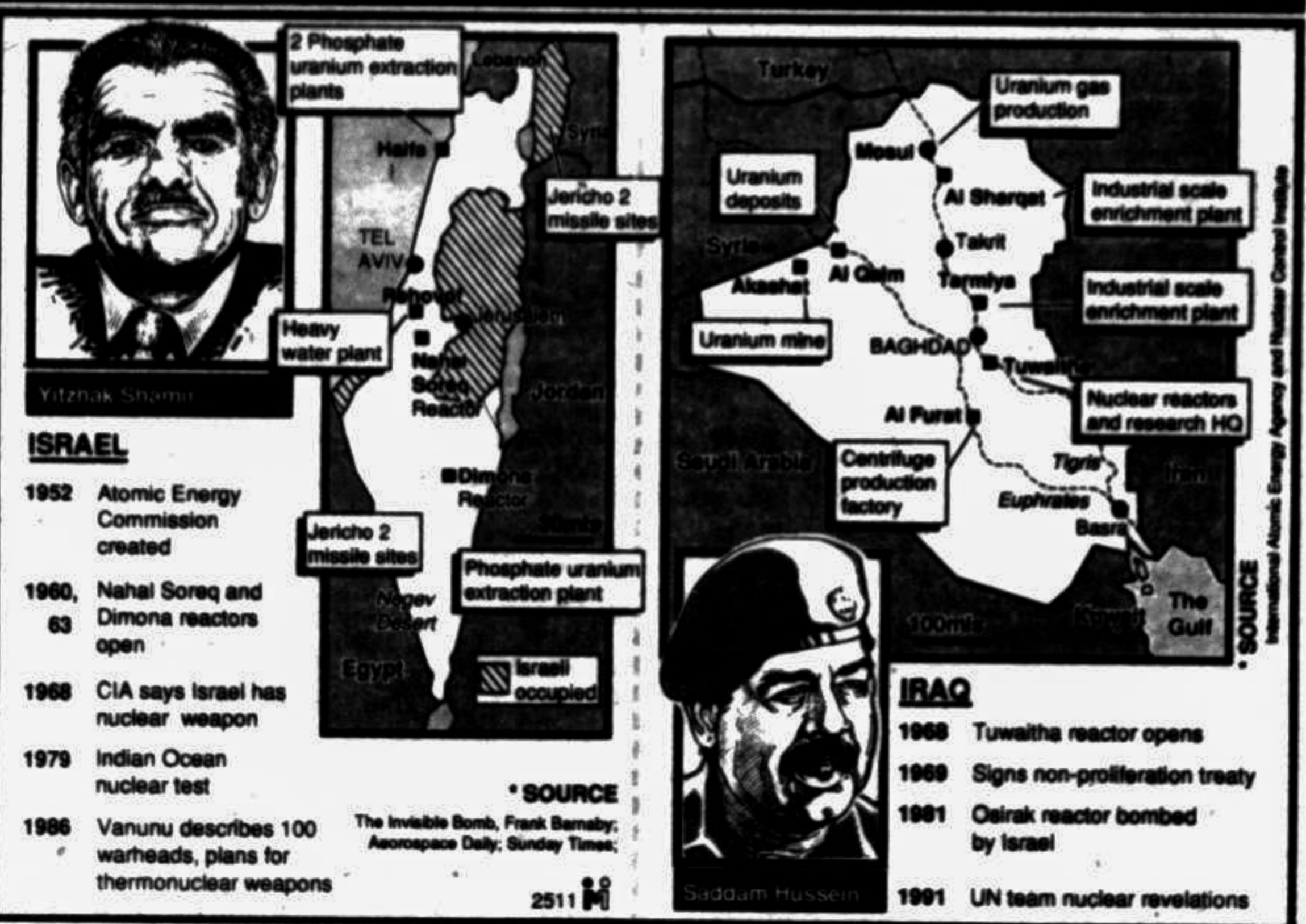
Similar double standards were at work when the Iraqi president was denounced for declaring before the Gulf War that any country to attack Iraq would be annihilated. "By God we will make the fire eat up half of Israel if it tries to do anything against Iraq," he said, prompting critics to label him a madman. Yet Saddam was merely enunciating, albeit in crude terms, classic principles of deterrence — a ruler's version of the "mutually assured destruction" which has been adhered to for decades by the US and Soviet Union.

