Lessons from the Games

An extraordinary Olympic Games came to end last Sunday in the Catalan city of Barcelona in Spain. Not only were these, the 25th Games, the largest in history in terms of the number of countries and athletes participating, these were also the first Games since 1972 which were not marred by boycotts. The world's family of nations finally gathered under one banner to engage in competition that was fierce, yet noble and heroic, unlike any other kind of competition among nations.

The supreme irony of these Games however, may turn out to be the eventual fate of the 1992 Champions. The Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), that is the old Soviet Union, which have won more medals since 1952 than any other nation, may never compete as a unified team again, thus ending its long, glorious reign at the top of the Olympic pyramid. The break-up of the old Soviet family will no doubt leave a lot of athletes nursing a deep sense of loss, as they would never be able to train with one another or compete as team-mates. If the newly-independent republics maintain the kind of state support the sports federations of the USSR were used to receiving, then sports-lovers around the world will be able to sleep contentedly; but if the economic crises in these new states force a cut-back in subsidies, as many people fear, then sport will suffer a loss from which it may not recover for vears.

While the shape of things to come from the eastern half of Europe is an uncertain one, the emerging picture in east Asia is crystal clear. The performance of China in Barcelona went a long way to confirm what many sports-watchers have been predicting for some years. China's 54 medals including 16 golds, which secured it fourth place in the league table of medals behind old favourites Germany, USA and CIS, sent a powerful signal to the rest of the world that a sporting giant was in process of emerging from the unlikely fields of Asia. Unlikely, because Asia has never been at the forefront of world sports, as exemplified by India's failure to make any impression on these Games. Not only India, the more than one billion people of South Asia had just one bronze medal, won by Pakistan in hockey, with which to console themselves. This dismal performance may well be a pointer to the poor socio-economic conditions prevailing in this region, and the low priority governments of South Asian states accord to sport and leisure.

While the world's largest nation, China, gave Asians something to be proud of, a tiny Latin American nation, Cuba returned to the Olympic arena after a 12-year absence in triumph. A country of just nine million people going through tough times economically. Cuba's tally of 31 medals including 14 golds spoke volumes about what could be achieved if people and governments approached sports in the right frame of mind. Again, it is no mere accident that countries which are prepared to spend money to build-up sound sporting facilities and management are the ones that produce good athletes. This is a lesson from which South Asia would do well to learn Moreover, popularisation of sports would not only heighten chances of medals at Games, it would also help to develop a healthy, competitive spirit among the people at large.

The lasting memory of the Games, however has to be the sight of Ethiopia's Derartu Tulu and South Africa's Elena Meyer holding hands and doing the lap of honour together at the end of the women's 10,000m race. Tulu won the gold, and Meyer the silver. The moment the black runner from Ethiopia held the hands of the white girl from South Africa, which were taking part in the Olympics for first time in 32 years, all racial and political barriers that disfigure the southern African landscape, seemed to lie in ruins. It was a triumph for Africa, black and white, the real Africa, they said. The symbolism of their joint lap of honour may yet have a profound impact back home

A Close Look at History

The Atish Dipankar Gold Medal '91 award was handed over, like every year, to people for excellence in different fields, at a function befitting the occasion. There was also no dearth of ritualistic sermons the speakers generously pour in on such occasions. The sermons concern ideals and values to be inculcated by the present generation along with learning past history of the nation. But the ceremony over, people become oblivious of what was discussed in the function. This happens years on end.

The problem with us is that we tend to look for a short-cut rather than assigning ourselves to the painstaking task of delving deep into history. Continuous study and relentless research are what can provide us with newer - and perhaps the real - insights into the days of yore. Atish Dipankar's achievements have also come to light through such persistent research. But not enough has yet been known about this great scholar.

The fact that he travelled through Lasa, Tibet to China to spread knowledge there is quite a vindication of the abiding religio-cultural relationship between the sub-continent and the Chinese mainland. If giving an award the title after his name is a tribute to the great ancient scholar. a scholarship specially devoted to bring more things of the time to light could prove to be an even better way of paying the same to the man. That way perhaps enough light could be shed on various unknown aspects of socio-political life of the time. The research work, moreover, stood a fair chance of being systematic.

Better it would be if a Sino-Bangladesh joint effort could come up with a Foundation for the purpose of thorough study and research on the subject. But an immediate need for a film on Dipankar's journey through Lasa and his life in China is strongly felt. On this count too the cooperation between China and Bangladesh should

prove overriding.

