

Bangladesh Unnayan Parishad

NATIONAL SEMINAR

Last Two Decades and the Present Decade

29 January 5 February, 1993

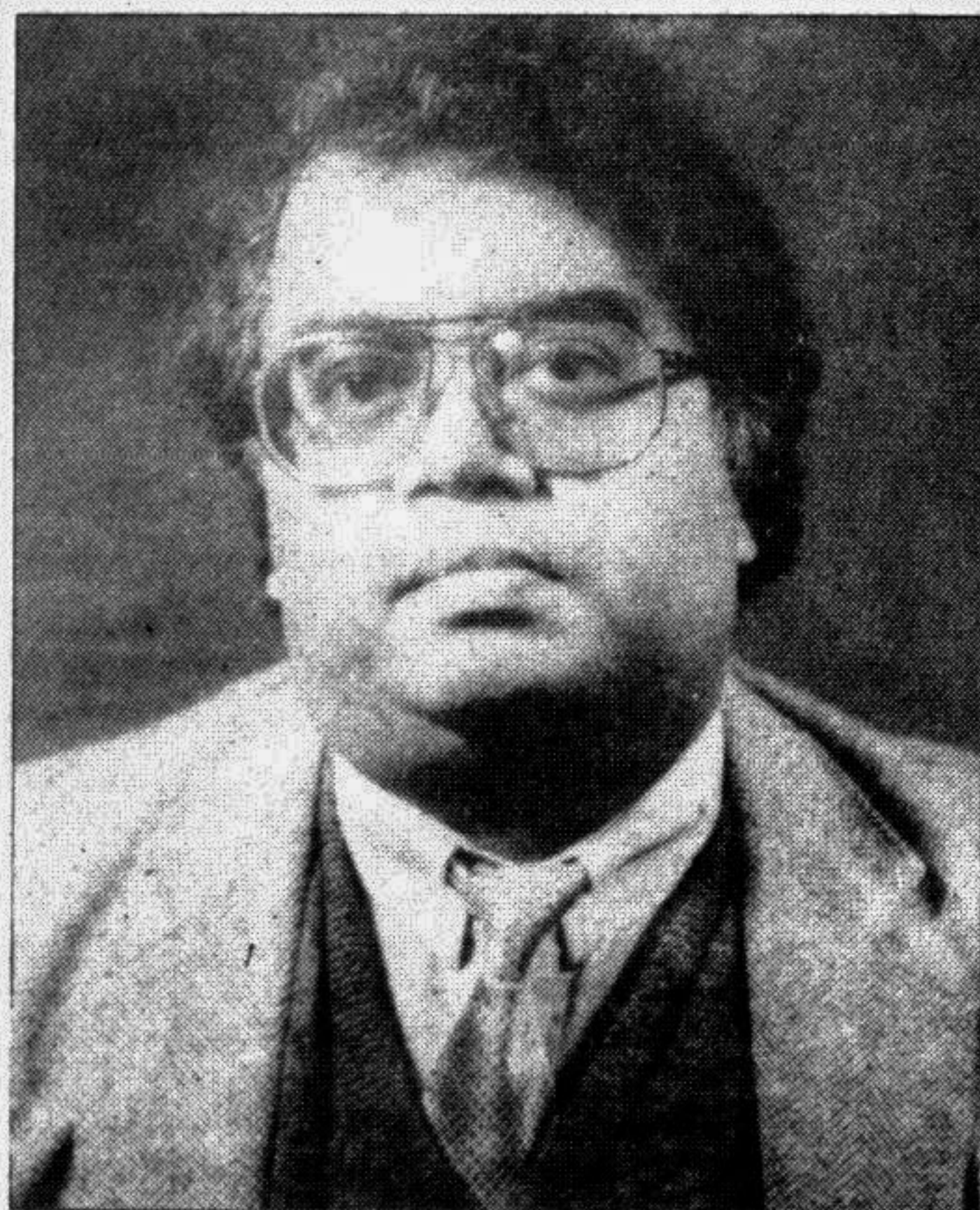
Venue: Academy for Planning and Development, Nilkhet, Babupura, Dhaka

The Daily Star

Special Supplement

January 29, 1993

MESSAGE



I am pleased to know that the research organization Bangladesh Unnayan Parishad is organizing a weeklong national seminar entitled "Bangladesh: Past Two Decades and the Present Decade". As far as I know this is the first effort of its kind organized outside the government framework. I sincerely welcome this initiative.

