

### Crisis in JCD

In a decisive move Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia dissolved the central committee of her powerful student wing the Jatiyatabadi Chatra Dal (JCD). We welcome this move which became necessary when factionalism within JCD resulted in the killing of two young activists in the early hours of last Saturday. The killing was a severe blow to the prestige of the Prime Minister. Only a few weeks back she personally supervised the reconciliation between these very groups and instructed them to work jointly. The limited impact of her mediation efforts made it tragically clear that the root of the conflict went deeper than the BNP chief has imagined. The sure sign of JCD factionalism coming out in the open occurred on August 30 when a gun battle caused the death of a bystander and injured many others. The brutalities of Saturday morning caught the BNP highups by surprise and nobody seems to know exactly what can be done to extricate the party and its student front from the present mess.

To start with Prime Minister Khaleda Zia must take the sternest of measures against the killers of Mamun and Mahmud. The dissolution of the JCD central committee is a good first step but not a sufficient one. She, with the help of her intelligence service and advisers, must expel all armed cadres from her party. Following this she must give a free hand to the police to go to the bottom of the affair. The police should be given clear instructions and complete power to arrest and interrogate anybody — regardless of their political connections — and get to the truth. How severely the Prime Minister handles the culprits from her own party will determine, to a large extent, how effective her call will be to the others to help her weed out terrorism from the campus.

Those who are in the know of the nature of student politics say that the root of the problem lies in the politics of "Hall capture" — meaning allowing this or that group to take physical possession of student halls. Student parties fight regular gun battles to control or take possession of these dorms, which then are used to house the supporters of the group that captures them. BNP highups should have known that both the Illias group and Sohrab group, who control five of the residential halls, did so with the help of illegal arms. Yet they did nothing to force them to surrender arms to the police. It is in the policy of "looking the other way as long as the guns are in the hands of our boys" that has led to the present deplorable state of affairs.

Factional fights are not unusual in student politics. But waging it with modern automatic weapons is. The development should trigger new thinking among the political leaders. Both the BNP and the AL and other parties that have powerful students front — like the Jamaat and the JSD (Inu group) — should now put their heads together and rethink about students being used in politics. While it is not realistic to expect that a politically conscious group such as our student community can be made to stay away from politics altogether. But definitely some measures can be taken to ensure a more constructive role for them. But that is for the future. As for the immediate, what needs to be done is to take serious and effective measures to weed out all fire arms from the student bodies. This the government must do in earnest, and in a total non-partisan manner. Learning from experience the government must act in a way which will leave no doubt in the public mind that it will treat its own members as harshly for breaking the law as it would anybody else. Such an approach will give the government the type of political cooperation and public support that it needs to solve the problem of campus violence.

### Literacy

Another World Literacy Day is upon us, and hundreds of thousands of factory workers have collected their monthly pay by "signing" the register with thumb-prints as they did last September. All the observance ceremonies, speeches and solemn pledges of the previous day have not produced any significant or visible movement to lift the national rate of literacy from its current, shameful 25 per cent to a more respectable level. Primary schooling continues to suffer from massive desertions, and nation-wide literacy drives, usually announced through long, tedious sermons at gatherings of the elite, disappear without a trace. More and more men, women, boys and girls are added to the labour force every month, with their path to learning of higher skills blocked by the curse of illiteracy. It is a curse they have done nothing to deserve, but which has been imposed upon them by an inefficient and corrupt administrative system and an unimaginative and unresourceful political leadership.

With Bangladesh falling further behind its regional competitors in terms of literacy and level of skill, the time has now come for putting an end to the rhetorics and preaching to the converted. We have to devise programmes that are innovative and that would inspire people to work dedicatedly at the field level. One of the saddest features of the literacy scene is the almost-total lack of efforts by university students and teachers in conducting campaigns on a regular basis. This ought to change and the universities and colleges should set aside at least three weeks during a calendar year, possibly following year-end exams, to go out into the countryside with a serious sense of purpose. Such annual drives, intensive and effective, would not only have a positive, snowballing effect across the country, it would also help to lift the somewhat battered image of the student community. A lot can also be done at the workplace, especially on factory shopfloors which have a high concentration of illiterate workers. The factory management, in cooperation with unions, could organise literacy classes every other day after normal working hours, and pay the attendants overtime money for the duration of classes. Government planners as well as non-government organisations could look abroad for models, such as the success story of the Indian state of Kerala which last year achieved 100 per cent literacy. The Kerala model was applied recently in the Burdwan district of neighbouring West Bengal with identical results. Given the socio-economic and cultural similarities between Bangladesh and West Bengal, the Burdwan model is one that could be studied carefully for ideas.