Yet to give the process an institutional shape, the preservation of our ancient relics such as the Paharpur stupas and Shalban Vihar of Mainamati should receive equal attention. The recognition the UNESCO has given to the Paharpur monastery as a human heritage is not enough to restore its rightful glory. The UN body's financial constraints have not helped the cause. But there are indeed countries - Japan, Thailand, Indonesia to name a few — which take genuine interest in Buddhist monasteries or Vihars and also generously help restore their shape. What we need is to sufficiently focus on the relics and commit ourselves to see them through the haze of time in their true historical perspective.

The Baily Star 4 Sharif Hustles Pakistan to Privatisation

Javek A. Malik writes from Islamabad

tion of being the coun-Under Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif, Pakistan has embarked on a massive privatisation try with the fastest record of privatisation. The zeal and the programme. Since he took office, 35 state-owned industrial enterprises have been sold to speed with which privatisation private companies. The opposition parties argue that privatisation will create monopolies of state assets have been introduced reminds many Paof wealth and charge that it is being followed with undue haste to favour a privileged few. kistanis of the nationalisation

> not that easy. Private companies were less than enthusiastic about investing in loss-making enterprises. In all, 20 units were offered to private com-



PRIME MINISTER NAWAZ SHARIF Accused of helping the privileged

panies. But none could attract ever two bids.

Then in August 1991 the government decided to offer 100 industrial units for sale at one time. This evoked a much better response from the private companies, leading to 35 units being transferred to the private sector.

The Privatisation Commission, formed to organised disposal of state assets, hopes to complete its work by the end of 1993. It is an autonomous body answerable only to the cabinet committee on privatisation headed by Finance Minister Sartaj Aziz

The commission was set up to expedite privatisation and save it from bureaucratic red

Rapid privatisation has been attacked by the opposition, mainly the former ruling party, the Pakistan Peoples Party led by Benazir Bhutto.

The opposition argues that it will create monopolies and concentration of wealth and is being followed with undue haste to favour the government's friends.

For its part, the government of Prime Minister Nawaz Shartf says it has made all the details of privatisation public and challenges the opposition to prove irregularities.

On criticism about undue haste, Aziz says: "Yes, the pace of privatisation is fast, but we need speed as the losses to national economy because of a huge public sector have become unbearable at Rs 500-600 million a year."

Speed, he maintains, does not mean rules and regulations are being compromised.

The most conspicuous problem and the largest contributor to the losses have been over-staffing. Successive

governments, forced by political pressures, employed people in these enterprises

without restraint. These employees became a major hurdle to privatisation because they feared losing their jobs. Thousands threatened strikes and did not even allow private sector auditors to

enter the premises of some

They relented after the government signed an agreement ensuring job security for the employees for at least one year after privatisation. It also gives them the facility to form employee management groups to bid for the industries in which they are working.

The government has not started utilising the proceeds from privatisation - currently Rs 4 billion. It has been decided not to use them for budgetary support.

Part will be used for developing the social infrastructure in the country and part to rehabilitate workers who lose their jobs through privatisa-

So far privatisation has focused on such areas as the financial sector, cars, cement, chemicals, engineering and the food industry. The government has also undertaken a comprehensive plan to privatise the huge public sector corporations running the telecommunication networks,

railways and electricity. Formulation of the regulatory framework for the telecommunication and electricity sector is underway. while for railways partial privatisation is being tried on

profitable sections. Aziz insists that privatisation should not be seen in isolation. He asserts that it is a part of the overall policy to open up the economy to the private sector and foreign in-- GEMINI NEWS

JAVED A. MALIK is on the staff of a Islamabad daily. The News. He was previously a reporter with the Dally Jang in Rawalpindi.

tioning at the same level -

relatively speaking - as he was

in 1800. He must feed too

Farming Americana Feeds the World

by Avik Sanwar Rahman

OUSUF, one of the sons of Yaqub (Israel), once had a dream — he saw all his brothers including his father bowed to him. But when he revealed his dream, his brothers became very angry and sold him as a slave to the Egyptian traders. Many years later dream came true, in the period of seven years drought, when he became the secondin-command under the Pharaoh. As a master dream interpreter. Yousuf saved Egypt and made her the ruler of many nations. Yousuf said to Pharaoh, "and let them gather all the food of those good years that come, and that food shall be for store against the seven years of famine" - not an uncanny foreboding, but a reality. This Biblical story shows us the 'ABC' of how to rule the world.

AKISTAN is trying hard

to achieve the distinc-

In just 20 months, 35 state-

owned industrial enterprises

have been transferred to the

private sector. Another 21 are

tion. In addition, two public

sector banks have been sold to

the private sector and the sale

methods of privatisation have

raised controversy. The Mus-

lim Commercial Bank, for in-

stance, was sold to the private

group whose bid was second

highest, but later was matched

Bank Ltd was unique in being

sold to its employees. They

had pooled their savings and

secured personal loans to pay

for the shares. Now from the

president down to the lowest-

paid employee all are share-

state-run industrial units was

initially, the privatisation of

holders in the bank.

