

Feature Development

A Development Strategy for Bangladesh — I

by Md Kamruzzaman Khan

THE foundation of the present development strategy of Bangladesh was laid in the mid-fifties under the auspices of the Colombo Plan. The basic objective of the strategy was to raise the socio-economic condition of the teeming millions through planned, development sponsored by the government. Since then, with a brief interruption during the war of liberation in 1971, a series of Five-Year Plans have been implemented and physical achievements accomplished there form are also not negligible. In the communication sector, over 12,000 kilometers

of highways have been added to the existing 2746 kilometers of rail routes. About 5000 manufacturing industries have been set-up. Hundreds of educational institutions including half-a-dozen universities have been established. Over a dozen natural gas fields have been explored and electric power generation capacity has been raised from 21 MW to 2100 MW. Food production increased from eight million tons to 18 million tons. And above all, the endeavour created approximately 14 million new job opportunities outside agriculture.

greatest factor that virtually doomed everything. It grooms (so-called) mixed-economy without earmarking the areas of jurisdiction between the government and the private sector operations.

Half a century ago, when the colonial rulers left the sub-continent, the geographical area which constitutes Bangladesh to-day was left with crude farming as the base of their economy. Therefore, creation of job opportunities by undertaking labour intensive projects became an immediate responsibility of the government. Since then, the priority remained unchanged. In fact, the ever increasing number of landless people left no room for a priority change.

In a predominantly illiterate society like ours, labour-intensive projects, though seems to bring certain degree of immediate relief to the landless community, trigger population explosion. Where only two bare hands can earn a piece of bread, culturally backward

Table — I
Total vis-a-vis Per Capita Food Production (1980-1991)

| Fiscal year | Total production (million tons) | Rate of increase | Population (million) | Per capita production (million tons) |
|-------------|---------------------------------|------------------|----------------------|--------------------------------------|
| 1980-81 | 13.80 | 100% | 90.00 | 0.015 |
| 1985-86 | 15.00 | 108% | 100.00 | 0.015 |
| 1990-91 | 18.00 | 130% | 115.00% | 0.015 |

people, unconscious of the impact of their activities on the national economy, naturally tend to produce more children to earn more breads. Thus, the prize of development endeavour has ultimately been swallowed by its own inherent dragon, the population boom. A look at the following table reveals the contention.

A decade of intensive effort and investment though led to a laudable 30 per cent increase in the total production, it added nothing to the per capita production. This is true

Table — II
Annual Operating Loss of three selected Sector Corporation

| Name of the corporation | Annual Operating Loss (in million taka) | | | | |
|--|---|-------|--------|--------|--------|
| | 85-86 | 86-87 | 87-88 | 88-89 | 89-90 |
| Bangladesh Steel and Engineering Corporation | 19.59 | 15.90 | 20.90 | 35.58 | 46.89 |
| Bangladesh Textile Mills Corporation | 67.60 | 88.09 | 94.89 | 116.11 | 127.91 |
| Bangladesh Jute Mills Corporation | 92.83 | 95.43 | 108.25 | 135.52 | 164.39 |

dependent upon external aid. There are of course talks of policy changes but any significant change is still far from the sight. Tabled below is a picture of last five year's annual operating losses of three selected sector corporations which reveal, to a certain extent, the plight of the so-called mixed economy.

It is reported that Bangladesh Chemical Industries Corporation suffered a net operating loss of Tk 380 million in FY 1990-91. While establishments of the same nature are doing good

business in the private sector, the corporations are incurring operating loss at a higher rate every consecutive fiscal year. The Bangladesh Railway's annual operating loss is to the tune of Tk 1500 million. The World Bank Vice-President has rightly told the Prime Minister that the surplus revenue derived from Bangladesh Power Development Board alone, if its business could be run on sound management practices, can finance a Jamuna Bridge every two years. However, with richly fertile plains, the arable hillocks growing tea and tropical fruits, the huge flow of sweat water,

process. As a result, 15 million unemployed people sit over the shoulder of a much smaller contingent of employed people. Among them are engineers, doctors, scientists and graduates of many other disciplines. The number is increasing at a geometrical rate.

