

## Industrial Prospect

Not many have viewed that Bangladesh stands much of a chance to be significantly industrialised. But there are others who are quite optimistic that the country can achieve remarkable industrial success. This, according to them, is possible if the country followed certain policies and took some curative measures. One such optimistic man is Dr M M Huq of the University of Strathclyde, United Kingdom. He expressed this opinion while delivering a lecture on 'Industrialisation in Bangladesh: Aid dependence and the failures of technology transfer' organised by the Independent University Bangladesh (IUB) at BIRDEM, Dhaka. Dr Huq's stress on domestic production and the development of indigenous technological capability is what deserves special attention. But this is one area, the virtue of which has been extolled by many, since the country emerged as an independent nation, without bringing enough concrete evidences in support of their arguments.

Dr Huq, however, has hinted which way the country should move. The report has not been elaborate enough to discuss the complex issue in great details. But the key points have been brought to the focus. As far as domestic production is concerned, there is hardly any option other than boosting it at its optimum level. The magic touch required for this has however remained elusive. For industrialisation, manpower, technological know-how, raw materials and resources are the essential ingredients. Manpower we have aplenty. But in all other respects our lacking is well known. Even then what proves decidedly at fault is the policy that makes up for deficiencies in other areas.

Development of indigenous technology may be highly essential but it depends on resources put in research and experiment. This again finds its relations with the education policy a nation formulates. A country like Bangladesh has an endemic resource constraint. But this can be overcome by adopting appropriate policy. Liberal policies for inviting foreign investors — especially when labour is cheap here — can be a key factor for industrial success; but not until and unless the country's socio-political climate becomes ungrudgingly stable. As for the shortage of raw materials and fuels, it is again the policy that matters. Japan has shown the world what a nation bent on scaling the industrial peak can achieve. There is no point laying the blame at someone's door. The whole thing shapes through a society's collective decision. On this score, our failure in developing a democratic polity has ever remained responsible. Even in the past two years of our democratic system of governance, no significant decision on this matter could be taken.

What escapes attention amidst the gathering confusion is that our economic policies cannot be formulated independently. The recipes imposed on us by various international bodies very often go against our interest but we have no other option than accepting them. Dependence on foreign aid robs us of our right to choose. That is why and how the indigenous technological and production capabilities remain unattained, and even unexplored. The transfer of technology from the north to the south has happened in trickles only. It is the market of the finished products that the developed nations have been interested in. Bangladesh has been no exception to this rule. The country's consumerism has increased by leaps and bounds but its production base has remained at a staggeringly low level. An in-built weakness in the country's political system has been further compounded by an international hostile investment climate. But this excuse should not be used for explaining our inaction. We must decide the right course for us through a political consensus — even if that means economic austerity and not so universal appreciation of our policy.

## Stemming the Bamboo Wane

Bamboo production is decreasing in the country, if a report of such a fall in eight northern districts is any dependable indicator. Although these districts are in no way comparable in their yield with either Sylhet or the Chittagong Hill Tracts, areas from where the best part of our national bamboo production is collected, there is no reason for any increase in the latter zones to balance the fall in the northern districts.

This should disturb all minds that care for the well-being of the nation and its multitudes. The entirety of our rural life is shot so thoroughly by the presence of bamboo! All rural housing is more than three-fourths made of bamboo. And then, you don't use anything other than bamboo for the village furniture and for other domestic as well as professional implements. Our boats are wooden but their canopies are universally made of bamboo thatches and we don't ply them without a bamboo mast and rows of bamboo poles.

It is a blessing that it is so. One cannot imagine converting all bamboo things into wooden ones patently because that will need felling all trees in the land. A shortfall in bamboo production will necessarily lead the nation into some unmanageable economic and environmental straits.

What pushes the bamboo situation out of control is the fact that it is not cultivated or farmed and there is not one 'plantation' in the land raising bamboos at present and there is no sign that there will be any in the near future either. Bamboo, its pervasive demand notwithstanding, continues to be a very chancy forest produce. Why should it be so? It doesn't need vast tracts of land for turning in an economically fetching output as does cotton.

The foolishness of our ways about bamboo, one of the mainstays of our way of life, can be actively remedied to a great degree by creating 'bamboo reserves' all over our land. The plant doesn't cost awfully by way of nurturing and after a time it continues growing irrepressibly both in length and in number unless the soil is dehydrated or the cluster is set to fire. It is a self-caring miracle of a plant that we can neglect only at the risk of harming the nation irreparably.

