

Dhaka, Wednesday, April 29, 1992

Aid with a Warning

In committing a massive \$600 million aid, said to be the largest in this category in the Third World, the World Bank, several other aid agencies and donor nations have provided a new boost to the population and healthcare programme of Bangladesh, with the assistance forming a major part of the country's Fourth Five-Year Plan. The move underscores both a recognition and a warning. The country's population problem remains a major source of concern for the international community whose continued development assistance cannot yield the expected results as long as the staggering population growth is not drastically reduced within a specific period of time. There can be no two opinions about this realisation or, for that matter, about the recognition of population control being the Number One problem facing this country.

On the other hand, we fear, the warning served by the aid giving agencies may well go by default. In committing this massive assistance, the donors are also asking Bangladesh to match the international effort in every possible way, by raising the level of its performance, quantitatively and qualitatively, and, to put it plainly, in efforts reflecting increased vigour, zeal and determination. Behind this warning also lies a message: Bangladesh has achieved some success in bringing down its population growth during the eighties, but its performance falls short of targets and well behind that of such populous countries as Thailand, Indonesia and China. What's worse, government figures on the decline of the growth rate—2.2 per cent in 1991-92 down from 2.5 per cent two years ago—are disputed by the UN agencies which put the present growth rate at 2.4 per cent.

In launching the fourth Population and Health project, to be supported by this massive aid, Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia on Monday made all the right promises, showed all the right concerns and, in the end, reiterated her government's determination to face the challenge with renewed zeal and determination. She has called for national consensus on this issue, linked population control to education and health-care and put the problem in the overall perspective of reduction of poverty throughout the country, especially in rural areas. At the meeting on Monday, officials offered an outline of the strategy and programme formulation.

In theory, there may be nothing wrong with the programme. Some may even suggest that it offers a near-perfect approach to the challenge facing us today. The question is, how does the administration implement the programme which has been drawn up by the same type of bureaucrats and experts who prepared the ones for previous regimes? How does the government promote the concept of national consensus on this issue, without holding an all-party high-level conference or bringing in the Jatiya Sangsad into the picture? The Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) do have a major role to play in this field, as in education and even in rural credit system, through their cost-effective efficient methods. It will be most useful if the thinking within the administration about NGOs is reviewed and brought in line with the new realities in the country. Again, is there a way of offering financial incentives to small rural families which adopt population planning, through an innovative insurance programme, as proposed by a leading institution in this field? It is all very much a question of formulating new methods—innovative, challenging and even daring—to back our much talked-about determination. Otherwise, our so-called new approach may only turn out to be a case of putting old wine in a new bottle.

One Year of DooomsMonday

This day last year — it was Monday then — the elements struck our south-eastern areas, made mostly of off-shore islands, and took a toll of about five lakh human lives. There is no reliable figure for that as there is none for the property including cattle and other forms of life lost in the swoop. There was devastation mile after mile, island after island and the city of Chittagong itself — at least 10,000 of its residents lost — presented a ghastly sight. The resulting desolation hung over the whole region for over two months.

Man must live on and life is again all dim and bustle down there. The tears dry up and the memory of loss is replaced by the dictates of survival and the pressure of building again, this time from a scratch. We take our hats off to the staff of the Public Health Engineering who helped make the first moves towards life there by sinking tubewells in the most inaccessible of areas and in the most trying conditions. And together with that we must record our appreciation of those members of the armed forces who buried the bodies and removed and interred the carcasses. Gratitude is due to numerous private organizations as well as some NGOs for putting in whatever they could by way of resources and labour and be a living solace to the surviving victims. We also recall with gratitude the promptness with which the international help was made available to us including the relief operation carried out by the American servicemen.

Although the government faltered in the early stages to reach succour to the needy, it improved its performance considerably in ultimately managing to organise an effective relief operation. The memory of the devastation also reminds one the way squadrons of military aircraft were lost for just not heeding the warnings one expects illiterate fishermen and farmers to take seriously? And about the foolish gallantry of throwing hundreds of maunds of chapati from giant helicopters instead of soft-landing the succour using slings.

