

Dhaka, Saturday, July 25, 1992

## The Drama Begins

When the curtains go up on the 25th Olympiad today at Barcelona, capital of Catalonia in Spain, the modern Olympic movement will be one step and four years away from its centenary. The world, sporting and otherwise, has undergone a tremendous change since Baron Pierre de Coubertin revived the Games in 1896 after centuries of lying dormant amid the rugged hills of Greece. In ancient Hellene, the Games were principally a celebration of and homage to the 12 deities who, legend had it, lived on Mount Olympus. De Coubertin's modern Olympics was bristled with ideas of heroic pursuits typified by men of ancient Greece, but the revived Olympics of 1896 were launched not to pay homage to the gods, but to celebrate youth and sport. What mattered to the true Olympians was the taking part, not the winning, but at the same time they were driven by an irresistible desire, without promises of fortunes and fame, to push back the frontiers of human achievement.

That innocence, that lethal mixture of romance and heroism, steeped in the Olympian tradition of amateurism, alas, is now a distant memory. In a world of sport awash with big-money prizes and lucrative advertising contracts for winners and record-breakers, the Olympic movement has gradually and grudgingly accepted the reality that many athletes who now compete at the Games every four years do so not simply because of the honour and privilege of taking part, but also for the fortunes to be had afterwards. Off the track, the event has come to be dominated by big business firms and television stations whose sponsorships ensure the hundreds of millions of dollars necessary to stage the modern, hi-tech Games. Baron de Coubertin may well turn in his grave, because his celebration of youth is now little short of being a worship of sporting prowess, financial fall-out and nationalistic flag-waving.

However, after all is said and done, the Olympic Games remains the greatest sporting event ever envisaged; it attracts, excites and thrills people all over the world like no other occasion; the glitter, the glory, the heartbreak all combine to make the Olympic fortnight the biggest, most moving human drama ever enacted. To majority of countries which have no hope winning a medal, such as Bangladesh, the taking part still matters above all else. Just to feel the atmosphere of an Olympic stadium, alongside the glittering array of world champions and record-holders from Europe, America and East Africa is enough to turn the heads of athletes from most nations. The glory that is truly Olympian still has, in 1992, the capacity to enrich all the thousands of participants, from Peru to Papua New Guinea, Mali to Mongolia.

When the teams march out today, the placard bearing the letters DDR will no longer be there, the unification of Germany having spelt the end for East Germany, that tiny, mighty sporting powerhouse of a nation; missing also will be the red flag of the Soviet Union, which had fluttered more often at recent Games than any other. But the absence of Yugoslavia as a national team means the games are still dogged by factors which have little to do with sport. Yugoslavia's enforced absence is another reminder that despite all the razzmatazz and camaraderie at the Olympic stadium, there will be people nursing a grievance, a national wound. The time has now come for the IOC and United Nations to work out a formula by which the Olympic Games can be insulated from political actions by nations. Boycotts are one thing, since they represent exercise of free choice by sovereign states, but punitive actions in the form of bans is less desirable and acceptable.

## Regional Co-operation in Food Production

A three-day regional workshop on fruit cultivation ended in Dhaka yesterday. The Commonwealth Science Council (CSC) represented at the workshop by Peter de Groot has indicated its willingness to fund a set of pilot projects and plans for regional strategy to expand fruit cultivation, preservation and marketing in Asian countries. It is Dr Groot's idea that he might be able to persuade the Commonwealth Secretariat to allocate fund for the projects he has outlined. No doubt, the news will be gladly received by the Asian countries, specially one like Bangladesh with a poor record of fruit production.

A regional workshop of the order of the one held in the capital is significant for more than one reason. First, it focuses on an issue not given enough attention here. Second, the regional countries, by sitting together, get an opportunity to work out a plan for producing fruits according to the demands at home (in their respective countries) and abroad. Thus the chances of overproduction and abnormal shortage can be reduced and at times eliminated. The fact that fruits as a food item has received little and even no attention from the poorer section is almost self-explanatory. Food in the poor man's dish mostly means cereal and where this staple food is in short supply, other items figure only sparingly. Consumption of fruits and their production only more so.

Yet the country's fruit situation suffers from an in-built paradox as much as some of the vegetables do. Both production and consumption of fruits may be pitifully low, but even then some of them sometimes at some places sell at a price below the production cost and also rot in unimaginably huge quantities. This is because of the lack of storing or preservation facilities and/or of poor or no transportation to timely carry them to the deficit areas where both demand and price are astronomically high.