The bamboo reserves that must be created would come as a boon to the environmental needs of the country — firming up soil, inviting in rain, saving the trees. With a higher national yield of bamboo, masses of people would turn to bamboo for their fuel needs sparing the trees in equal measure.

We simply cannot afford bamboo to be on the wane. This has served us wonderfully so long. Now let us try to serve it so that we enter into a wonderful symbiotic existence.

# Communalism should be Discussed in SAARC Summit

by G A Momin

**D**O we in the sub-continent really know the exact connotation of the word 'civilization'? In the backdrop of what have happened in all the three countries of the region — India, Bangladesh and Pakistan — following an igniting act of demolition of Babri Mosque in Ayodhya, the obvious answer will be 'no'. It is indeed outrageous to think that while many people in the advanced countries in the world are having regular rendezvous in outer space and in the moon, we can not live in peace and harmony in our old dear planet, the earth. This is of course very often the case with most of the underdeveloped countries in the world. It is also true that the situation in many leading countries across the world are not all that honey and milk. There are problems and irritants too. But then they are mostly contained, and hardly gets out of hand. To my thinking there are four qualifications that bring distinction to a genuinely civilized country.

First the governmental efficiency and sincerity to preserve peace and discipline in the society. Second, people's spontaneous respect towards the positive law of the land. Third, strong public opinion against any major wrong doing. Fourth, a deep-rooted respect for democratic values. The recent events in all the three countries in the sub-continent have proved that none of the countries can genuinely qualify as a civilized nation. I beg excuse for such an audacious comment.

Through an insane act of demolition of a four hundred-year old Babri Mosque in Ayodhya, the BJP government of UP has triggered a communal frenzy that has swept across the sub-continent like wild fire with humanity and civilization sent helplessly adrift in a sea of blood and fire. A large number of the minority communities in all the three countries must have experienced inhumanities and atrocities similar to those suffered by the Jewish communities in Hitler Germany during the second world war. Most of the Hindus in Bangladesh and

Pakistan and the Muslims in India have simply shrunk to bundles of nerves fleeing from homes for fear of life. Right in Dhaka I have seen and known quite a number of Hindu families taking refuge in friendly Muslim homes. I myself have had to offer shelter to a very prominent citizen of our society Mr A Roy, member of central presidium of CPB, a writer and an intellectual of distraction. But this has been terribly shocking and painful for both of us: Mr Roy fleeing his home in dreadful fear, has been here in my home totally shaken, playing fugitive in his

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own familiar city. Many families in the entire sub-continent must have done the same.

A Hindu family in Bangladesh and a Muslim family in India live like foreigners in their own homes in their own countries without of course respect and protection enjoyed by a bonafide foreigner. There is another very painful aspect about the lives of the minorities. A Hindu in Bangladesh or a Muslim in India may have his own home, his own property and other assets, but he does not have a real sense of belonging to any of his possessions not even the country he lives in. His rights over his possessions can be snapped up on any flimsy pretext. A real sense of belonging to possessions is a very nourishing and satisfying experience. It is monstrously inhuman to see the minorities deprived of this very precious feeling.

With a considerable number of people getting killed in India and Pakistan and fairly widespread acts of arson, looting, destruction of temples and mosques and properties and unhousing of thousands of people in all the three countries including Bangladesh, the orgy of violence remained us of what had happened in 1946-47 in our sub-continent which had witnessed one of the worst human tragedies in history.

As a result of the massive communal conflicts, India was divided into two states, and with another break-up in 1971 when Bangladesh emerged, the sub-continent now stands divided into three states. But nearly half a century after partition of India, the problems still persist, blatantly negating the solution made through partition of India. The communal issue is a nagging problem with India and Bangladesh just because India has a very large minority and in Bangladesh also the minority is fairly large.

What has happened in all the three countries for more than a week following demolition of Babri Mosque is a shame almost amounting to criminality for all of us — those who have done the mischiefs, those who have seen them done, even for those who have heard them done. The fundamentalist forces have been insidiously allowed to grow in strength for wicked political gains and now they are taking everything pertaining to civilized living at ransom against religious overtures. It is a debasing failure for the peace loving and sensible people not to do anything significant to put the fanatical maelstrom in check.