I am also pleased to know that research papers on various aspects of our national life will be presented at the seminar, and that there will be open discussions and intense exchange of views with the aim of comprehending the existing realities, their historical perspectives and future implications. It is my expectation that the seminar will generate conclusions and recommendations which will make substantial contribution to the process of policy making and programme formulation for national progress. I am confident that Bangladesh Unnayan Parishad will continue to conduct research, organize workshops, seminars and conferences and undertake other relevant activities in future as well aimed at helping shape appropriate nation-building programmes.

I wish the seminar all-round success.

Nazmul Huda, Barrister-at-law

Minister

Ministry of Information

Govt of the People's Republic of Bangladesh

On the Theme and Purpose of the Seminar

If one were to identify the developmental problems faced by Bangladesh, the very first thing to strike one would be the glaring inequalities existing between different socio-economic categories. The society is like a pyramid with the vast majority of the unspeakably poor groaning at the base. The subsequent upper rings are gradually smaller in size with a very rich tiny minority perched at the apex.

If one is allowed to take a little liberty with the metaphor, it is a pyramid in which the various socio-economic and power categories of people may be conceived to be separated by glass curtains; so that nothing in any ring is hidden from view of those who are in rings on either side. The poor mass of the people can easily see how grossly deprived they are relative to the privileged classes; it is all too palpable that they would want to smash through the glass barrier. The upper echelons can also see through the glass curtain the activities of those below and would take appropriate steps to safeguard their own privileges and interests. The result is that the society is full of tensions and contradictions which hinder progress.

Such a state of affairs can only continue at the peril of the entire nation. It is time for all of us to try to bring about qualitative changes in the country's socio-economic dispensation through fundamental and at the same time pragmatic reforms. The country has gone through a number of run-of-the-mill five year plans and annual development programmes. The teeming millions have, by turn, been told the virtues of socialism and the public sector, with El Dorado round the corner, of the blessings of a mixed economy as the means to plenty and happy society, and then of a free market economy as the road to salvation. But the fact remains that socio-economic emancipation of the masses is still as elusive as ever. Hence, all development activities must be realistic and centred round the imperative of economic emancipation of each and every individual inhabiting this country. The vast majority have long enough led sub-human lives. They must now be allowed their say and their share in the development process and its rewards.

The exit of the past autocratic regime has created a basis for progress to that end. With a democratic base in place now, the crying need of the hour is to establish democratic order and institutions at all levels of the society and, as a natural corollary, the induction of the masses into the mainstream of the development process. Two decades of independence have gone by, but the national economy is yet to find a solid footing on which a viable future can be built. The dawn of a new century and a new millennium is around the corner with its looming opportunities and challenges. We can ill-afford to lose any more time. We must prepare ourselves for an orderly, people-oriented progress to face those challenges and take advantage of the opportunities.

Against this backdrop, BUP is holding a seminar on "Bangladesh: Past Decades and the Present Decade". The BUP is of the opinion that free and frank discussions and deliberations on the failures and successes of the years past will bring out perspectives and directions and infuse a much needed dynamism in the nation's quest for policies and strategies for building its future with all the citizens contributing their best and benefiting equitably.

People of distinction in their respective fields will present papers in this seminar on various aspects of the economy and society, such as social, economic, cultural, environmental and technological aspects. All matters directly and indirectly concerning the country's urgent development needs are expected to be addressed. Leading intellectuals, social scientists, policymakers, development practitioners and administrators and specialists