So there is a need for a balanced cultivation of various fruits not only in the region as a whole but also in an individual country. But the production line must also be ably supported by measures of preservation and smooth transportation. Pineapples, tomatoes and even mangoes, like *Hilsha* fish and some varieties of vegetables, have rot not only to cause pains to the farmers and fishermen but also its pinch was subsequently felt by the country's economy at different times. Disappointed farmers react sharply by switching en masse to other crops leaving the country to suffer a shortage in the produces that either fetch them no profit or have simply to be dumped in garbage piles. Its economic impacts become far-reaching. That is why Western countries subsidise farm produces. We may not need subsidy if we can build up a sound system of production, preservation and marketing.

CHINESE army has moved into lucrative business in a very big way. Army industries, operating 50,000 companies aggressively seek markets abroad and joint ventures with western partners. Throughout China, the military operates gas stations and driving schools, run transportation companies using army trucks. One of the best hotels in Beijing is jointly owned by the army and a Hongkong group where the General Manager is a European but many other staff are former army personnel. The business transformation of the Chinese army have been so fundamental that according to the China Daily, in 1979 civilian goods were only 8.1 per cent of the military's industrial output. The figure reached 65 per cent in 1990 and the goal for 1995 is 70 per cent.

The Sri Lankan army has also moved into hotel business creating employment for the widows and orphans of the defence personnel killed in battle with the Tamils. The Indonesian army is heavily involved in plantation, mining, forestry and varieties of other business and industrial enterprises. The US Army Corps of Engineers is engaged as a giant construction firm regularly undertaking irrigation, dam, roads and other civilian projects.

Army and business — if true elsewhere, why not in Bangladesh. Army in our country is often viewed as the biggest spender of the national revenue. Little do we realise that army also manages the Cadet Colleges, rated as the best schools of the country. Why not, therefore, increase by at least ten-fold the number of such institutions managed by the army. It may involve hardly one to two per cent of the present defence budget spread over a number of years. Further, tuition fees may be charged to meet the operational costs of those schools while entry of the bright but

# Army and Business: True Elsewhere, Why Not in Bangladesh?

poor students could be facilitated through a scholarship programme. Although army's expanded role in education sector is strictly not business but this could be an important civilian activity by the army for national development.

## Existing Farms

On the other hand, the existing army dairy farm could be the basis of expanding into dairy development as a solid business all over the country. The vacant lands within the cantonment should be leased out to newly constituted Army Horticulture Farming Co. Ltd as the beginning of fruit and vegetable production, processing, local marketing and export. Contract farming on the private farmlands adjoining the cantonments for horticulture should also be commercially feasible since location of many cantonments is in highland, flood-free areas and therefore in near around villages intensive horticulture farming as well as processing of fruits and vegetables should be lucrative business. Speaking of agriculture, army can initiate modern poultry business as well.

A major thrust to modern manufacturing development can easily be provided by the army. Of the number of officers commissioned each year, very few would end up as Generals. By its very nature, the army command structure must be like a pyramid with only one officer as the Chief of Staff and hundreds down below. A large number of officers, therefore, retire early in life. Such persons do possess the training and experience in management, of a different sort no doubt but it has relevance to the business world as well. In building up disciplined enter-

prises, defence personnel should be extremely valuable; more so these days since discipline is so much lacking everywhere else except the defence establishments. In addition, military personnel are capable of hard work, endure hardship and above all, the boldness of their character and personality would be extremely valuable asset in the competitive world of export business, in particular.

In Pakistan, retired army officers are given barge lands to become gentleman-farmers; as a result of which they became the driving force behind agricultural modernisation of

that country. Obviously, such land settlement programmes are not possible in Bangladesh. What instead should be done is to provide crash training courses on accountancy, business management and marketing to the interested defence personnel. In fact a full-fledged MBA programme might be an excellent idea for the purpose. Next, the retirement benefits alone may not be adequate to finance the proposed private sector enterprises. Therefore, a separate business financing agency for both equity participation as well as long-term investment loan will be necessary. The agency should be capable of rendering technical advice as well — not only feasibility studies and appraisal of pending proposals from the military entrepreneurs but continuing management and technical advice to the benefi-

ciaries. This had been the drawback of the Shilpa Bank and the Shilpa Rin Sangtha who have no system of continuing follow-up once the loan has been sanctioned.