It is all the more unfortunate that it can happen in India and Bangladesh. Pakistan has been almost always in the grip of the fundamentalists against whom progressive sections of the population have been battling hard since long. In Bangladesh we have suffered the worst in the hands of the religious fanatics in 1971. Even on the pretext of safeguarding Islam, they have not hesitated to butcher the innocent Muslims. The Razakers and Albadars who have joyfully preyed upon the best of our men most of whom have been Muslims. We have seen enough how merciless the claws of the religious fanatics

can be. We have seen and suffered a lot in their hands. But have not adopted any effective means to shield the society from the fangs of the fundamentalists.

In India, which is supposed to be a democratic and secular state, communalism can play havoc with all the values and sentiments India stands for. Besides Muslims, India has also other minorities. It is dismaying to see India, committed to democratic ideals and secularism propounded by Mahatma Gandhi and avidly practiced by Pundit Nehru and Maulana Abul Kalam Azad — an all-embracing, all loving India of Rabindranath Tagore — crumbling under the blows of the fundamentalists. The Indian polity which has an advantage of having a rare taste of uninterrupted democracy and considerable nourishment of secularism, has miserably failed to take stock of the adversary. I think that among the India leaders only Jyoti Basu has seen through the sinister design of the Hindu fundamentalist forces. This is rather a sad commentary on the quality of Indian leadership. Delhi leadership must consider that communalism, with all its attendant vices, holds a very explosive potential not only for

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India but for the entire region. For, whatever happens in India has a very great impact on the neighbouring countries, because India is the largest country in the sub-continent having the largest minority. There is already a strong wind blowing over India sowing seeds of disension and separatism and if communalism is allowed to join the adversities, this will whip up the wind into a raging gale that will shake India to its roots and put all the efforts towards betterment of the climate in the entire region at jeopardy.

By blaming others for their failures we can in no way lessen our guilt. Destruction of

Babri Mosque has been certainly a criminal act, but we in Bangladesh could have contrived more effective and peaceful means to express our outrage. Things have not gone along the peaceful way of our desire. Whatever have happened in course of about two weeks, have inflicted grievous wounds to our society and should call for an immediate fresh look at all the aspects of our lapses and find out possible ways to retrieve the situation.

Let each and every single sane-thinking individual in the entire sub-continent join hands in organizing massive socio-cultural-cum-political movement against the malady of communalism. The conscious elite of the society must educate the general public about the scourge of communalism. Political parties must not be allowed to hold religion as a sacred and secret weapon in their arsenal. The activities of ultra-fundamentalist political parties should be banned, politicising of religion should be shunned altogether. In this regard, in Bangladesh, the organization of the cultural activists under the banner 'Sammilita Sangskritik Jote' are doing an admirable job in creating awareness among common people about danger and darkness of communalism.

In India this sort of movement, if properly organized, can be more expansive and effective, for the cultural activists in India are far more numerous.

In the movement against communalism, genuinely religious groups can be profitably inducted for their words are likely to have better effect upon the common mass who are very often taken blind folded by mis-conceived religious dogma. Let all the well-meaning people of the region say in unison that all the religions stand for love and peace as against hatred and violence. Religions stand for tolerance and not retaliation, understanding and not animosity.

Humanistic aspects of religion should be highlighted. Let the common people understand that the activities of the fundamentalists and religious fanatics are nothing sort of sacrilege putting religion to a self-defeating purpose. Let them understand that Allah or Ishwar will never accept prayer from the hands stained by human blood. We must not forget that we all in this sub-continent are among the poorest nations on earth. We have problems of hunger, health, poverty and education, problems of population boom and environment.

Let us not allow communalism with all its ills any more to enter the arena and put all our efforts towards redemption of the already too bad situations into a shambles. Let us in clear terms identify communalism as out and out an evil from socio-economic, political and moral points of view.

May I humbly suggest this 'curse of communalism' be included as a subject for discussion in the agenda of the forthcoming SAARC summit since most of the SAARC countries including Sri Lanka are affected by the sin. It passes my comprehension to find its absence in the SAARC agenda, which will condemn, during deliberation on environment, felling of trees while beheading of humans will be thrown in the backyard; preservation of forests will figure prominently but blazing homesteads will be left to burn themselves to ashes. Should SAARC summit be so much unconcerned about the miseries of the millions?

When things happen that you do not like, you have two choices: you get bitter or better. Let me put an adjunct to it and suggest let us all get bitter about whatever things have happened in the sub-continent in the recent days and then get better and better. Is it really too much to desire from the peoples of this region who claim to have originated from one of the oldest civilizations in the world?

The author is a retired senior executive of a multi-national company. He has been a free lance writer for a period spanning over 30 years now.