It is high time that the nation gave up the present development strategy and adopted a new one in the light of the realities the nation faces today. Evidently, if something is not done to contain the uncertainty and frustration of the new generation right now, it may be too late to hold fast even the present miserable

Table — III
Annual Rise of Per Capita NNP (Income)

| Fiscal Year | Per capita income at Factor Cost (Taka) | Annual rise of per capita NNP income |
|-------------|---|--------------------------------------|
| 1985-86 | 3767 | 2.17% |
| 1986-87 | 3846 | 2.10% |
| 1987-88 | 3887 | 1.09% |
| 1988-89 | 3877 | (-) 0.26% |

Source : B B S Year Book, 1990

abundant marine resources and a plentiful deposit of high quality natural gas, Bangladesh could have been full of immense economic possibilities. But the per capita income of this resourceful country is one of the lowest in the world.

Source : B B S Year Book, 1990

If any single factor is to be blamed for the emerging situa-

condition from going to worse right tomorrow.

The Proposed Strategy
The ultimate aim of the development endeavour is to improve the socio-economic condition of the general mass. The physical development is only a means to that end. Therefore, the development strategy must emphasize those issues which ensure an increase in real per capita income to a desired level within the prescribed period of time. In the context of the present realities, the salient features of the proposed development strategy are outlined below:

Highest priority will be attached to a Population Reduction Programme (PRP).

The next priority will be given to the basic infrastructures in consistent with the PRP and allied areas such as education, health, communication and electrification.

The labour-intensive technique of production will be replaced by appropriate technology within the quickest possible period of time.

Projects that proved to be futile and frustrating during the last four decades shall be dropped from the development programme.

be used for things like building breakwaters or access tracks to their taro, banana and coconut crops or they can assess their own village needs in consultation with us, and come up with a proposal. We will document this proposal and send it to the Swedes."

Eco-tourism is the second solution. The Swedish Society offers places to members for a group holiday living in the village at a set fee negotiated with the village. The money goes to the village council. A portion is spent on forest upkeep, such as fencing out their pigs.

The village supplies guest with food, accommodation, guides as well as the opportunity to join the cultural life of a people who have not lost their passion for life. Peteru stresses: "The money goes directly to villagers, not to overseas-owned hotels."

Peteru believes eco-tourism encourages villagers "to strive to preserve and enhance their rainforests. To do otherwise would be to kill the golden goose. If the forests disappear the tourists will not want to visit."

Perhaps more importantly, he adds, "It compliments traditional Samoan hospitality." The Samoa custom of offering visitors food and lodging is as generous today as it was when Samoa captivated British writer Robert Louis Stevenson into becoming a permanent resident a century ago.

The successful first of three eco-tours this year is over. The generosity of the Samoans proved the only problem.

Peteru smiles: "They were so enthusiastic. At one village, when I asked the leader of the women's committee to tally up how much they had provided — according to tradition you feed guests well and provide certain gifts and handicrafts — it turned out they had spent more on the eco-tourists than they received."

"Next time they will have to turn it down a bit."

— Gemini News
About the Author: JIM BEATSON is a Australian-based journalist who travels widely in the Pacific region. He writes regularly for the Guardian, London and the San Francisco Chronicle.

A Richer Catch for Maldives Fishermen

IN 1974, the Government of Maldives embarked on a national programme to equip traditional fishing vessels with diesel engines in order to increase their speed, thus reducing spoilage after the catch.

With assistance from the World Bank, the Government of Japan and UNDP, fishing capacity increased significantly and spoilage was reduced. However, due to foreign exchange constraints, supplies of fuel, spare parts and fishing gear arrived erratically.