I was a student at Cambridge University when the first conference of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) was held in Bandung, Indonesia in the autumn of 1955. As students from the Third World, we shared a sense of exhilaration at this pioneering gesture of solidarity amongst the formerly colonised and oppressed countries of the world. I remember by way of sympathy with the Bandung spirit the Presidents of the Africa Society representing African students at Cambridge, headed by Abu Myanja who went on to become Education Minister of Uganda, the Arab Society, headed by an Egyptian, Syed Zulfikar who worked with the Aga Khan Foundation and UNESCO and myself as President of the Cambridge Majlis which represented students from India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka and Burma met to found the Cambridge Bandung Society. It was the first time that Third World students at Cambridge came together in search of a shared vision of the world.

Whilst to my knowledge the Cambridge Bandung Society withered away, the NAM still remains alive even though its obituary has been written several times by the foreign ministries and intelligence agencies of the western countries. The original vision of the founding fathers, such as Chou-En-Lai, Gamal Nasser, Jawaharlal Nehru, Kwame Nkrumah, Soekarno and Tito, was to demonstrate an autonomous voice of the Third World in global affairs to generate collective strength in global force where the voice of the North, defined as both West and East, had remained historically dominant over the formerly subject peoples of the world.

This vision of building political and economic bridges long sundered by the colonial encounter founded against the harsh realities of economics and geo-politics. In the decade of the 1950s and 60s most Third World countries were primarily agrarian economies, dependent largely on export of primary products to the developed world (DW). They were dependent on the developed economies for import of manu-

## From Bandung to Jakarta — a Role for NAM in the Post-Cold War Era

by Rehman Sobhan

factures, capital and technology. Most of their economies were still dominated by western transnational corporations and they remained integrated into a global division of labour which derived from the compulsions of the western developed countries.

At the strategic level many Third World countries were enmeshed in western designed strategic alliances. Many countries in Africa and Latin America whilst having no strategic links with the west were so totally dependent on the west for capital and markets for their commodity exports that they enjoyed little room for maneuver and readily accepted a world where the western powers called the

countries to become more self-reliant through structural diversification of their economies and trading patterns. Only a very few countries succeeded in building such structurally diversified and dynamic economies. However even these economies remain dependant today on open western markets and for the more indebted countries, on the western dominated global capital market to ease their debt burden.

Today most Third World countries still remain dependant on capital, technology and markets on the developed world. The recession domi-

global affairs is thus limited. The disintegration of the USSR as a balancing force in global affairs has made all Third World countries even more vulnerable to dictation by the dominant western powers on the direction of their political and economic life. The Third World is thus faced with an unprecedented global situation where their economic options are limited, their domestic politics have become vulnerable to the strategic and even domestic political compulsions of the western powers and even the boundaries of their nation states now depend on the grace and favour of the western powers. It is not sur-

national Economic Order are now long since eroded as a factor in global economic affairs.

Many Third World economies have demonstrated considerable capacity to diversify their economies and to become competitive exporters to the North and to each other. As a result today there is much greater scope for South-South economic cooperation. Within the South a wide variety of manufactured goods and primary products including energy can be traded competitively. The South has emerged as a source of technology and capital. Today 60 per cent of the US trade deficit is financed by capital inflows from Third World countries. Thus there is considerable scope to

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ture. It was not till the Suez confrontation when Gamal Nasser nationalised the Suez Canal as a reaction to the refusal of the US and World Bank to finance the construction of the Aswan dam that the world witnessed the emergence of the USSR with its offer of arms and to build the high dam for Egypt as an active presence in the Third World. It was this access to an alternative source of capital and arms from the Eastern bloc which contributed to the emergence of a more autonomous voice in world affairs being articulated by Third World countries such as India, Egypt, Syria, Ghana, Guinea, Tanzania, and Indonesia. Prior to the emergence of the USSR as a player in the Third World non-alignment remained a largely theoretical posture within the prevailing economic and geo-political circumstances of the post-colonial world.