Those were very good lapses to learn very well from. But there was a supreme lesson to be learnt — and have we done that? Lives of about three lakh people were saved by the cyclone shelters and maunds of earth called Mujib Killa. Loss of life could surely be minimised if the programme of building these life-saving facilities taken up in the early years of independence, no doubt prompted by the experience of the 1970 toll of over a million lives, were not discontinued long before even one-third of the projected total was built. Last year's experience proved indubitably the effectiveness of particularly the maunds where men and women could take shelter together with their cattle.

On the first anniversary of the '91 cataclysm it could be a great source of hope and inspiration if we had reports of very good progress in completing the programme of cyclone shelters.

"Brazil 1992": The World Conference on Environment and Development
Whose Agenda? And for Whose Benefit?

by Prof C Suriyakumaran

It is not for us to draw attention to the World Conference in 1992 on Environment and Development. Yet, it bears emphasizing if we state that this Conference, perhaps more than any others that we have known of and as 'missionary' and well meaning as it may sound, and be — can make all the difference to our countries moving into the 21st Century facing prosperity and expectations for our people, or stagnation and resignation for them.

It is not our intention to be startling, much less anti-environmental. Above all, our care for Planet Earth, and for our future, does not yield in either sincerity or concern to those of others. Our care lies elsewhere, in two major factors, now latent, but embodied in the run-up to the Conference. The first is, that the UN and the member countries will be mainly talking to an Agenda that is the developed countries' concerns. The second is that, in that process, our people will be permanently esconced in a future stagnation and dependency on the rich, beside which past historical parallels of unequal relations, of colonisation, or of the gap, would be each a lesser phenomenon. Let us clarify ourselves.

One Earth, Two Environments

The issues before us are being presented, among others, as of one Earth, of Global Warming, the Ozone Layer, Tropical Forests, Wild Life, and the Third World's Population growth. It is that there is one Environment, and one Question, namely the threat of Planetary Collapse, or possible redemption by immediate action — by all countries.

Yet, the reality has been otherwise, of One Environment, but Two Perspectives. It has been a leadership by the 'North' that was largely irrelevant to the 'South'; and of needs by the 'South' that have largely not been served by the policies or inclinations of the 'North' — a South, trapped in Poverty, and having to pay heavily for needed technology for both development and environment.

In important ways, the 'North' has by now developed an excellent Environmental Agenda for itself — on the one side, by internalisation of envi-

ronmental costs, by increasingly impressive pollution control and treatment methods; and on the other, by visible re-cycling programmes and even if slowly, acceptance of limits to Air and Water pollution. All this has been made possible only through a pervasive development of Technology across all the areas of environmental management and economic production. For Development is not merely the cause of resource use, but also the means to resource sustenance. (In the early seventies, a UK White Paper had already declared that development is the means in fact to solving most, if not all, of the environment problems themselves).

However, what all this adds up to is that, of the two types of Management essential to a true Environmental Programme, only one, the 'Qualitative' management of the Environment, has been addressed. The aspect of 'Quantitative' Control of its Environment has received little recognition and even less implementation, that is, of both excessive resource use by the 'North' and heavy resource need by the 'South'.

The Meeting Grounds at 'Brazil'

Where do the countries of the 'South' stand in this? By one, extremely valid, reckoning, that for the 'North', on average, an individual uses /disposes as residues or wastes, about 20-40 times that in the 'South'; the population of Europe for example, if 400 million is, 'environmentally' in fact, 8,000 million.

Secondly, even to stem the growths of populations of some countries of the 'South', Poverty is not only a pollutant, but a breeding ground of people; and it is the 'mass' change, (as opposed to 'marginal' change) of Development that will, in fact, finally arrest Population growth.