Privatisation of the Allied

with the highest bidder.

Apart from the speed, the

in different stages of privatisa

in the early 1970s.

of a third is planned.

There is an American old farm ballad, dating back several hundred years, that ends in the verse: A man gets tied up to the ground, he gives the world its strongest sound. The ties between man and earth, lubricated with sweat and blood, are ancient and almost unbelievably powerful. We come from the earth, return to it, and never leave it while we live; next to the bond between a man and his God, there is probably no stronger tie than that which holds man to the earth. Without it, without the sustenance the earth provides, we would die. "The strongest sound..." And Americans feel it is a sound well worth listening

Initially the United States was an agricultural settlement, and many of their moral and philosophical values and much of their political structure find roots deep in the early American farm. The very method they use to select their highest leader, the President, came from the farm community concept: the Electoral College was simply a way of consolidating the votes of farmers who couldn't get to the polls. Whether or not the

Revolutionary War was caused by agricultural restrictions might be open to debate, one thing stands clear: the war was declared, fought and won by American farmers. Washington, too, was a farmer. Thomas Jesserson, besides being a great thinker, was a farmer. Benjamin Franklin, while not directly involved in running a farm, devoted much of his talent to the improvement of American agriculture. Every body in the war of independence was connected in some way or the other with the American farm. Later, following the Civil War, in that incredible period of American history known as the Westward Expansion, it was again the American farmer who took the lead. It wasn't the Colt revolver, in the hands of the daring gunfighter or cowboy, that won the West. It was the plow and the tillers of the earth, it

Exploding the Myth

was the farmers.

The American farm not only became unique, as it still is, but it revolutionized the very idea of farming, and shattered boundaries in so doing. Mas styely productive, giving yieldsper-acre that in other countries staggered the imagination, the American farm exploded the myth of the small farm community, wherein a local farmer grew what needed for himself with just enough extra to feed a nearly small town. It became possible for the farmer to feed not only himself and the local community, but a good portion of the world as well, and national, even international lines were

crossed to alleviate hunger. At no time in history have so few fed so many from such a relatively small amount of arable land. It has been said, and rightly, that America feeds the world; the prairies have been called the breadbasket of

the world, and it is a proven that when famine and drought hit other countries they turn to America. America has almost always had a suffi-

cient surplus to feed the

The reasons for this are complicated, and astounding when the full implications are studied. Americans have, for instance, fed both Russia and China, when in truth both countries have more arable land and farming for longer than America has existed

Part of it, of course, is technology: American production methods have put efficient machinery for farming into the hands of almost all farmers; high-grade fertilizers and crop protectants have also been significant factors. But technological advancement is only a small part of what makes the American farm and farmer unique. To understand the whole picture, it is neces sary to study not just the surface of American farming but delve into the concepts that governed the process of American agriculture. One thing is clear; the farmers of the New World thought big. Whatever it is, make it bigger and better, remained open to new ideas when the rest of the world continued to use oldfashioned, rigidly structured methods.

In America, a man could own the land he worked. He could realize the profit from his own land, and how he profited depended on how well he could make it produce. After the Revolutionary War one thing became readily clear to the American farmer: in a new land, a new country. old methods - and more important, old equipment wouldn't get the job done.

It's small wonder that Jefferson, Franklin, and later

neutrality in presenting each

Daniel Webster worked very hard to design an improved plow. Plows used in Europe in 1800 were crude, suited only to settled farms where soil was well broken and easy to work; and then only on a small scale. What was needed in America was a plow that cut deeper. Wider, and faster than European plows, as the land was virgin and wide.

True Development

Here is where and how the true development of American farm equipment emerged, for there was no single explosion of inventiveness that suddenly brought out a new and improved model of the plow. On the contrary, 'the irony of agriculture in Bangladesh is that most of the research offices are Dhaka-city based, as if one brilliant single man sitting in a little room will come out shouting "Eureka!" When he will discover the endall of plows. But this is not the way farming goes. Farming goes with the land. The equipment is developed by and for the farmer. It came hard, and there were many failures and mistakes, just as there were failures and mistakes in farming itself.