The substance of building an autonomous voice in world affairs however really rests on the capacity of Third World

nated global economy of the 1980s has set back the growth and diversification of most Third World economies who have faced economic setbacks due to the slow growth in their export markets, fall in export prices, debt servicing problems and decline of capital inflows. The World Bank and IMF have used the crisis within the Third World to impose their own agenda of economic reforms on these crises ridden Third World countries which has for most of these countries aggravated their economic difficulties during the 1980s. Only a handful of countries, mostly in East Asia but including India and China, commanded the resilience to survive the crisis of the 1980s and continued to sustain the growth and diversification of their economies.

For most Third World countries whose economies remain fragile and dependant on western markets, institutions capital and philosophical dictation the scope for speaking with an autonomous voice in

prising that obituaries of NAM were being written with even more conviction than before.

It is however interesting to note that the Jakarta session of NAM, notwithstanding differences on Bosnia and Iraq, demonstrated a new vigour and a more cohesive world view than has been in evidence since the Algiers session in 1973.

It appears that member countries at Jakarta appreciated that the prevailing global circumstances the need for using NAM to reinforce the collective solidarity of the Third World remains more relevant than ever. It was recognised that if the Third World is not to lapse into a vassal status, they will have to use the institutions of NAM to rebuild their bargaining power in world affairs. NAM members have realised that with the passage of years they are not as powerless as they were even though the OPEC surpluses, which sustained in the 1970s the voice for a New Interna-

use NAM to reinforce and expand South-South economic cooperation. As suggested by Egypt in Jakarta it makes sense for the G-77, which is a separate entity within the UN system to speak for the South, to now integrate itself with NAM. As has also been proposed at Jakarta it is time to consider the establishment of a high powered secretariat on the line of the OECD secretariat in Paris. Such a body, well staffed with competent Third World professionals, could both identify and promote areas of cooperation within the South and could develop collective negotiating positions with the North.

Can NAM play out such a historic role at a time when the Third World is fragmented, vulnerable and in their individual capacity desperately seeking bilateral accommodation with the dominant western powers and their multilateral institutions? To build faith in NAM will demand a major gesture of statemanship and reunification by the

more powerful Third World countries such as Brazil, Mexico, India, China, South Korea, Nigeria and Egypt. These countries will have to make a conscious effort not to exploit their superior economic and political weight to use regional force to establish their hegemony over their neighbours. They will have to open their markets and will have to invest in developing and diversifying the economies of their weaker neighbours to avail of these opportunities. Such a gesture of statemanship will not be without advantage to these countries. They will build political allies and economic partners, with considerable market potential who will be less inclined to induct outside influences into the respective regions to neutralise the domination of their stronger neighbours. A growing market within the South will strengthen the negotiating position of the Third World in a global dialogue and make particular countries less vulnerable to political blackmail through threats by the western powers to withhold access to their markets.

Are these any more than pious hopes for the Third World? Statemanship is not greatly in evidence within the Third World. There is however an awareness in every country, vocally registered at Jakarta by Mahathir Mohammed, Prime Minister of Malaysia, Mugabe, President of Zimbabwe and others that live in a transformed world where countries on their own can on various fronts be exposed to severe assaults on their sovereignty. It is only when the weak come together to demonstrate strength through collective action that we can think of building a more just and stable world order.

A noted economist, the writer was the member of the first Planning Commission of Bangladesh, the Director General of the Bangladesh Institute of Development Studies (BIDS) and, more recently, an adviser in the interim government of the acting President, Justice Shahabuddin. Prof Rehman Sobhan writes occasionally for The Daily Star as its guest columnist.

## Kolorob Literacy Model — a Dream Comes True!

by Tarafder Rafiqul Islam

**Children gradually learn values like, punctuality, discipline and obedience simultaneously with respect for elders and teachers and the whole atmosphere offers vitality in the midst of joy, laugh and fun where children are encouraged to demonstrate qualities of leadership.**

**K**OLOROB Literacy Model, the once-a-week education programme for the urban deprived children is not only the fulfilment of a dream, but also the pursuance of the same in full vigour. The model started in early 1990 by Shamima Islam, the veteran non-formal education researcher in Bangladesh who worked in the pioneering research team for non-formal education under Michigan State University (USA) in 1971-72. Since then, she has participated in major non-formal education publications in Bangladesh. In this process, she gradually formed her own dream: 'can a new model for learning be developed for poor children which will break the vicious circle of poverty and where the school will go to the children and not the children to the school? The dream also spelled out, 'can a school be such that will not interrupt poor children's daily life and work schedule and children can learn in the work-site just by spreading some mats in the open center? Can a model be such which would offer a programme for learning where both the opportunity cost and the incidental cost would be negligible?