Thirdly, simply by way of comparison, too many countries of the 'North' have a higher density of Population per square mile than the South, without at all attracting any 'policy' strictures. For,

when, during their industrial revolutions, their populations spurted — what was picturesquely called 'the vertical invasion of the masses' in Europe last century and around — their levels of resource use increased in parallel tremendously, by domestic exploitation and by external expansion.

The almost explicit request to the 'South' now to use resources more modestly for development, emerges in this light as an 'asymmetrical' prescription from the 'North' to the 'South'. The International Community completely overlooked the enormous question of the Levels of Resources Use at both ends of the 'Quantitative' side of environmental management.

Finally, examples, abound on the failure of this Quantitative management in the North, too many to repeat here. One estimate had it that the USA used 40% of the world's resources, with 6% of its population — that it would have been more profound if it had attained its successes using only 6% of the world's resources. Another found that if India used the same energy levels as the US in its agriculture, all known oil reserves would be over in 12 years. And so on.

What remains the moral for us in this, both 'North' and 'South'? Firstly, the massive technological capability that the 'North' has developed for itself and continues to — in pollution control, treatment, recycling, alternative sources, even stopping pollution at sources — has placed it within sight of warding off Global Environmental Cataclysm.

However, this has a premise, namely that the South does not use the same, or anything like the resources in 'replicable development', as the North is continuing to do. For, then, the World would certainly collapse Environmentally on both accounts, namely (a) the vast new mass of Resource Use Levels; and (b) on a base of Environmental Management Technology that is primitive and totally insufficient. The Apocalypse then, would be for sure. The Agenda of the 'North' is based on this unspoken premise, and the appurtenant theory of the Apocalypse.

This is the crux, containing the two 'Problematics' of Environment and Development, whose 'intersection' — to use the phrase of Ph. de Seynes, former USG of the United Nations — has still to be found. And this, is not in the Agenda of 'Brazil 92'.

The 'South' needs, accordingly to one modest estimate, at least 5-10 times the resources it is using now for Development, and for Environment. Thus, the 'South's' Environmental Priority at Brazil is not less resources, but far more resources than now.

How may this be achieved, and the Earth too kept in ecological balance? Firstly, an ideal is for the North to come forward to participate in Resources Use Containment Programme for itself, apart from all other current agenda.

Secondly, very significant areas of the 'South', by the Year 2,000 or thereat, will surge forward as Developed countries, with enormous additions to the world's resource use levels, whoever likes it or not. When that happens, the Global Environment at the given levels of technologies will become unmanageable. Left in that situation, pollution on large scale will occur, until these countries too become fully developed and use those technologies that manage, contain and solve the problems of the environment alongside growth — unless, well before that stage, the World environment itself 'collapses'; or unless, the 'North' brings down its technology and resources to the 'South'.

That contribution needs to be seen not as Aid, but as 'own self-interest' and as a global contribution to the global Eco-System, outside the economic aid and assistance frameworks as are entrenched now. Such an agenda, given good sense, has to be found place at 'Brazil', with vision into the year 2,000 and beyond.

If these may become so, then a set of Principles, Programmes and Specialised Activities can be seen, as below, which must, in one way or another, be adopted.

Agenda '2000'

Principles: Recognise the historical asymmetry in resource use levels as countries

struggled to become developed; Agree that Development is the means ultimately to commanding the resources and the technology for the same environmental threats that Development, and before that, Poverty created; Agree that the 'North' will increasingly set Resources Use Limitation targets for itself; Agree to set appropriate Resources Use Expansion targets for the 'South'; Accept that Development, in a striking phrase of the King of Thailand, is the Creation of a Livable Environment; Reject the 'Consumerist, Mercantilist and Commercial' type of development as manifest in many Cities/Enclaves in the 'South' passing off for development; Agree to set Technology, supply /transfer targets from the 'North' — and financial resources — for successful environmental management in the 'South'; Agree to set Global Pollution Control targets, for 'North' and 'South'; Accept the setting of Consumption targets for Select Resources, such as tropical forests, genetic resources and other select renewable and non-renewable resources; Commit to the setting up of Resource Expansion targets as special priority, by combination of technology with restoration, and maintenance methods, the use of renewable and re-usable resources, and search for alternative resources, in all areas.