To assist the Government in this respect, in 1986 UNCDF approved a project to finance inboard diesel engines, fishing equipment and spare parts. The project aims to increase fish production and to pro-

vide exports. The project is being implemented in two phases. Engines and equipment are sold to fishermen on credit, and the repayments are deposited in a convertible currency revolving fund operated by the Ministry of Fisheries.

The Maldives Transport and Contracting Company (MTCC) is responsible for vessel mechanization while the State Trading Organization (STO) manages sales of fishing gear. Engine installation began in June 1988. UNDP is financing the technical assistance required to established mechanisms for the operation of the revolving fund.

The project has effectively contributed to the creation of 1,150 jobs in the fishing industry and improved the in-

come levels of the fishermen, which are now comparable to those of average employed islanders. The revolving loan operation is functioning efficiently and has significantly benefited both the fleet owners and the fishermen. A loan repayment rate of approximately 85 per cent has been recorded, with annual return to vessel-owners standing at 56 per cent of the individual owner's share of net sales.

The project has also contributed to the overall mechanization programme and improved service levels. The impact of the project has been very positive. Comparing 1987 results to data from 1984, fish exports increased by 81 per cent and catch per fishing trip increased about 10 per cent. — UNCDF



UNCDF-equipped fishing vessels improve efficiency and increase exports in Maldives.

Community-based Job Training

IN December 1946, the International Labour Organisation (ILO) became the first specialized agency associated with the United Nations. Originally, it had been established in 1919 under the Treaty of Versailles, as an independent institution associated with the League of Nations.

The ILO works to promote decent standards of living, satisfactory conditions of work and pay, and adequate employment opportunities for working people everywhere.

During the UN Decade of Disabled Persons, the ILO has developed community-based methods to address the employment needs of disabled people. ILO's technical cooperation projects have assisted the development of community-based programmes providing vocational skills and employment to disabled people in Costa Rica, the Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Ecuador, Ethiopia, Guatemala, Honduras, Indonesia, Kenya, Lesotho, Malawi, Nicaragua, Nigeria, the Philippines, Swaziland, the United Republic of Tanzania, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

The experience of 44-year-old Helan Senzo of Malawi illustrates the success of ILO's community-based approach. When Helman was eight, an attack of poliomyelitis left him with paralysed legs. His parents were farmers subsisting on a small piece of land 20 kilometres from Lilongwe.

There were no medical services in his village and, with no access to medicine of therapy, Helman's conditions worsened. His weakened legs atrophied and the boy had to drag himself around on his hands and knees. As he grew older he remained dependent upon his parents, but they could afford only to feed him; sending him to school was beyond their means.

When his parents died in the mid-1980s, Helman, at 39, was alone, dejected and vulnerable. Villagers advised him to go to the city to beg. None of them thought that a man with such a disability could earn a living. Eventually, Malawi Against Polio, a charitable organization, gave him a tricycle wheelchair. But without job skills, he could not earn money to buy food.

Travelling on his tricycle, Helman visited a nearby village where people were gathered to hear a talk. "I found myself at a meeting where a gentleman was explaining about a new programme to help people like me, right in their homes. He was also encouraging the rest of the community to help disabled people," he explained.

Helman Senza had attended the first meeting convened by a community rehabilitation volunteer to announce a community-based rehabilitation programme of the Malawi Council for the Handicapped, assisted by the ILO and the United Nations Development Programme. Dalison Makhundize, the

volunteer, worked out a rehabilitation plan with Helman. They decided that tinsmithing would be compatible with his disability and that there would be a local demand for the work he did. To carry out their plan, they needed to find a local craftsman who could train Helman. The volunteer found Soza Mpevu, a tinsmith in another village. He welcomed the disabled man to his workshop, but later commented: "At first I expected payment, but it dawned on me that I was actually playing an important part and will be one of those to help this person become self-reliant. I am proud of it."

Now Helman Senza makes and mends enough cooking-pots and water pails to bring in a regular income and support himself.

During the UN Decade of Disabled Persons, the ILO has developed community-based methods to address the employment needs of disabled people.