## Industrial Estates

In order to further boost the growth of military entrepreneurs, setting up of Defence Officers Industrial Estates (DOISE) should be favourably considered where not only all the utilities including telephone and fax services exist, but readymade factory buildings are also immediately available. This would considerably cut down the gestation

period and the retired personnel with prior business training should be commercially operational within 12 to 18 months.

In our country, we are not only short of capital — we conspicuously lack the right type of entrepreneurs. At the same time, the Army, Navy and the Air Force could be the source of potential entrepreneurial talent with appropriate training and support services. Yet we are not making good use of such potential lead agents of development.

To bring about the desired business orientation of the defence forces, the establishments themselves must get into business first. It must be lucrative business with high profits which are ploughed back for relentless expansion. For example, why not construction business and real es-

feasible. The Air Force can undertake charter flights, or private airline services for both cargo and passenger traffic, develop tourist resorts at Cox's Bazar and St Martin's island linked to charter flights from Dhaka. Not that the suggested business ventures are all commercially feasible; but many of them are and there could be very many waiting to be identified. At this point the profitability of a particular enterprise is not the issue; the point is army and business — if true elsewhere, why not in Bangladesh.

## 'Counter Development'

There is a deep-seated feeling — not only in Bangladesh but the world over, particularly among the economists and development thinkers that military is counter-development. It had been told that one of the major reasons for the lack of economic growth in South Asia is heavy defence commitment. But it is forgotten that South Korea, Taiwan and Singapore also provide for relatively large defence establishments, yet these economies are rated as the growth miracles of the world.

Thus it is not that we are committing a large part of the budget to defence but the critical gap is the continued keeping away of the defence forces outside the mainstream of economic growth and development. We are a poor country. We have very little in terms of well disciplined institutional base for development. In fact, whatever little we had in terms of the education or the financial institutions, we have managed to mess them up into nightmarish scenarios of counter-development. Let us therefore call upon the defence forces and the police to spearhead the expansion of business and manufacturing enterprises. Let them become the well organised prime-movers of growth and development.

## WINDOW ON ASIA

Shahed Latif

# Transmigration Paying off for Indonesia

Rudy Fernandez writes from Jakarta

Indonesia's modern transmigration scheme is remarkable. Of the 3.7 million resettled from 1905 to 1985, 2.9 million were transmigrated only during the mid-60s to the present

INDONESIA'S transmigration settlements, particularly those established in recent years, are now offering settlers the best of several worlds.

Where before the resettled families were landless and sometimes homeless in the places where they came from, now they are landowners and have a house they call their own. They also earn modest incomes from farming the land given them by the government in the resettlement areas, as well as from other sources.

Over nine decades, the Indonesian government has been establishing transmigration areas in the bigger but thinly populated islands such as Kalimantan, Sumatra, Irian Jaya and Sulawesi.

By 1985, about 3.7 million Indonesians had been resettled. The transmigrants came from the small but densely populated islands, particularly Java — home to about 110 million of Indonesia's 185 million people.

Java, and the inner islands of Bali, Madura, and Lombok are inhabited by about two-thirds of the country's population. But these areas constitute only less than 10 per cent of Indonesia's land area.

The transmigration programme was introduced by the Dutch East Indies government to move excess population from Java to the outer islands. It was also implemented partly to provide cheap labour market outside Java for the development of plantations and industries owned by the Dutch.

The programme was started in 1905 with the resettlement of 155 families from Java to Gedong Tetaan in Lampung, Sumatra. Up to 1942, about 36,000 families had moved to Lampung. Some 53,200 more

followed during the 1950-1969 period.

The first transmigration plan of Sukarno, Indonesia's first president, was too ambitious or unrealistic. It was designed to lessen the burden of Java's high population density by moving 1.5 million people each year to the other islands, where 2,000 hectares of land would be opened daily. Sukarno rejected the need for a family planning programme in reducing Java's population.

Later plans under Sukarno were more realistic. The Eight-Year Plan (1961-1963) set up a target of a gradual annual increase of 15,000 families in the first year. During the 1951-1968 period, 416,471 transmigrants were moved.

