

The Muddling British Agonise yet Again

Derek Ingram writes from London

In the midst of its worst recession since 1945 Britain is in the middle of another soul-searching...



STUCK!

Aid Environment

The World Bank has a few words of praise for Bangladesh for its economic performances...

Even if this vitally important question is side-tracked, one cannot forget that aid utilisation in the country has been far from satisfactory...

However, this is bound to happen, specially when economic policies are to conform to recipes put forward by international financial institutions...

The WB's positive comments on at least one aspect seems to be highly significant: it is the potential of the country to do much better...

Women's Emancipation Central to Our Development

Like everywhere else in the world, we in Bangladesh have also observed the international women's day with due importance...

Take education for example. As an old Chinese saying goes: If you educate a man you educate an individual; but if you educate a woman you educate a family...

Therefore, for us in Bangladesh, giving all our support to the cause of women's emancipation is not only a moral and political commitment...

Given the tremendous role that women can and need to play for the overall economic development of our country...

It used to be a proud boast of the British that they always muddled through in the end...

You do not hear that kind of talk these days in Britain. Such remarks were easily uttered because they were made from a position of strength...

You can see this self-confidence written all over the architecture of the 19th Century: grand, ornate and solid buildings that sit in their space as if determined to occupy it for ever...

Since Britain won, with allies, its last great battle nearly half a century ago it has increasingly agonised about itself...

A Private Institution that Belongs to the Nation

by Muslehuddin Ahmad and Junaid Kamal Ahmad

THE first Divine revelation to the Holy Prophet (SM) 'Iqra bismi rabbika-ladhi Khalaaq...' Read in the name of Thy Lord, the Cherisher, Who creates...

North South University as an institution of higher learning belongs to the nation. First, on the grounds of both efficiency and equity, it is the general belief that private money should be encouraged to fund higher education and

public money should fund more of primary and secondary education especially the education of girls in villages. In a recent study a very disturbing fact was revealed: 70 per cent of the public's money spent in the education sector in Bangladesh funds 10 per cent of the best educated people in our country...

NSU has been named keeping in view the philosophy and high hopes of a visionary German leader, Willy Brandt who foresaw even at the height of the cold war and the East-West tension, that the true challenge confronting the world lay along its North-South axis...

Village Women Turn Garments to Export Gold

Mallika Wanigasundara writes from Colombo

BILLBOARDS with elegant logos and names are being put up in villages in the hinterlands of Sri Lanka.

They advertise various garment exporting firms - Creative Garments, Star Apparel, Elegant Garments, Accent Clothing, and so on.

The idea is to attract women to work for garment factories which have relocated to the countryside. With an estimated investment of 6.5 billion rupees (US\$144.5 million), the private sector is bringing Sri Lanka's 45-billion-rupee (US\$1 billion) export market in garments and textiles to the rural areas.

In the last two decades, the skillful fingers of Sri Lanka's women have fashioned garments for export to the United States and Europe. The garments boom has also been a boon to the women who make up most of the garment workers.

Take 20-year-old Nimala who once thought the only job for her was raising vegetables on a rented land. In Diyatalawa

The private sector is bringing the 45-billion-rupee (US\$1 b) export market in garments and textiles to the rural areas

The country's garment export has been growing steadily since 1976, from 68.91 million rupees (US\$1.5 million) to 31.6 billion rupees (US\$702 million) in 1991. During the first half of 1992, sales already totalled 32 billion rupees (US\$711 million).

The government has stipulated a minimum wage of 2,000 rupees (US\$44.5) for each factory worker. Other benefits, like production and annual bonuses, overtime pay, distress loans, free breakfasts and tea, will also be extended to the workers.

Besides generating employment, the government also wants the garment factories to lure people back to rural areas. One of the most lamentable facets of the controversial FTZs is the migration of people, mostly women, from the villages to the cities.

The girls working in the FTZs put up with the most de-

plorable conditions. They are crowded together in boarding houses where they are unmercifully exploited by rapacious landlords. Food, transport and clothes eat up most of their earnings and many suffer from chronic ailments.

Moreover, having lost the protection of their parents and the constraints of family life, the girls have become prey to human predators who make them lead lives of easy morals. Authorities hope siting the factories closer to the girls' homes will eliminate these problems.

It is estimated the factories will bring about 200 million rupees (US\$4.45 million) to the villages. The earnings will also stay in the villages.

With more money in the hands of the villagers, more local produce will be bought and the local economy will be stimulated. Villages can be-

come growth centres and rural infrastructure - roads, bridges, water supply, power generation and telecommunications systems - will hopefully improve.

To ensure that more families benefit from the scheme, only one person from each household will be employed in the garment factories. The workers will be chosen from very poor families with incomes less than 1,000 rupees

(US\$22.20) a month, or from those drawing food stamps or payments under the government's poverty alleviation programme.

At the same time, the government is trying to reduce dependence on imported raw materials, linkages are being established between the factories and textile mills as well as local suppliers of fabrics, buttons, zippers, etc.

—Depthless Asia

To the Editor...

Exodus of MNCs Sir, It is a matter of concern that the government has failed to stop the exodus of world renowned Multi-National Companies (MNCs) from Bangladesh...

Haji policy Sir, When the government notified, in the second week of January, its Haji policy for 1993, it had specifically mentioned that intending pilgrims could perform the holy Hajj on their own arrangement or could apply to the government for arranging their residential accommodation in Saudi Arabia.

They're too good to be true Sir, On 27 February, West Indies defeated Pakistan in both the final and all qualifying matches of the Triangular Tournament held in South Africa. I would like to congratulate them through your esteemed daily.

Imbecility has a limit. We strongly urge that it is high

This requirement of providing copies of deeds of lease was not mentioned in the Government, first notification for ballottee pilgrims, nor was anything in that regard mentioned in the Government-circulated application forms and, as such, I would appreciate if the government issued an immediate clarification.

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OPINION For a Greater Unity

A conference of India-Pakistan-Bangladesh is being organised by the 'Samajwadi Manch' (Socialist Forum) at the Constitution Club, Vithal Bhai Patel House, Rafi Marg, New Delhi on March 23, 1993. On this day Dr Ram Manohar Lohia was born and Sardar Bhagat Singh attained martyrdom. Not only the people of India but also that of Pakistan and Bangladesh feel grateful for the contribution made by this two great men. So the Forum has decided to make this day, the day of resolution to give a new turn to the relations among these countries.

As you know that not only leaders like Mahatma Gandhi, Khan Abdul Gaffar Khan and Dr Lohia but also millions of Hindus and Muslims did not support the partition of this sub-continent in their heart of hearts. Owing to the partition what we lost and suffered is known to everyone. In recent years, hardship of poor masses has increased owing to rapid rise of religious fundamentalism in these three countries and the position of the sub-continent has worsened in international politics. If this religious fundamentalism of medieval age is not checked not only that these three countries will be balkanised but also the people of these countries will not be able to avoid becoming slaves of the western civilisation once again, politically and economically.

By creating fear of Muslim fundamentalism, Hindu fundamentalists lead the Hindu masses towards reaction while Muslim fundamentalists scare the Muslims by creating the ghost of Hindu fundamentalism. This dangerous game is continuing for the past forty years only because enslaved India has been divided into three parts since Independence and the fundamentalists of these three countries are entrenching themselves by spreading hatred and distrust.

It is hoped that realising the importance and necessity of this conference, you will join us in overcoming the present crisis facing the sub-continent.

Raghu Thakur Convener, Samajwadi Manch New Delhi-110002