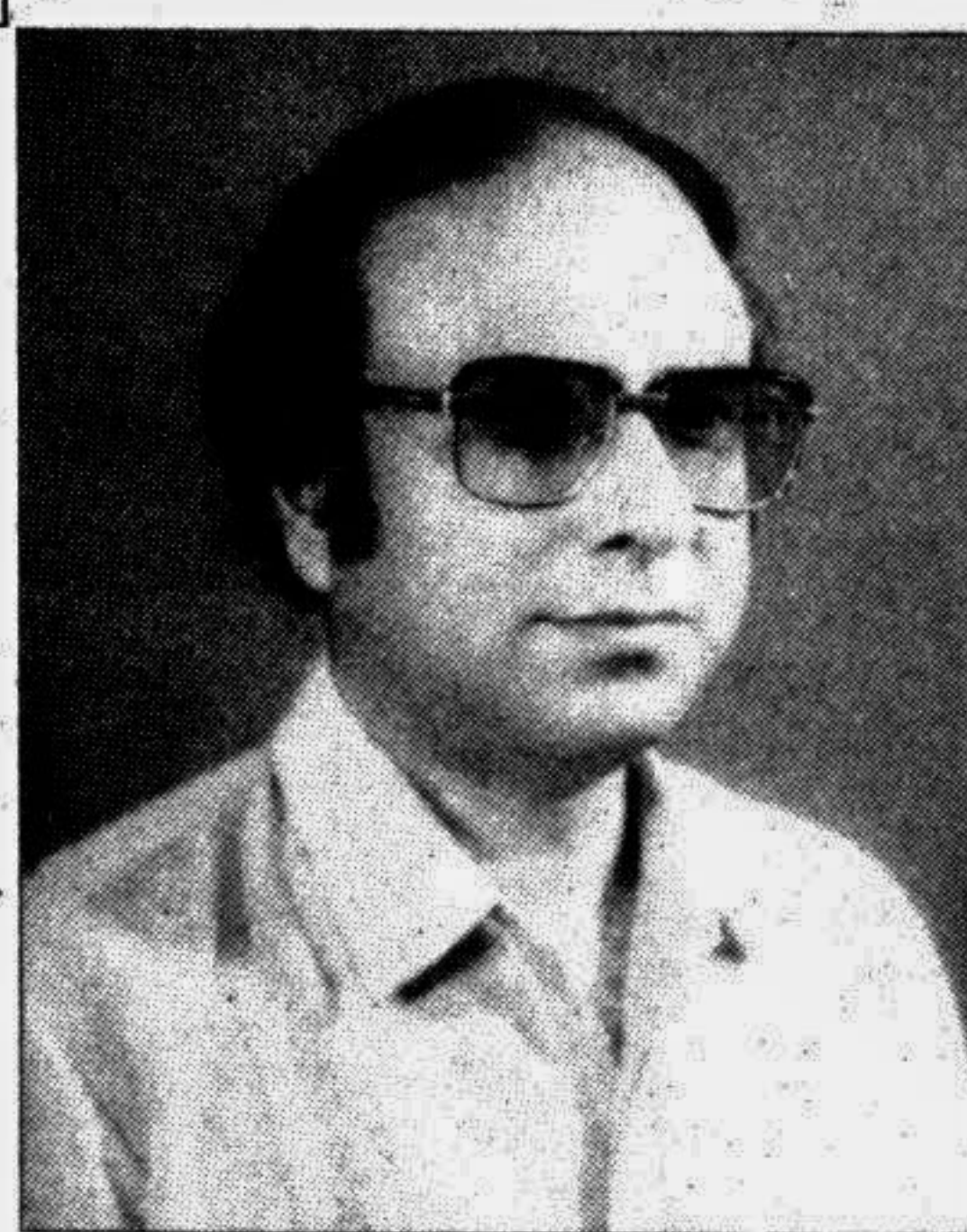
in different fields have been invited to take part in the discussions. All present at the seminar will be free to advance their opinions and engage in open debate.

The aim of the seminar is to review the policies, strategies and programmes pursued in the past and currently with a view to identifying their strengths and weaknesses and formulating conclusions and suggestions to assist the process of formulating and setting in motion a people-centred, pragmatic development process for the benefit of the entire nation, aimed at poverty alleviation within shortest possible time and then moving the economy and society forward on sustained basis.

There will be 20 sessions in the seminar, of 18 which are working sessions and one inaugural and one concluding session. The inauguration session will be held in the morning of 29 January 1993. Then, there will be 3 or 4 simultaneous working sessions each day over the following whole week. Only one comprehensive paper will be presented in each session and 30-40 people with expertise, experience and interest in the subject have been invited to participate in the deliberations. Each session is planned in such a manner that all participants can make effective interventions. We expect that, at the end of the day, we shall have a rich volume of information, ideas, opinions and proposals to draw on for formulating conclusions and suggestions towards improving approaches to development, policy regime, programme contents and implementation strategies. While discussions may cover whole range of relevant issues, for convenience 18 subjects have been chosen as themes of the 18 working sessions. These are macro-economic management; employment generation; economic growth and poverty alleviation; environment; political process; agriculture; industry; the Constitution and legal aspects; urbanization; population; health; education; culture; media and journalism; women and development; administration; foreign policy; science and technology; and international trade.