Lewis Msasa, a community rehabilitation officer with the Malawi Council for the Handicapped, explains: "The aim of our programme is to help people to help themselves and to become self-reliant within their community after being trained by community members."

At the start of the UN Decade of Disabled Persons, community-based methods were little more than an idea, but by the 1990s they had become the favoured solution. This evolution was inevitable, as rehabilitation institutions simply could not cope with the demand for training, and often did not teach the appropriate vocational skills for an independent life.

Their services were costly and not very effective, and they were rarely located in villages, so disabled people had to leave their families to attend training courses. But the Decade brought policy makers, planners, economists, social scientists, rehabilitation professionals and disabled people together in constructive debate, and the growth of community-based work accelerated.

Ten years ago, most rehabilitation centres were self-contained institutions with staff, equipment, standard assessment tests and training syllabuses, but with little or no contact with the world of work outside.

Today many centres provide outreach services to disabled people, offer part-time courses, operate mobile rehabilitation teams, or act as resource centres for training craft instructors and other vocational rehabilitation professionals.

Mustapha Hasan experienced something of this new flexibility when he attended a rehabilitation centre in Yemen. As a toddler he fell down stairs at home and suffered a server injury which left deaf. — UN Publications

He grew up in the city of Tatz, where his father is a judge and his older brothers are officers in the police and the military. This well-off family could easily have made the mistake of over-protecting Mustapha and not allowing him to go out to work and grow. But when he was 19 father arranged for him to attend a vocational rehabilitation centre in Sana'a, about 400 kilometres from his home.

He showed an aptitude for carpentry, and developed skills with tools and timber. Many rehabilitation programmes provide training, but fail to assist trainees in finding paid employment. This training centre arranged for a commercial workshop in Sana'a to "employ" Mustapha as a carpenter every afternoon, enabling him to polish his skills and increase his confidence.

Mustapha learned skills as a carpenter, and confidence as an employee. With the training completed, he returned to his home town and now has a permanent job in local carpentry business.

High on the list of disabled people's policy priorities is full participation in the open labour market and equal recognition as employees. ILO fully supports these aspirations.

Open employment for a disabled person, working alongside other colleagues, is a challenge for developing countries where employers can often choose from large pool of unemployed people. Open employment, however, remains an important goal for equalizing opportunities for disabled persons.

ILO is committed to ensuring the participation of disabled people in the mainstream of society, notably in training and employment.

On 20 June 1983, the annual International Labour Conference of the ILO adopted the Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment (Disabled Person) Convention (Convention 159). It has been ratified by 39 member countries, which undertake to observe "principles of vocational rehabilitation and employment policies for disabled persons".

The Convention requires national rehabilitation policies to accommodate all categories of disabled people, to provide equal opportunities between disabled and other workers, and to promote employment opportunities in the open labour market. To carry out the Convention's provisions, representatives of employers, workers and organizations of and for disabled people are to be involved.

Convention 159 is encouraging other countries to review their legal protection they give their disabled population on matters of access to skills training, equality in the labour market, job security and career advancement.

Villagers Gets Schools in Return for Logging Promise

by Jim Beatson

Most of the rainforest in Western Samoa was destroyed by the devastating cyclone that hit the islands last December. Preserving what remains has become a priority. In one area three villages have signed covenants promising not to log their forests for 50 years in return, under a Swedish aid project, schools and a road are being funded Gemini News Service reports a unique aid project.

turned to pay for the school. He discussed his project with Swedish co-worker Thomas Alquist, a fellow bat specialist. The two men gave the Swedish conservation group the idea for the scheme now being tried out on Savaf's three villages.

Is it working?
Ulu Taufaaasina Tausaga,

Mayor of Takua, explains: "When we signed our covenant, we both agreed that it would be an agreement between two parties, based not on the legal system with lawyer's involvement, but on goodwill and God."

Like most Pacific islands land is communally owned by

the village. Fish and rain forests are their only assets.