Design improvements in any part of farming improvements to save time, labour or money, were a constant part of farming, in America. Most modern farms have welding equipment and machine shops, and if a new piece of machinery is found to be lacking in some area. It is a simple matter to modify it by the farmer. If the improvement works, it doesn't take long for word of the modification to get back to the manufacture and soon the machinery is altered to meet the new demands. Or, if it isn't altered, the farmers quit buying it. This

is as true now, with giant selfpropelled combines or tractors, as it was in 1776 with a simple one-bladed plow: if a piece of machinery doesn't work right - can't be made to work right - it will rot on the shelf while the farmer makes what he needs for himself. It is perhaps this feeling, this attitude of independence, that has made American farm equipment the best in the world. Equipment has to meet the standards of the farmer or it won't do.

But what is strange is that this feeling didn't seem to extend to other farmers in the world. The Russians have two distinct types of farm equipment - one type that is used. and one that is simply looked at. The equipment that is looked at appears to be the best: huge tractors, self-propelled combines and the like. It is shown off much of the time on the highways.

Comparative View

Comparisons are generally fruitless, but when the indications are so clear it is difficult to avoid taking at least a minimally comparative look. It is , for instance, almost inconceivable how the American farmer would use an old piece of machinery, something that was falling apart, when new equipment was being paraded

daily on a nearby highway. The evolution of power for agriculture in American has always been just behind the demand; it was so in 1776. and it is so now. Power has never caught up with need not really, not in terms of energy required for power produced. Solutions are complicated, and though several companies are working on the problem, answers aren't that easy because it amounts to a race against time and population growth. In the meantime the American farmer is func-

many people - the world with too little power. It is a tremendous task, surely one of the most difficult in the history of the world. Just on the face of it, it seems impossible to expect less than one per cent of the world's population to feed most of the rest, and there is no way, of

course, to know whether or not the American farmer will To farm now the farmer has to be streamlined, mechanized and extremely conscious of that work-versus-energy-versus-time requirements of each crop or kind of stocks he is trying to raise. With profit margin becoming exceedingly narrow, and the cost of fuel and seed rising rapidly, a farm has to be run more tightly and smoothly than most urban business.. Add to this tightness of operation, the 'gamble' on the weather or disease, and

running modern farming setup becomes a walk on a fine line between success and failure each year. With many of the causes for both, totally beyond the control of the farmer. He makes it or breaks, and luck has a lot to say about what it is. It is still farming, the won-

derful art of puling food from the soil, of planting and bringing sustenance for life from reluctant dirt, and the critical nature of the work - will the weather or won't it allow a crop?- will probably never chance.

But there are perhaps some indication of what will happen. Farming has always been a profit-motivated business, which is probably the reason that it has grown into a king of mega-industry more suited to computers than to grandfather hitching up the team for a day of plowing. So the Money Makers better gamble with the land, cause there's a probability that you may rule the world.

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.

BTV and CNN

Sir. The less said about the performances of BTV, cultural, educational or mechanical, the better. Perhaps a particular coterie has been successfully serving its interest for the last decade. Ask any viewer and he will agree that he is to adjust his TV almost every few minutes because the technicians at the other end do not function properly. At times it gives him a thought that probably his new TV purchased the other day has gone wrong somewhere. How could they bungle with Macgyver show on 29/7/92?

CNN authorities are justified if they want to put their own men appointed recently to run the show. BTV technicians have failed to make the TV function without much flaw. Why should they stand in the way of CNN if they want to run it flawlessly during the hours given to them? How could a threat come in the wake of agreement between the authorities of CNN and Bangladesh TV on 'technical grounds? We should correct gurselves first.

Quaf Alif Dhaka-1207.

A reader's view

Sir, I am a regular subscriber and reader of The Daily Star. I became very much interested in The Daily Star since it was first published Now everyday, getting up from bed in the morning what first comes to my mind is to read The Daily Star. My morning hours become dull and boring if The Daily Star is not delivered by the hawker (on occasions it occurs). I like The daily Star and encourage my friends and others to read this quality English newspaper. had long been feeling the need of such an English daily in our country. It is happy to say that with the publication of The Daily Star, a long felt need of the readers has been fulfilled.