Under President Sukarto, the success of transmigration has been remarkable: 2.9 million of the 3.7 million resettled from 1905 to 1985 were transmigrated during the Suharto administration (from the mid-60s to the present). Many of the transmigration areas have also become model communities.

Typical of the successful resettlement sites is the Toili transmigration centre, which was the subject of a recent study made by Mohammad Maksum of the University of Gadjah Mada in Yogyakarta.

The Toili transmigration centre is situated along the coastal plain of the southern part of Central Sulawesi province. It covers 16,363 hectares, more than half of which has a good potential for irrigation.

Mr Maksum reports that 44,016 people had moved to 27 settlement units in the transmigration centre from 1965 to 1987. These comprised 68 per cent of the total

transmigrant population in Banggai district. Of the settlers, 82.8 per cent were general transmigrants; 11.8 per cent spontaneous transmigrants; and 5.4 per cent local people.

The first group of general transmigrants who moved to Toili Unit 1 in 1965 was not provided with houses. Hence, the settlers had to stay temporarily in transmigration barracks upon their arrival and had to construct their own houses. Moreover, they were given an undeveloped agricultural land to till.

After this period, the general transmigrants received the most assistance. Transportation expenses incurred by this group of settlers were fully shouldered by the government.

Each general transmigrant was provided a free housing unit, a 0.25-hectare home lot, a 0.75-hectare agricultural land ready for cultivation, and one hectare of uncleared agricultural land.

Production and consumption subsidies were provided during the early period of settlement until they became self-reliant. For their basic consumption needs, they were given rice, dried fish, kerosene, cooking oil and others. The consumption subsidies were provided during their first year of residence in the area; this was renewed for a maximum of six months in case of a crop failure.

Production subsidies were also given for a two-year period

in the form of simple cultivating equipment, seeds, fertilisers and pesticides.

In the early 1970s, spontaneous transmigrants were provided with transportation assistance and a piece of uncleared land. However, they were not given consumption and production subsidies. Those who arrived later were not given transportation assistance.

The early local transmigrants are those who had settled in the area or those com-

ing from nearby areas. This group enjoyed the same subsidies received by the general transmigrants.

In his study, Mr Maksum found that:

- ★ Before transmigration, only 2.1 per cent of the transmigrants were landowners. The majority were farm labourers, non-farm labourers and tenants. After transmigration, 98.7 per cent became landowners. Exactly 25.2 per cent of those who owned lands solely relied on farming for their livelihood. About 75 per cent had other sources of farm and non-farm employment.

- ★ A total of 93.5 per cent of the spontaneous transmigrants, 87.4 per cent of the general transmigrants, and 58.3 per cent of the local people said their real income levels increased as a result of the project.

- ★ The majority of the spontaneous and general transmigrants said the size of their landholdings increased after transmigration. The increase in their income enabled them to buy more lands.
- ★ Twelve per cent of transmigrants did not own a house before transmigration. After transmigration, all except one owned houses.
- ★ Before the development of the Toili transmigration centre, the local people produced only rice and corn. With the road network developed in the area which facilitated the transport of goods and farm products, they now produce plantation crops and fruit trees.

— Depthnews Asia.

## OPINION

### Running Union Parishad by Administrator

According to press news (The Daily Star, 8-7-92), a special bill, seeking provision for running the activities of Union Parishad (UP) in the absence of elected body by appointed administrator, proposed to be introduced in parliament, has been withdrawn. Whether the withdrawal of the bill is a good news or a bad news, is immaterial to the inhabitants of a union, but why there's the need for appointing an administrator is a pertinent question. UPs are supposed to be run by elected body. On expiry of the prescribed tenure, fresh election is supposed to be held. If for any reasons election cannot be held, the existing Parishad can be extended for a required period, provided it does not otherwise become disqualified. If the extension is not permissible under the existing law, provision for such extension may be sought, instead of appointing an administrator. Parishads that were elected for three years before the extension of tenure to five years, should automatically be allowed to continue for the full tenure.