An attempt will be made to present the highlights of the weeklong discussions on a wide array of subjects and issues in the concluding session. A comprehensive report will of course be prepared as soon as possible after the conclusion of the seminar and circulated widely.

We Must Win



Qazi Kholiqzaman Ahmad
Chairman
Bangladesh Unnayan Parishad

A new Bengali century is almost upon us. According to Christian calendar, not only a new century but also a new millennium is only a few years away. In this small South-Asian country, we began our journey as an independent, sovereign state about two decades ago, full of courage and with a dream of a bright future. A lot has happened around the globe in the past two decades; and far-reaching changes have occurred in many places. We in this country have also passed through times of fluctuating circumstances — opportunities and challenges.

What successes have we achieved and what failures have we endured? We must look back to the past to learn lessons towards building the future. The present seminar has been organized to provide such an opportunity.

Poverty has continued to be Bangladesh's main problem. In fact, it is more entrenched now than ever before. All facets of the national as well as individual Bangladesh's life are conditioned by poverty.

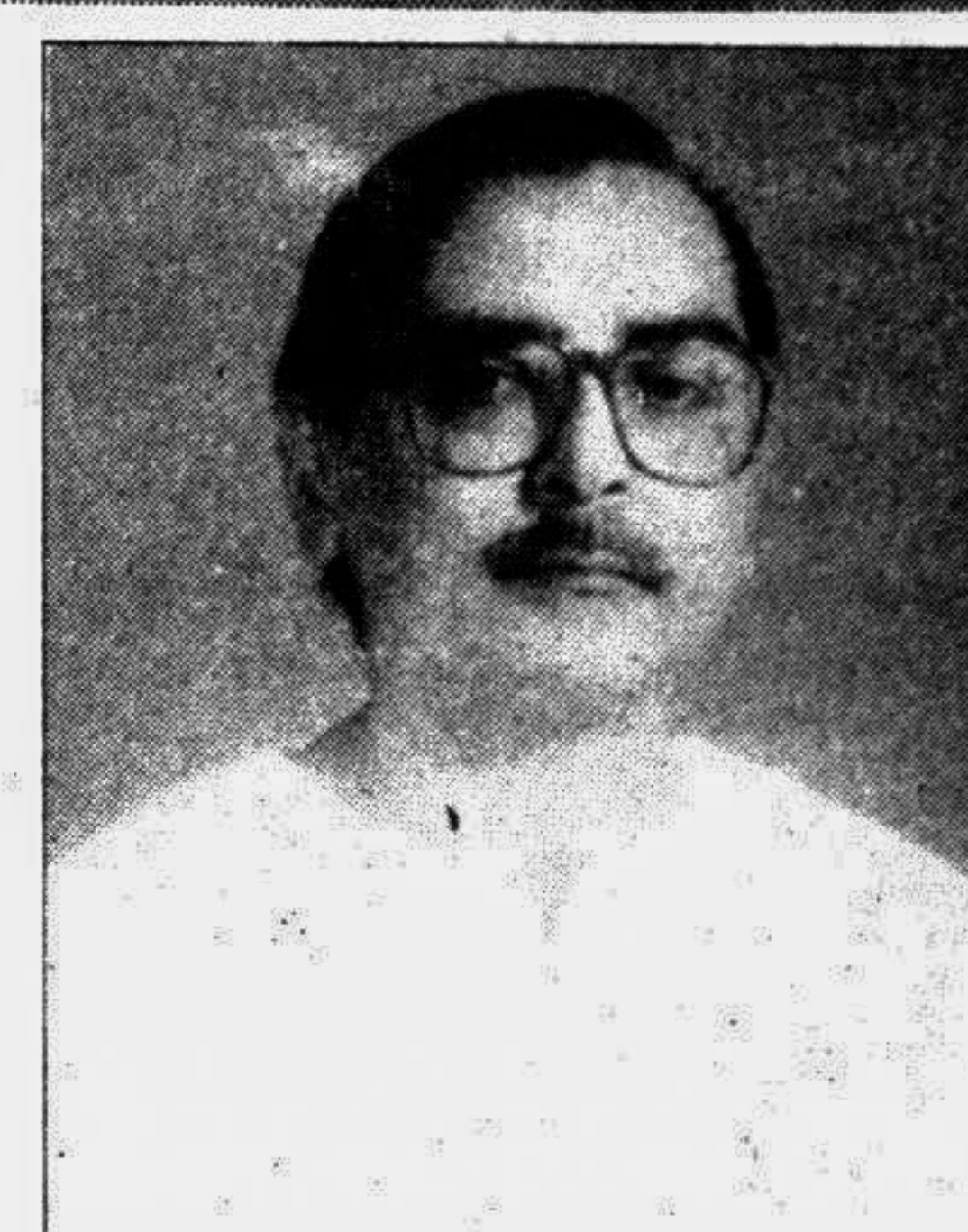
The country has failed to stem the rot. Poverty stares in the face of the large majority, although a tiny minority is rich or very rich.