The Daily Star introduced some new items right from the beginning such as education, feature, write to Mita column, My World column, Rising Stars, Commentary, Dhaka Day by Day, Down to Earth, which are worth reading and sharpen our intellect. But there are also matters that need to be reviewed. For instance, a recent news item regarding the death of one Munira Khatun, a female student of Ru, seems not based on truth. If you kindly take the trouble of looking deep into the matter, truth will come out before you. I am not a supporter of any political party nor is involved in politics. As a reader, what I feel and understand is to make a newspaper more believable to and popular with all sections of readers, neutral journalism is a must Your newspaper is one such

and I hope it will maintain

and every news to us. Now about some other writings. Recently, two write-ups entitled 'Quest for a breath of air' and 'Bengali erotica' have appeared in your daily. Regarding 'Quest for a breath of air by A S M Nurunnabi, I would like to say a few words. We are aware that there are only two or three recreational places in the city of Dhaka. For approximately 70 lakh people of Dhaka these are quite inadequate. But it is more disturbing that even these recreational places are seen to be filled with undesired elements including prostitutes. So it is high time the concerned authorities should ensure satisfactory safety measures for the people going to the above open spaces. The article under the title "Bengali erotica" by D K Karmaker is readable and timely. While buying newspaper or magazine from any news stand of Dhaka, one may see these sales centres flooded with obscene magazines and books. These have added to the degeneration of our youths. Urgent steps need to be taken on the part of the concerned authority to stop printing and publication of such harmful literatures to save the youths from being ruined.

I feel it necessary to say something about the writing of Nahed Kamal. In her recent article titled "No one can forbid us the future," she has tried successfully to express her free thinking and outlook towards love and marriage. Two people in love, she says, cann't do wrong. I also agree with her on this point. But in many cases of love affairs, sometimes something unexpected and painful happens which should be avoided. The recent death

of a female student of Eden Girls' College can be cited here as she had a love affair with a boy of DU. At one stage both of them involved in activities which can be called 'immoral' before marriage and as a result, while doing abortion at a clinic, the girl died a painful death. Who is responsible for this? With her unfortunate death, her family's prestige has also been diminished. So, lovers should be careful about what they can do in the name

However, I appreciate Nahed Kamal for her topic and writing. I expect more writings as of heart-touching from Nahed Kamal in the pages of The Daily Star.

Md Delowar Hossain, North Shahjahanpur, Dhaka.

Class struggle

Sir, Several years back, coming to know the communist political tenet — the dictatorship of the proletariat-, I was overwhelmingly chagrined. It appeared to me that dictatorship, whether by bourgeoisie or by proletariat or by any other socio-economic-political stratum has to depreciate. But the time passed on and as closer I became to the existing society, so clearly I understood the 'dictatorship of the proletariat'.

Here comes the Marxist theory of class-struggle. Some people have rejected outright this approach to the interpretation of social evolution. Following the recent crisis of socialism, the criticisms multiplied against it. Notwithstanding those above facts, the society bears the substantiveness of the theory of class-struggle.

All societies are divided

into several classes where one dominant class rules over the rest. It is because of the inability or ill wills of the dominant ruling class that the society as a whole does not develop. The ruling class formulates policies keeping in mind the continuation of its rule over the rest of the society but not their material development.

The oppressed people are generally sympathetic towards each other. They do not hesttate to share whatever they have with all others, but the oppressors do. For instance, the former USSR and China provided aid to the Third World countries on much easy terms than the capitalist world does. That is all about the international society.

Coming back to the national society; it has also been divided into several classes and one class rules over the rest. This ruling class has been reluctant to share the resources with others. Consequently, the poor gets poorer and the rich gets richer day by day.

With this bourgeoisie at its top the society as a whole cannot develop. Aiming at social development, the other oppressed classes are also to hold the decision-making power of the society. This power transfer cannot necessarily be peaceful. The world history has been replete with the examples of violent power transfers. But we must look for something beneficial for all.

All these relate to many of the present national societies worldwide. As for Bangladesh, feel that the illiterate, less conscious over-whelming majority people's fate can only be turned letter through a revolution leading to the transfer of decision-making power also to the presently oppressed. The

class-struggle is on. It would continue till the highest stage of the development of the society is achieved; when the society would be able to meet everyone's basic needs. Md Abdur Rouf

Department of International Relations, DU

Hospital wastes

Sir, Most of the hospitals

and clinics in the Metropolis and elsewhere in the country dump their wastes either in the nearby drains or dustbins. These wastes pose a serious threat to our health and hygiene and also cause environmental pollution. On a number of time, some amputated human limbs were found in our college's agricultural field. It was revealed with the help of the police that those were brought to our crop field from the Pangu Hospital area by dogs or foxes. Imagine the situation? The hospital wastes can also spread harmful dis-

relevant authority to take strong measures so that hospital/clinic wastes may not be thrown to open places or dumped unhygienically without proper precautions. The Medical students forum 'Sandhani' may undertake a motivational campaign to make hospital/clinics administration and others aware of the hazardous consequences of dumping wastes in drains or in open dustbins. If 'Shandhani' wants, they may take the help of other students in running the motivational programme.

would like to request the

M Zahidul Hague Assistant Professor, Bangladesh Agricultural Institute, Dhaka.