Israel is being asked to give up land for peace. It is unlikely it will also be asked to give up nuclear weapons. From then on, Israel jealously guarded its nuclear capability, going to great lengths to ensure that no other regional power became its match.

Contrary to popular belief, destruction of Iraq's nuclear pretensions has not removed the nuclear threat from the Middle East equation. That equation still has another side. — GEMINI NEWS.

RULA EL-RIFAI is a freelance journalist who formerly worked in the Middle East head office of the Spanish News Agency EFE.

## Middle East nuclear foes



## Budget 1991-92 : Alternative Thoughts-II

by Muhammed Ayenuddin

20 lac tons foodgrains on an average per year. Question naturally arises as to why the rate of production is so low in our country. The reasons, apparently, are — (i) only 23.7 of total land, area is under irrigation and rest 65.3%, dependant on the mercy of nature; (ii) we use only 59.2 kg fertilizer per acre whereas Japan, Korea, China use 357 to 430 kg to increase the yield; (iii) land under irrigation also do not get required water as the poor cultivator cannot afford to pay the high price of diesel and electricity necessary for such irrigation; (iv) poor cultivators cannot procure required fertilizer for their lands as the price of the same is also very high; (v) use of fertilizer without supplying proper quantum of water affects production and, above all, (vi) clumsy process in granting agricultural loan and unusual corruption of the officials and employees related thereto hamper the whole thing very much. Needless to mention that none of the past Governments had nor the present one has yet made any attempt to remove the hindrances which stand on the way of increasing production.

It may be stated here that the donor countries have never shown any real interest in increasing the rate of our production nor they are likely to do it in future. Because, assumably, they know that if Bangladesh can utilize its agricultural sector properly and in its fullest sense of the term, they may lose a great market and the surplus money they invest in Bangladesh shall, in that sense, be of no use.

**Full Utilization**  
It is not by checking tax evasion but by fully utilizing agriculture sector we can build up our national economy on a solid foundation and change the fate of our poor people. Because with the development in the agriculture sector, 85% people of this country will be benefited as they are dependent on the same either directly or indirectly. The farmer who gets 25 maunds paddy at the present rate of production, will get 75 maunds if the production is increased three-fold which is possible by effort. In the same process, 'Adhishri' who are the real producers/cultivators will enjoy the same benefit and standard of their living will be enhanced. For additional production nation will need more labourers and new situations will be created for the huge unemployed persons. Out of 2.25 crore labourers now employed in the country, 1.70 crore are in agriculture. Increase in production will no doubt double the number of labourers. In addition, then the nation will need large number of new godowns for storage of additional produce and for construction of such godowns and their maintenance quite a good number of the unem-

ployed will be absorbed. Moreover, for transportation, movement and export of additional foodgrains another large number of people will be required. This will also help in reducing the unemployment problem to a considerable extent.

To increase production we shall have to use fertilizer and make provision for irrigation as efficiently as that in Japan, Korea and other countries. It may not be out of place to mention that we require near about 30 million tons of fertilizer whereas we produce only one and a half million tons. So without further delay we shall have to set up a good number of fertilizer factories based on our own raw material — natural gas. Such fertilizer factories will not only help us use required quantity of fertilizer in our land as in other developed countries, they will create large number of vacancies for our unemployed skilled and non-skilled people. Thus in the process we can also save our educated and uneducated younger generation who have been suffering from utter frustration. Moreover, with the additional production the country will not only be self-sufficient in food, it will also earn foreign exchange more than we require to support both our revenue and development budget by exporting surplus foodgrains. We may demand of our government to recast the budget in order to

implement the following steps in the greater interest of the nation: (a) 100% cultivable land has to be brought under irrigation system. (b) All agricultural inputs be sold to the farmers at the lowest possible rates, if necessary by giving any amount of subsidy. (c) Agricultural loan be given to the farmers at a minimum rate of interest and by adopting simplest possible process. (d) One crore fifteen lac acres of land which produce only one crop in three months in a year and remain fallow for next nine months have to be reclaimed and brought under cultivation for at least two crops.

**Shrimp Culture**  
In addition to this, production of about 2-3 lac acres of land under shrimp culture can be increased from its present rate of 85 kg per acre to at least 1000 kg per acre by introducing modern technical know-how and inputs as is done by other shrimp producing countries. Then shrimp alone can give a foreign exchange earning to the tune of Taka 6000 crore per year.