Programmes: Establish 'Resource Balance Sheets' — global, regional, sub-regional, national — for all major Resources (the macro-level); Account all key Natural Resources as 'Capital Stock', with provision for depreciation, re-equipment etc; and with 'Reverse Discounting' in strategic cases; Conduct all EIAs (the micro-level) only on the basis of prior Resource Balance Sheets as above; Move towards converting all EIAs into integrated Environment /Economic Cost-Benefit Systems, fully integrating all costs and all benefits (cf. for example UNEP Bangkok Regional Office/ESCAP-APDC exercise 'Environmental Assessment of Development Projects', Kuala Lumpur, publ. 1983); The 'North' to take technological/financial responsibility, with 'South' co-operating, for Global Warming (CO₂, Sea Level rise) Ozone (CFC), Tropical Forest Restoration, and genetic resources conservation; All projects in the South using Renewable or Reusable Resources and Wastes to be eligible for grants/low interest loans from the International lending countries and sources; The 'South' to be fully responsible, subject to the foregoing, for all degradation/pollution during Development, as its commitment to the Global Eco-System, and to itself.

Specialised Activities (Academic, Research etc): Vast fields of study await attention of the World's Universities,

Institutes and other Centres, in all sectors — in ideas (e.g. the future of city planning, transport and the motor-car); in Science research (e.g. in energy alternatives, pollution prevention, or bio-technology); and in across the board Technology developments promoting both the Economy and Environment; Socio-political fields need fundamental thinking on Policies, Administration and Systems, with need for distinction between 'Protectionist' and 'Productionist' approaches. Legislation must distinguish between enforcing the law on poor polluters of wastes, and enforcing systems for their conversion, by governments and agencies, into economic product. The entire Education Content of Environment Management needs fundamental re-arrangement, from pure pollution orientation to resource restoration, management and use; The World's NGOs have a particular function and capacity in all these areas — (a) to help Environmentalists and governments to do their 'homework', and (b) to speak for the grassroots and intercede with Authority on the one hand, and to interpret the Government to the grassroots on the other; A 'New Economics', absorbing environmental resources management, awaits formulation out of the foregoing thinking, with no room for either discipline to conceive of themselves as 'opposites' (in the directions pointed for example by the American economist, Kindleberger on 'Public Goods' and the Indian, Amartya Sen on 'Public Benefits', etc). Over the decades, economics has, in fact, absorbed non-economic categories in the past; and will do so again, given effort by the environmentalists, to go beyond the 'Slogan' of Sustainable Development, to the methodology of 'Sustained Maintenance of Future Resource Levels' as shown above; A Draft Convention, embodying commitments on the foregoing, would be a truly appropriate contribution for Brazil '92', as for the future peace and welfare of the Planet. The difference between Prosperity for all, or Disaster, lies in the ideas here presented. Not accidentally, they seem fully in accord with the call, by the US President at recent critical moment, for the New World Order, as he put it, in 'A partnership united by principle...and supported by... equitable sharing, of... cost and commitment.'

Prof C Suriyakumaran, Honorary Adviser to the Sri Lankan Government on the UN Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) prepared the above proposal 'Brazil-92' that was distributed to all delegations and NGOs present at the Third Meeting of the Preparatory Committee on UNCED held in Geneva in August/September 1991, in final preparation for the World Conference to be held later this year.

Democracy Continues Elusive in Arab Authoritarian Regimes

Mounir B. Abboud writes from Beirut

Authoritarian Arab regimes, feeling the pressure of a changing world, have been making efforts to inject a semblance of democracy in their political orders.

But with the Algerian experience sending shock waves throughout the Middle East after the election triumph of Fundamentalists, these regimes are careful not to go too far.

Indeed, Algeria's first multi-party general election was cancelled by the government — and army — after it became clear that the Front for Islamic Salvation would gain control of parliament.