Not only to achieve progress, but in fact to survive as a nation, we must fight poverty — but not following old, failed strategies. New, appropriate and effective strategies must be evolved. The basic approach in this context would be to seek to utilize the vast pool of the unemployed in the country. The poor people of Bangladesh are very resilient — they have survived through many a cyclonic storm, flood and plague. They fought back against heavy odds. Given opportunities and facilities they will be able to give very good account of themselves both for the good of themselves and of the nation.

We must win the war against poverty. And we shall — provided we can de-alienate the people at large, mobilize them into the mainstream of socio-economic and political processes by dismantling all barriers of differentiation which have kept them marginalized.

Let not the nightmare that this nation has passed through in the past endure any more. Let the future bring hope and sunshine for all. But, for that, it is crucial that all of us rise above petty self-interests and establish a meaningful and dynamic solidarity among all sections of the people and devote ourselves to the building of this nation of ours — it is the only one we have.

MESSAGE



At the end of the present decade the world enters a new millennium. While other countries of the world are getting prepared to welcome the new millennium, we in this country are overwhelmed with the burden of the past, embarrassed with the present and uncertain and directionless for the future.

Against this backdrop it is my belief that the weeklong seminar on "Bangladesh: Past Two Decades and the Present Decade" organized by Bangladesh Unnayan Parishad (BUP) will help us know ourselves as well as determine present and future policies and programmes.

Let that expectation find full expression in the deliberations of the seminar.

I wish the seminar all-round success.

Rashed Khan Menon

Parliament Member

and

General Secretary

Workers Party of Bangladesh

PAPERS TO BE PRESENTED

Subject	Author
National Economic Management	Prof. Muzaffer Ahmad, IBA, DU
Economic Growth, Employment Generation, and Poverty Alleviation	Dr. Qazi Kholiqzaman Ahmad, Chairman, BUP
Agriculture	Dr. Mustafa K. Mujeri, CIRDA, and Mr. Abu Abdullah, BIDS
Industry	Mr. S. M. Al-Husainy, Former Chairman, Public Service Commission
Education	Dr. Zaheda Ahmad, Department of History, Dhaka University
Women and Development	Advocate Sigma Huda, Bangladesh Supreme Court
Foreign Policy	Mr. Fakrudin Ahmed, Former Foreign Secretary
Politics	Mr. Ataus Samad, BBC Correspondent
Journalism	Mr. Abed Khan, Assistant Editor, Daily Ittefaq
Constitution and Law	Barrister Amirul Islam, Bangladesh Supreme Court
Health	Dr. Halida Akhter Hanum, Director BIRPERHD
Environment	Dr. Ainun Nishat, BUET
Science and Technology	Dr. A. M. Harun ar Rashid, Department of Physics, DU
Administration	Mr. Munir-uz-Zaman, Former Secretary
Population	Dr. A. K. M. Gholam Rabbani, Former Secretary
Culture	Prof. Anisuzzaman, Department of Bengali, DU
Urbanization	Dr. Amirul Islam Chowdhury, Department of Economics, Jahangirnagar University
International Trade	Dr. Ayubur Rahman Bhuya, Department of Economics, DU

Bangladesh Unnayan Parishad (BUP) — an Introduction

THE Bangladesh Unnayan Parishad (BUP) is an independent research organization committed to the philosophy of total development of the people and the nation. The focus of development, BUP believes, must be to achieve poverty alleviation at the first instance and then to promote unimpeded improvement of the living standards and the quality of life of the people who make up the Bangladeshite sociecosm, through efficient and equitable development processes. The test of national welfare is the all-round and sustained well-being of each and every citizen. The national development strategy must, therefore, set its sights not only on the immediate satisfaction of the people's basic needs but also on attainment of ever-higher and sustainable advancement that would make their lives worthwhile. Such a strategy will of necessity have to reckon with a time-frame, but in spite of the ineluctability of time-bound priorities, emphases on the here and now and in future, that is, on the present day objectives and those of the future have to be so dovetailed that no generation is denied the fruits of freedom and development.