Planning and implementing such a programme resulted in a learning experience where time needed is minimum — only an hour a week — and neither the parents, nor the employers (not to speak of the self-employed children) mind sending children to the cen-

tre? The long-wished dream got its momentum in late January in 1990 and 'Kolorob' Model germinated as the first programme in Bangladesh which offers an educational environment to the working children who spend only one hour a week at the centre. The innovativeness of the model is not only its timing — but the whole approach of handling the poor children with its rotating mobile teacher, new kind of reading material for teaching the basic 3Rs (reading, writing and arithmetic). Children gradually learn values like, punctuality, discipline and obedience simultaneously with respect for elders and teachers and the whole atmosphere offers vitality in the midst of joy, laugh and fun where children are encouraged to demonstrate qualities of leadership.

In 'Kolorob' Model, the planners do not stay away from the field — they are on their feet with the teachers and children enjoy the presence of 'nana' sir (Shamima's retired Magistrate father) and their 'khalamma' — the two vital figures' constant presence in the programme. The adult figure in 'Kolorob' plan together, teach together, evaluate together, learn together in this model. The model started giving shape to a dream with

Redda Barren's modest help and has spread to three different locations to test its replicability and bears potentiality for further replication.

The specialty of the model lies in the fact that it not only takes too little time, it is a complete open-air school primarily for working children and operates on holidays specified in the area. Starting with few working and street children, the programme now encompasses about 250 children in three locations covering deprived slum children, working children, street children, domestic servants, irregular formal school students and drop-outs.

There is no restriction, no rigidity no compulsion in attendance and here any poor child who is interested in joining can sit and practice the lessons for the day. An open-air class for 5-15 year old children, the smiling faces voluntarily attend the school. It is fun to watch children running for the class, cleaning their space, arranging their own class, practising their lessons for the day and merrily returning back to their own places after closing down the boxes at the end. They enjoy murmuring indigenous rhymes or numbers which their fellow peers make them practice. These funs are encouraged to

build confidence and leadership qualities among poor children who come to learn at these centres. According to Shamima Islam, 'they are her future literacy teachers and these funs are for training them up.

The teachers are like children's friends — no scolding, no beating and children are not scared. The teachers, all higher education students rotate from centre to centre and work on part-time basis. Their training is 'on their job' and the policy is earn while you learn from work in the effort to help deprived children learn.

The children, after learning the alphabets, read the innovative reading material which has been specially prepared for the programme. The material is very 'life-oriented' and that encourages children to practice. The children are interested in coming to the centres and reading the materials — and the programme now feels pressure from advanced children for more material. Here lies the success, the demand is coming from children! The school is never closed, except on Eid holidays, when teachers go home. In 'hartal', in curfew, on national holidays, — the policy stands — if children are there, we will teach them. And, students really attend

even on these days in varied intensity.

It is the dream that comes true — the availability of an open-air class where poor children can attend without any bar or cost. Whenever they feel like attending. It is their participation from beginning to end which seems to be one of the fondest times in their difficult life-situation. This little break in their daily schedule seems to be really breaking monotony in their life. This is the time for their 'Kolorob' class, time to practice their lessons in numbers, pronunciations, reading, writing, with new kinds of Hashi-Khushi, 'Ananda and Ullash sections of their school!

The children's non-attendance is not their unwillingness to attend but their inability to come due to their uncertainty in life, and charges in their adults' life-pattern with whom they are associated either for living, or for residence. These little children are scared of employers, unhappy faces at the prospect of their regular attendance. Many of them send messages through other children, 'tell 'khalamma' I cannot attend for coming days.' Khalamma invariably reassures them by sending message back, 'no problem, whenever you can

manage, join the class'. So, old faces re-appear after long gap and belief is strengthened that children can never be permanent dropouts, if availability of a centre is in the immediate vicinity with welcoming hands.

The 'Kolorob' Model is gaining strength and the leaders and managers gain rich experience. Currently, it is operating at three spots — at Eastern Housing, Sidheswari for domestic servants, at Gulshan South Market primarily for market children and nearby groups and at New Market for business and job-oriented children. The programme is attracting many visitors from both home and abroad. Many curious watchers ask, 'what do you offer these children to come to the class?'

The grandfather adviser replies — we have no building, no furniture, except our affection and commitment which brings school to the children

and not children to the school. 'The newness in approach has impressed many concerned individuals and they ask, 'Mrs Islam, what can we do for you? Shamima Islam replies, 'my need never ends but try to help my children first before you help me.' And in many difficult days, such small help counts for Kolorob and ease her struggle at least temporarily.