# Billionaire PM Promises to Fix the Phones

Allan Thompson writes from Beirut

**T**HE face of billionaire Rafic Hariri, Lebanon's new prime minister, beams out from billboards erected all across the country just after his election. Inscribed beneath his round, moustachioed visage is the slogan: "Hope is equivalent to action." As it is written in Arabic, the slogan could grammatically be taken both as a statement and a question.

That just about sums up Hariri's fledgling premiership in this country still struggling to recover from a decade and a half of civil war, a full two years after the last shot was fired.

If the great hope generated by the arrival in the prime minister's office of the famous philanthropist and construction tycoon does indeed lead to action, Hariri will live up to his current billing as Lebanon's saviour.

"He's a good man, just look at all the things he's done for Lebanon," said Badrieh El-Rifai, a school teacher who lives in west Beirut's Mazraa district.

Her street, as most others in Beirut, is cleaner now because of the garbage trucks Hariri secured for the city two years ago. But her house still gets electricity only about eight hours a day from the government system. Water comes from private tanks in the basements that used to serve as bomb shelters. The telephone system is a shambles and because of rampant inflation, buying power is eroded daily.

"The Lebanese are expecting from this government a plan for economic salvation," Hariri told parliament while laying out his government's programme in November. In it he promised to apply free enterprise principles to running a war-ravaged economy.



RAFIC HARIRI  
Poor boy made good

He said he will cleanse Lebanon's corrupt administration, gradually restore telephone and electricity service and entice expatriate Lebanese to invest in the country. The question is whether he can succeed, and whether hope alone is enough to revive a country still reeling from 15 years of war against itself.

"The most important thing is restoring the confidence of the Lebanese people," Hariri said in an interview in his heavily-guarded west Beirut palace.

A bulky, straight-shooting businessman, Hariri sits at the edge of the couch while he talks, leaning in close. In one hand he twirls a string of prayer beads, stopping only to

take a sip of his tea, sprinkled with artificial sweetener.

With a personal fortune estimated at \$3 billion, Hariri is one of the world's richest men. He is no stranger in Lebanon, where the Hariri Foundation he established has spent millions of dollars restoring hospitals, schools and historical buildings and funding scholarships for thousands of students.

The southern port city of Sidon, where Hariri was born 48 years ago, now has all the trappings of Harirmania, huge billboards, banners, posters and slogans everywhere dedicated to Hariri.

The poor-boy-made-good left school and moved to Saudi Arabia in 1965, where his work in the construction business eventually came to the attention of Crown Prince Fahd, who is now king.

Hariri took on the contract to build a massive resort in the Saudi city of Taif for Fahd.

The Hariri Group is now a sprawling business empire with 5,000 employees operating in Lebanon, Saudi Arabia, France and the United States.

While he has made his career as a construction magnate, Hariri says he is no novice in Lebanon politics. "I am not new to politics in Lebanon. It is just that now I've come to the forefront in my first official post. But I've been involved in Lebanese politics for at least 10 years. They call me the architect of the Taif

accord."

That agreement, signed in 1989 and implemented in 1990 after Lebanese and Syrian troops ousted rebel Christian General Michel Aoun, gave more clout to the majority Muslim population. It also brought about the withdrawal of warring militias that had turned Beirut into a battlefield.

While insiders acknowledge Hariri could never have become prime minister without the blessing of Syria, which has ultimate control over Lebanon, it is believed he was not Syria's choice for the office.

"The Syrian-Lebanese relationship is not a contradiction to Lebanon's independence or sovereignty. On the contrary it is a guarantee to sovereignty and independence," he told university students in July.

A Sunni Muslim himself, Hariri is adamantly non-sectarian in a country where most appointments are made on the basis of religion. Muslim and Christian students alike benefited from his largesse. His new media spokesperson, Rima Tarabay, used to do the same job for the Christian Lebanese Forces militia.

Hariri accepted power only on the condition that he could bring his own team of technocrats and business associates with him. He makes no bones about the fact that his company's lawyer became justice minister and another close associate minister of finance.

ously corrupt political machine.

Hariri is a major property owner in Lebanon and is behind the scheme to reconstruct Beirut's centre by turning it over to a government-mandated private real estate company. The reconstruction is overseen by the Hariri-dominated Commission for Development and Reconstruction. He owns the television station and is starting a newspaper.

"Hariri has become the most important thing for people, but behind him the details are lost," MP Najah Wakim told parliament in November debates on a vote of confidence in Hariri's new administration.