True, for implementation of all these steps noted above we need large amount of money. And it is further true that many of our so called donor friends may not extend their helping hand towards increasing internal resources of Bangladesh that might affect investment of their surplus amount. But there are coun-

tries who, if convinced by our good reasoning, may come forward with more assistance than they give today. As such, our democratic government must convince foreign countries that we have ample resources to be self-reliant financially. Rather our resources, if tapped and utilized properly can be of great use to both. What we need today is initial financial assistance to reach the desired goal.

**On Our Own**  
This may also be noted that even if no financial assistance is available from abroad, still we can implement the steps referred to above by selling out all Govt owned/nationalised industries and trading concerns including banks and insurance companies. It will also save the nation from huge recurring losses.

In fine, we do believe that a government supported by the people and imbued with national spirit can bring about a revolutionary change turning the so far impossibles into possibilities. And in fact this has been done in Japan, Korea and other countries. The problem is not of over-population, it is the problem of non-utilisation of valuable manpower and under-production. We demand of the democratically elected government: (i) No begging, be the maker or a self-respecting nation; (ii) No surrender to donor friends, take your own people into confidence and create a consensus on national issues to overcome any national crisis; (iii) Not any party interest, let the national interest prompt us to take all actions.

(Concluded)

## 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.

**Cadet colleges**  
Sir, In a developing but poor country like Bangladesh where millions suffer from malnutrition and live in abject poverty the need for supporting the Cadet Colleges with a huge amount of money naturally becomes questionable. Only handful of boys in the country are enjoying the best possible education with all the ideal facilities provided. Our conscience is as such aroused vis-a-vis the misfortune of the millions of children who comprise the bulk of our population. Worse is the picture of the private educational institutions most of which are in real bad shape for want of teachers, proper housing and furniture, and other related facilities. Teachers employed in these institutions are either ill paid or remain unpaid. This state of affairs remains unchanged due to the worsening economic condition of the country. Floods and other natural calamities frequent the country almost every year and the cost of repairing the damaged roads and bridges and other infrastructure add a great burden to our suffering exchequer. When poverty prevades our economy, cadet colleges are being provided with a sum of about 15 crore taka annually. This huge amount of money can otherwise be well utilized in the development of a hundred educational institutions in the country.

Initially four cadet colleges — Fouzdarhat, Mirzapur, Rajshahi and Jhenidha — started functioning during the 1960's and later in the 1970's six more residential schools were converted into cadet colleges. No doubt cadet colleges provide some officers to the defence services every year, but the number is not upto the expectation. All cadets are not eager to join the Defence Services, and of them choose careers in Medical, Engineering and other technical and non-technical professional, while cadet colleges at-

each much importance to discipline, physical training and other activities related to defence services. Hence in consideration of our poverty stricken economy an alternative suggestion can thus be made in favour of reducing the number of cadet colleges towards slashing down the huge expenditure. The four large cadet colleges each with an area of more than 120 acres of land can as such be retained and the remaining six can be merged with other government colleges of the country. Then the quota of enrollment in the four cadet colleges can be enhanced and provision may be made for every cadet to join the defence services after passing out.

It is true that democracy in Bangladesh is still nascent. But it is a bounden task of the present government to think about welfare in the terms of all the citizens of the country and towards providing education to all. Hence all the educational institutions of the country should be brought more or less at par with each other. Unless a uniformity established and justice shown to all classes of people the gospel of democracy may not bear much fruit for us despite any massive programme for progress and prosperity of the country. Rafiqul Islam

Mohammad Aslam, Dhaka  
**Kokil Kabab!**  
Dear Sir, Kokil or cuckoo, the famous singing bird, is in real danger of extinction. The bird, most known for its song that heralds the advent of spring and a subject of innumerable poems, is available as an eatable in a major hotel in Dhaka in Motijheel area! Not only that, its eggs are reportedly being sold in the market of Gulshan. Also, migratory birds are

seen being hawked at important road junctions and most buyers are well-to-do, possibly educated, smoke belching private car passengers.

I appeal to the readers of your esteemed daily to help stop this nefarious activity, the eating of eggs and birds themselves is a crime against nature and those who perpetrate this should be made punishable by law.

Eating of exotic birds at exorbitant prices is fast becoming a fad in the country, specially in the capital. If it is allowed to continue it may have irreparable repercussions in the natural ecological system of the country. Eating of these birds cannot be justified by any means especially when their consumers are not quite dying from hunger. Help save the Kokil. Javed Helati  
Shahnaz Wahid  
Save the Nature PVO, Dhaka.