The writer is a columnist in the Chronic, a student-news-paper at Saint Cloud University, Minnesota, USA.

### 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.

#### ECNEC and government publicity

Sir, The ECNEC meet periodically and sanction a number of development projects. The press release which follows contains a few lines of the names of the projects only, and a longer list of those who attended. It is like offering half a glass of water to a thirsty person who needs two full glasses.

This news is not followed up during the following weeks with more pertinent details of each project, for the information of the public. Some projects are on-going, but some are new. Follow-up background information on projects may be released by the Planning Commission or the Ministries concerned, written in simple language, and illustrated, if possible.

These project write-ups have to be in journalistic style to sustain the interest of the readers, who are mostly laymen. A reshuffle of the project document or academic papers are not required, as these make dry reading. Data may be obtained from the internal progress and monitoring reports.

The problem is that the government publicity machine is engaged in day-to-day catering of VIP activities. Still, there is enough time left for short-term and long-term routine releases in specific fields, presenting an over-all picture of the development activities.

The output of govt PR appears to be low, and largely irrelevant, in spite of the fact that there are publicity officials attached to each Ministry/Division. The press has to be fed constantly and regularly

to build up a reader-friendly image of the popular government.

Photographs and charts and graphs are not enough. There are no "illustrators" in the service for free hand drawings and sketches of men or machinery, and graphical representation of systems (as we see in NASA reports, although many of these are computer simulations — not an impossibility in Bangladesh).

There are several vertical levels of mass media targets, which need different fare prepared by specialists in PID. The government PR has to be updated and modernised, and its output greatly increased to feed the 40 million active adults in the country (including the illiterates).

A Mawaz Dhaka

#### 'Pray, Don't Build Villages'

Sir, I am sorry, that I beg to differ with the views expressed in your editorial 'Pray, Don't Build Villages' of 18th August. You concluded by suggesting that measures be taken first to see that no one any-

more becomes homeless and then to help the homeless to go back to their own non-model habitat and begin life anew under a roof. This is a good suggestion for those who become homeless due to flood or cyclone. But is it possible for those who become homeless due to river erosion? We are living in a country where several hundred dwelling houses, nay, villages get washed away rendering several thousands of families homeless each year. They cannot be managed to go back to their non-model habitat. River erosion has been increasing floating population in the towns and cities every year. This also has been increasing beggars' problem in the country.

Should not these people be rehabilitated in new locations? Let us not call these new locations 'model villages' or 'cluster villages' but let there be new villages where 'Khash lands' are available. Since we have not much 'Khash' land in Bangladesh the Govt should be well advised to reserve what-ever 'khashland' is available for leasing to the people uprooted due to river erosion. Even this may not be sufficient. Govt may acquire land for settling these

uprooted people. There is no harm if a good thing done by the Ershadian autocracy is copied. The cluster villages may not be el-dorados but they should be helped to exist. Gulam Kabir Juarshara, Dhaka

#### Public servants

Sir, It is really shocking to note that recently a camera crew of BTV while on duty was attacked by some angry political activists which caused injury to some crew members and damage to a costly TV camera.

Such attack is a condemnable act and is not expected to be done by people who believe in democratic values and process. It is to be kept in mind that all the govt employees are the servants of the republic and while on duty they serve the country's interest. Now a BNP govt is managing the state affairs. When its tenure will be over, they will be re-placed or re-appointed through election. But majority of the govt employees will remain the same and the new govt will have to work with them. Hence, no political party

should brand the govt staff by any party seal or cause any harm to their smooth discharging of duties. They are the neutral public servant, controlled by the Republic's Constitution and general rules and regulations. M Zahidul Haque Assistant Professor, Bangladesh Agricultural College, Dhaka

#### Coincidence!

Sir, September 5, 1992. I opened my Daily Star, and after the main story 'Two more DU boys fall' the caption that caught my attention by its hallucinogenic quality was 'BNP has rehabilitated AL into politics: Huda'. With faint but mounting nausea I read the beginning of this latest salvo, the Information Minister's disinformation campaign. I then turned over the paper for the conclusion (don't ask me why — I suppose to see what limits absurdity can reach), and in trying to locate the continuation, found, in bold letters, the caption 'Gas project'. How appropriate, I thought. Abed Elahi Dhaka