In the absence of elected Parishad, running the activities of a UP by somebody becomes necessary. Absence of Parishad can occur either in the event of expiry of tenure or even on suspension of a UP for any legal grounds. The latter happened when a number of UPs were suspended for breach of the last parliamentary election directives. In the event of suspension, question of extension does not arise. The best and the logical remedy is to hold fresh election. If for any justifiable reasons election cannot be held, an ad hoc committee could be created composed of eligible local persons to run the activities, pending fresh election. The committee should, however, be kept under vigilance of local administration for obvious reasons. Under no circumstances, functions of a UP or any elective body be entrusted to an individual as administrator. Consequence of such half-hearted

### Kazi M Sakawatullah

administrative measures are bound to create chaos and cause disruption in normal functioning and breed village power politics. Illustration of resultant situation in one of the suspended UPs may suffice to make the implications perceivable:

No I Uttarhanchadi Union in sadar upazila of Lakshimpur district was suspended for terrorism during last parliamentary election, along with such other offending unions. Parishad secretary was appointed administrator. From February 1991 till countrywide UP elections in January 1992, there was no Parishad committee and the Secretary-made administrator has run (?) the activities. In normal situation 'salaried UP secretary's duties and responsibilities include execution of collective decision of Parishad Committee and carrying out day to day instructions of the Chairman. When the same person is given the responsibility of making decisions and executing his own decision at the same time, the consequence can better be guessed than described.

The particular incumbent had been a capable secretary with unblemished record of 30 years' service of integrity and infallibility, under the guidance of elected body and direct supervision of the Chairman. In the changed situation of dual capacity and multiple performances his efficiency slackened and his integrity was dented severely by the vested quarters and he was flattened under pressure by the toll collecting mastans. It was too much for one man against so much complexities and odds to keep firm. To administer independently and to arrive at decisions by a lone person who has been accustomed to implement decisions made by others and carry out directives is not that easy. Actions of such functionary cannot be sanctioned. In consequence, the administrator could not run the activities, he could only

manage to survive, and eventually fell victim to the pressure groups and the toll collectors, lost his right arm in the melee and became permanently disabled. If cool thoughts were given to the possible implications of appointing a person of status and level of UP secretary as administrator such disastrous consequences could perhaps have been avoided. Onerous responsibilities of this kind may not be entrusted to one having status and rank below class II executive.

The offence during polls was committed by hired armed hooligans under the direction and on behalf of a particular candidate for parliament membership. The armed elements had no interest as to who wins, they were toll collectors and wage earners, so they acted to earn some money. In essence and in reality, the offender was the candidate who organized the terrorism. In all fairness he should have been hooked, instead of penalizing the entire population of the union. If provision is made in any election rules to hold responsible the candidate whose workers commit terrorism and break the laws, there would be no breach of law and no ballot box hijacked. Suspension of the UP has been a punishment to the inhabitants for crimes committed by the organizer of the act and the appointment of UP Secretary as administrator led to the breeding of lawlessness in the area. On the eve of UP election in January this year terrorism, riots, clashes between the contesting candidates were rampant. However, through timely intervention and stern measures taken by the Dy Commissioner of the district, peaceful election could be held. Even then, the elected Chairman and the Parishad cannot yet function due to widespread terrorism resorted to again by the vanquished groups. The peace loving inhabitants are yet to see the restoration of law and order and feel secure.

## 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.

### 'Shillong — the Scotland of the east'

Sir, I am so delighted to read the story all about Shillong as it appeared in your Weekend Magazine (July 3), written by Ms Aasha Mehreen Amin. But she has forgotten to touch some vital points which are most important for the tourists: Which is the best season to visit Shillong? What are the hotels available including their tariffs? Can we reach there by air? What are the visa formalities for Bangladeshis to reach Shillong, the capital of Assam? Does it have any security problem? So on and so forth... I wish she could provide more information about Shillong, our good neighbour.

Meah M Khalidullah  
Chauk Moghulity, Dhaka.

### Foreign aid

Sir, Certain donor agencies like USAID, and international bodies, such as, World Bank, UNDP, UNFAO etc, through national organizations, are providing financial assistances to individuals and groups for carrying out research on various fields of economic value for the development of Bangladesh. It is gathered that money allocated to these research projects are often misused by the incumbents. Although these projects are being materialized under the supervision of the incumbent's parent organization, still, in many cases the project materials, such as, type-writer, computer, bicycle even car are not returned to the financing or to the parent organization after the completion of the project. In many cases, it is alleged

that project articles are being swallowed by the individuals, or shared by the group of the concerned persons. Often, as I heard from my friend that certain people manages gifts for the top-persons by using the project money with a view to please them so that they could remain in the same posts.

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