As Samoa develops its rural electrification programme and moves towards a cash economy, with electricity bills, school fees and transport costs, how is the villager's goodwill lasting?

"It varies," says Clarke Peteru, who as director of the Samoan Conservation Society is the middle man between the villages and the Swedes.

"Villages reach decisions by consensus, and village composition changes as chiefs die and others get higher status. In one village they cottoned on to the idea that there is money in the environment which is exactly what we don't want to happen."

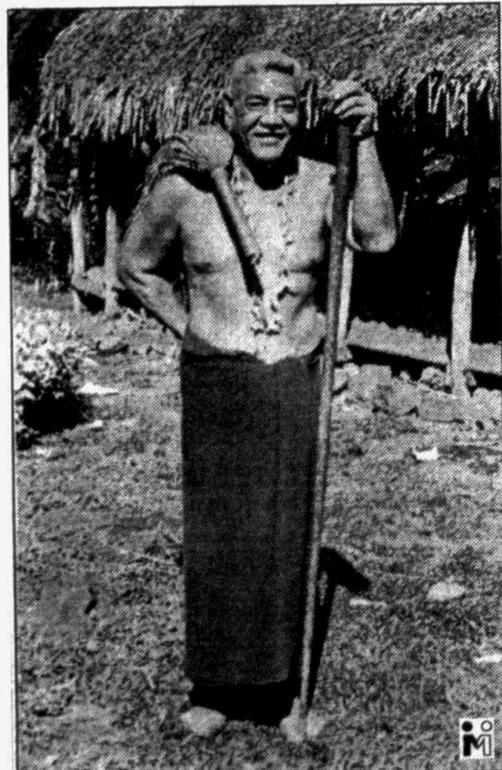
"This led the village to say that if they didn't receive money by a set date they'd log the forest. They didn't. It was a bluff."

"Instead we are de-emphasising the cash available and use educational awareness of the inherent value of the forests. We explain that if they log their forests then it provides only a one-time benefit."

The cyclones compounded the problem. "The chiefs used a portion of that money, \$4,000 for emergency relief. So it became apparent the money could be used for purposes it was not intended for."

"Since that time money is not given in cash form. The money now comes direct from Sweden into the construction company account."

Two solutions are offered to satisfy the cash needs of villages. Learning from their first experiences, Peteru says future schemes will deposit moneys into trust funds investing in fixed interest rate accounts. "That way the interest can



Villagers overdid the hospitality

IN the dense rain forests on Western Samoa's larger island, Savaf, vines trip and snare white legs. Villagers and visitors laugh as they struggle towards a silver-spray waterfall.

The villagers' Swedish guests are "eco-tourists" in a very special place: the rainforest both are trying to save. Three villages on the island, Saleogua, Tafua and Faala, have signed covenants with the Swedish Society for Nature Conservation promising not to log their forests for 50 years.

In exchange villagers were offered a choice of development projects to be funded by the Swedes. In Saleogua and Faala schools are being built costing \$130,000 and \$65,000 respectively while a construction company was given \$65,000 to build an access road from Tafua to village plantations.

Protecting Samoa's rain forests has taken on a news urgency, following the devastation caused by Cyclone Ofa in 1990 and Cyclone Val last December. For six days last Christmas, Val lashed the islands with winds exceeding 200 kilometres an hour. Only about 86,000 hectares of forest was untouched.

"We estimate we lost up to 70 per cent of our rain forest," explains Cedric Schuster, a project officer with the Western Samoa Department of Lands and Environment.

Schuster stands on a devastated mountainside and points down to the brown-stained Pacific. "Without the forest canopy torrential rains wash topsoil down into the sea, destroying village fishing beds."

In the mid-1980s, an American botanist and bat-specialist working in Samoa, Paul Cox, had watched villagers weep as their trees were cut. It was the only way villagers could pay to build a school, Cox asked them whether, if he provided the cash, they would stop the logging?

Armed with a Yes, he returned to the United States, mortgaged his home and re-