King Fahd of Saudi Arabia and General Omar Hassan Al Bashir, the head of the ruling military junta in the Sudan, have announced plans to appoint legislatures to help them in running their governments. The Saudi Monarch told his cabinet recently that by-laws governing the creation of a Shoura, or consultative, council will be issued.

The move, however, will not change the fundamental foundations of the Saudi regime as created by King Fahd's father, the late King

A semblance of democracy is being injected in Arab regimes. But after the election triumph of fundamentalists in Algeria, they are careful not to go too far

Abdel Aziz Ibn Saud.

There will be, on written constitution, as the Holy Koran will remain the constitution of the land. In fact, Saudi Arabia has been the first Arab and Muslim country to apply the Islamic code known as the Sharia.

The Saudi system is a moderate brand of Islam. Recently Saudi Arabia's chief religious authority, Sheikh Abdel Aziz Ben Baz and a member of the royal family criticised extremist fundamentalists in the country.

In neighbouring Oman, Sultan Qaboos Ben Said appointed a national assembly which will oversee legislation and question government members. Nonetheless, power remained in the hands of the Sultan. Members of the legislature will not have any influence beyond that given to them by the Sultan. Therefore, the assembly will for all intents

and purposes be a rubber stamp. Sudanese leader, General Al Bashir, announced plans to establish a parliament. It was later made clear that all members of the General's junta will be in the assembly. Al Bashir, furthermore, will continue to have the powers of appointing and dismissing the government. He began to apply the Sharia law in all of the Sudan except in the troubled South where the population is mostly Christian or animist.

The fundamentalist landslide in Algeria's general election is bound to send shock waves through other north African countries and wherever Muslim rulers do not base their legitimacy on an appeal to Islamic militancy. Algeria's experience marks the first time an Islamic movement had a good chance of taking power in the Arab world through democratic elections.

The repercussions will be felt most in neighbouring Tunisia and Morocco, where fundamentalists are working underground against the political systems inherited from colonial rulers. In Tunisia, President Zine Al Abi dine Ben Ali has followed in the footsteps of his predecessor, Habib Bourguiba, who used the law to crush the challenge from the Islamic Tendency Movement.

The main fundamentalist opposition movement in Morocco, known as 'Justice and Charity' was never powerful. But the government of the conservative monarchy banned the movement in 1990 nonetheless.

Libya, sharing a long border with Algeria, has its own Muslim fundamentalist underground but little is known of its activities beyond Libyan leader Muammar Qadhafi's, occasional reference to acts of violence it has committed.

Many Arab governments, with ideologies based on secular Arab nationalism, have justified their suppression of opponents by saying parties based on religion are incompatible with multi-party democracy. — *Depthnews Asia*

To the Editor...

Well done Pakistanis

Sir, To watch him bowl is one of life's rare pleasures; to admire him is to appreciate the very deal of cricketer excellence. To know him is to hold him in respect, perhaps even affection. Imran Ahmed Khan Niazi is a full man, a complete personality. Cricket has produced heroes whose reputation have been confined to their performances; whose impact has been on the record books alone. The Pakistanis wouldn't have asked for a better gift than the World Cup for their Eid celebration!

When there is faith and victory in the mind, success can be gained. If the thoughts are weak, there is defeat. Pakistan cricket team was blessed with both faith and victory in their mind throughout the World Cup tournament matches. And the result was ultimate victory. Pakistan's victory in the eight-nation World Cup put the

icing on the cake. It was a cup final of the highest standard, as the finals usually are. Everything was there, the drama, the excitement and the tension — thus in a nutshell, cricket at its best. That's how one can describe the World Cup '92 final between Pakistan and England at Melbourne on 25.03.92. Pakistanis were in real trouble at the starting of tournament as many of their senior players were injured. They have really missed service of Waqar Younis; today he is rated among the most lethal and deadly fast bowlers the world has ever known.