Wakim was one of the few MPs to vote against the government. Wakim said: "I'm afraid we are turning from democracy to dictatorship. We know all about military dictatorships, but we don't know the dictatorship of capital."

Most Lebanese are willing to put aside their doubts for now and support Hariri. Said Nabil, an engineer from Christian east Beirut: "At least we know he's not going to be robbing us, like all the others have. He's got too much money to worry about that."

Said Omar, an architect who lives in west Beirut: "If he can give us a proper telephone service and electricity, people will be happy."

Added Mounir, a teacher: "You can't blame people if they are desperate, if what they think about now is their daily survival, rather than the long-term implications of his policies. What he's doing may be wrong, but at least he's efficient. The old crowd were wrong and inefficient."

ALLAN THOMPSON is a Canadian journalist. He recently visited Beirut.

## To the Editor...

### Philanthropic organisation

Sir, Congratulation to Mr M Zaidul Haque for his write-up 'Philanthropic Organisation' published in The Daily Star on November 21, 1992. However, some of the observations are as under:

First, Mirzapur Hospital, school/college etc are being run outside the city of Dhaka, and certainly the services being given by these organizations would fall within the scope of the philanthropic services; and philanthropic services can be given from any corner of the country.

Second, in order to bring any sort of assistance to the "philanthropic organisation" Asst Prof Haque could possibly assist the organization somewhat as under: a) The write up published in The Daily Star ought to have been directly

meant for the attention of the 'relevant authority' instead of the honourable Prime Minister. In the past also we had seen lot of his writings (otherwise) wherein he has always been inclined to appeal to the highest authority instead of the immediate authority. Such tendency actually cripples down the authority and the capacity of the democratic cadre, who cannot take the steps required without the order from the authority to whom the appeal has been made, and that is the problem created for the smooth functioning of the democratic cadre authority and may cause some loss of time because of the processes. b) The simple process would be to apply for the tax exemption. However, it is not clear from the write up if it has been done. c) The customs offices at Chittagong/Dhaka etc are not vested

with the power to exempt any taxes under the usual law, unless the delegated power has been also given, and hence the customs office at Chittagong possibly could not release the ambulance without the tax exemption from the higher authority of the taxes. d) Mr Haque also could request for the help from the Ministry of Health.

2) In the past we had seen many such appeals to the highest executive of the country and also the unwanted exhortations and eulogies and thus the autocracy was helped to grow in the country. Hence such appeal systems through the newspapers ought to be eliminated and we certainly can follow the systems that the other developed countries do if we do not have any system. a) Common sense and the good intention are some of the best systems that automatically

work out the normal systems for any country of the world, why not in Bangladesh?

3) Mr Haque, who is Asst Prof BAI, could certainly work out a "philanthropic organization" for the development of agriculture in Bangladesh, whereby the poor people will have the scopes to work and to earn their living and at the same time the theory of productivity shall be on operation.

4) Every country has customs and taxes; however, the customs office at Chittagong is supposed to do what the customs offices of the other countries do, unless the exemption of taxes has been granted by the authority of taxes which is clear.

5) Thus such write up will not increase the dignity of Bangladesh in the overseas countries, will it? Andrew D'Costa Hemendra Das Road, Dhaka

### Demolition of Ahmadiya mosques

Sir, The demolition of Babri Mosque is indeed shameful. However, it is for consideration as to whether the demolition of Ahmadiya Muslim mosques at Dhaka and Rajshahi was more shameful, because: a) These were destroyed by Muslims; b) Destruction was undertaken allegedly to please Allah; c) Destruction was undertaken in a country administered largely by Muslims.

M I Samar Turnhout, Belgium

### Forgery

Sir, A Bangla daily carried a news item in one of its recent issues stating that an advocate in Bogra by means of some forged papers, falsely claimed to be issued by the Ministry of Law, had successfully made a good business by imitating

himself as a Notary Public. Now this gentleman is reported to have admitted himself in the Pabna mental hospital as a mental patient. The authorities have started investigating the fact following the first report on the suspected forgery.

Meanwhile, the rate of forgery, fraud and impersonation has increased in our country. Using bogus educational certificates, impersonation as police and other security officials, using false letters/quotations and many other forms of forgery have become a practice in our society. I think, the Special Branch of the police department should open a special cell to check forgeries and frauds and arrest those who are directly or indirectly associated with these criminal activities.

M Zaidul Haque Asst Prof. BAI, Dhaka