Research is a means to ends. It is essential for generating new concepts and ideas, finding out truths and providing solutions to the challenging socio-economic problems

of modern times. It is research which has been at the heart of the tremendous progress achieved by humankind not only in the field of science and technology but also in ensuring gradual betterment of human life and standard of living. Research needs to be pursued continuously with a view to improving our knowledge base and problem solving capacity and tools.

The importance of research in any field in Bangladesh cannot be overemphasized. The country faces many problems in various fields — social, economic, technological, political, cultural, environmental, and resource mobilization and utilization. But a research culture is yet to flourish in Bangladesh and research capacity in terms of appropriate institutions, expertise and finance is still very limited here in virtually all fields.

The processes of search for truth must be unencumbered. Only then it is possible to investigate all necessary aspects of the subject under consideration with objectivity and come up with conclusions based on free play of intellectual inquiries. It is, in fact, in the interest of all concerned that objectivity and pragmatic approaches form the basis of policy making and programme formulation. When the various strategies pursued for nation-building purposes are designed and implemented on that basis, they can be relevant to the

context and pertinent to the needs and aspirations of the people. The BUP is committed to assist in the process of establishing such strategies by generating data, analyses, ideas and views, and bringing those to the notice of all concerned.

Certain specific areas in which BUP has been conducting research include greenhouse effect as it relates to Bangladesh and such aspects as climate change, natural resources, energy, coastal areas and legal aspects; water resources development and utilization; gender and development; rural industries; micro-enterprise development; education; poverty alleviating approaches; urban poor; and minor irrigation.

Besides conducting basic research work, BUP has been trying to serve as a catalyst for the formulation of action-oriented strategies by bringing together experts from different disciplines and professions for free and frank exchange of ideas and viewpoints bearing on the problems and imperatives of national development at different conferences, seminars and symposia organized by it since its inception in 1980. The BUP itself has economists, scientists, educationists, engineers, physicians, journalists, and other professionals in-house and among its membership. The BUP feels that a meeting, if not convergence, of ideas and experiences of people engaged in different fields of study and

work can be most effective in bringing about a broad-based approach so essential for people-centred sustainable development.

In addition to seminar, workshops and conferences, BUP also disseminates its research results and constructive ideas and views through its publications. It has also established two journals — one quarterly and one monthly, both of which are in Bengali. It will soon start publishing a six monthly journal in English, the basic approach of which relates to the needed integration of economic and environmental issues in the development process.

Development takes place at the local space, but macro environment must be conducive for that to happen. Hence it is important that macro policies are appropriately designed keeping in view the needs and aspirations of the people at large. In this context, BUP believes that the crucial elements in the development process in Bangladesh are education, training and organization (economic & social), and that macro policies must, among other things, support all activities aimed at promoting education, training and organization. However, it is also important to find out the best ways and means of promoting these goals. In this context, BUP has been conducting active research in Panchgona Union under Rajnagar Thana of Moulvibazar

Zila for the past several years. Two workshops are going to be held in Panchgona and Rajnagar respectively on 15 and 16 February next to review the progress made so far and formulate ideas and programmes to promote education, training and organization in a more effective manner and in wider areas. Participants will come from local unions belonging to various walks of life. Government officers at Thana and Zila levels have also been invited. In fact, local people are coming forward spontaneously and BUP is playing a catalytic role. This local level dialogue is expected to generate not only ideas and proposals but also stronger commitment on the part of the local people to work in a collaborative framework to improve their own socio-economic conditions and contribute to national progress.

Indeed BUP seeks to pursue all its activities from scientific and pragmatic points of view. Its policy is to be always constructive. For example, when evaluating policies and programmes in any particular field, professional staff of BUP spare no endeavour to identify the elements which are winners and those which cause failures and to come up with constructive suggestions as to how the strengths can be consolidated and bottlenecks overcome, with people centred, sustainable development being the ultimate aim.



উন্নয়ন মানুষের জন্য

শিক্ষা প্রশিক্ষণ সংগঠন

উন্নয়নের চাবিকাঠি