Imran Khan's forceful captaincy has played a major role in transforming Pakistan into world's best. Imran and his soldiers have proved their mettle all over the world. One must have seen the face of Imran throughout the tournament when he was at crease. Imran's vision was clear as crystal; the path to victory was his destination. Everything is

over and now the World Cup belongs to Imran and his brigade. Well done. Bravoos. Keep it up.

Rashid Sultan Babbar
Townier Road, Singapore.

RAJUK and helpless allottees

Sir, Recently RAJUK posted an ad in a newspaper inviting application for allotment of residential plots in Gulshan and Banani. A similar ad appeared in newspapers during Nov, 1984 to allot some remaining vacant plots in Gulshan, Banani and Baridhara. It came in your paper (and some other as well) that several persons who got allotment subsequent to that ad and made full payment years ago are yet to get the physical possession of their plots.

Fresh call for application at the same townships when the previous allottees are kept under harassment for so long shows that everything is not

fair and above board in a government organisation.

A reader

Not all is lost

Sir, For the consoling letter of Mr P Haque of Dhanmondi, he is absolutely right, for my cup is three-fourths golden-silver. Being Irish on my mother's side, I share the emotional goodness of our Bengali boys, the best in the world. Mr Haque proves the very point that although frustrating at times, when former students knew I was for them, they showed a return of love and respect, and I pray for all of them. Where they are now, all around the world; even now, some of them send me donations. I am proud of them and their good parents who live a life style that is moral and will bring them all to heaven. Thank you, Mr Haque. May God bless you.

Brother Hobart,
St. Greg's High School, Dhaka.

OPINION

Indians in the Philippines:
A Clarification

It has been a pleasure for me and perhaps for many readers of The Daily Star to have gone through the letter of Asif Mahmood of Comilla, titled 'Indian Settlers in the Philippines', published on Monday, commenting on my column 'My World' printed on April 17.

Mr Mahmood has pointed out what he has described as 'factual errors' in the part of the column, dealing with Indian immigrants in the Philippines, written in reference to my meeting with Ramon Mitra, now a presidential candidate. In writing on Mitra, I made some passing observations on the small minority of immigrants from India. So, I did not purposely discuss a historical study as to how and when people from British India landed in the Philippines, a subject I do not feel qualified to discuss at any length. Hence, it cannot be suggested that my piece contains some 'factual errors'. However, I would like to set the record right on one specific point brought up by Mr Mahmood. The South Indian families who live in Cainta, in the suburb of Manila, are indeed descendants of 640 sepoys who were brought to the archipelago by the East India Company which occupied Manila in 1762-64, as rightly mentioned by our well-informed correspondent, and not towards the end of the Second World War, an error in my column.

Both of us agree, to quote Mr Mahmood, 'unlike their counterparts in Singapore, Malaysia and Thailand, the Indian immigrants in the

Philippines are now almost a dying breed.' However, even a 'dying breed' has its distinguished citizens. How could I then forget to mention Ramon Bagatsing, the second generation Sikh, who served as a Mayor of Manila in the seventies, whom I met a few times at public functions in Manila? I am glad, his name has been brought up by Mr Mahmood whose memory is obviously sharper than mine.

It may well be due to its lack of topicality that few writers and journalists of South Asia, including Bangladesh, have taken any interest in the Indian migration to Southeast Asia and the former Indo-Chinese states. One notable exception is N J Nanporia, a former Chief Editor of the Times of India and later of the Statesman of Calcutta. In the late sixties, he travelled through parts of the ASEAN region to write a series of articles on the Indian migration to Southeast Asia, which were published by the Asia Magazine. It is a pity that Mr Nanporia did not produce a book on this fascinating subject.

It is part of the editorial policy of this newspaper to broaden the scope of its coverage, in news and features, and, if I may say so, to open up the world, like Southeast and Far East Asia, from which we seem to have been cut off in media communication. The welcome letter of Mr Mahmood offers us the right encouragement in the pursuit of this editorial objective.

S. M. Ali