The Baily Star

Dhaka, Tuesday, March 9, 1993

Aid Environment

The World Bank has a few words of praise for Bangladesh for its economic performances, particularly in the areas of macroeconomic management and stabilisation. Sure enough, Bangladesh has earned accolades for it through measures the WB considers appropriate for the time. Efficient macroeconomic management, tax reforms and a larger volume of foreign exchange reserve are a measure of success any government can rejoice over in a system of free market economy. Bangladesh should be doubly happy because of its upturn in so short a time. But the appearance may be deceptive for reasons little understood amidst the hullabaloo of the international financial institutions. Macroeconomic management does not necessarily guarantee proportionate benefits at the microeconomic level. Macroeconomic success can be at the cost of the pain of the poor and the underprivileged. No system can be successful if the majority of the population are left out of the pale of its beneficial programmes. And in countries like Bangladesh the majority of population surely are the poor and the disadvantaged.

Even if this vitally important question is sidetracked, one cannot forget that aid utilisation in the country has been far from satisfactory. It is common knowledge that the financial institutions like the WB, ADB, IMF and donor countries have only recently expressed concern over the country's inability to utilise fund because of lack of internal resources. Japan was particularly worried and warned that it might be opting for drastic cut on project assistance in Bangladesh. Now that the WB has joined in the tune, albeit on a different ground, the country will have to do with less aid than it used to receive. It surely would have been an occasion to rejoice and even celebrate if the government adopted the policy of less dependence on foreign aid. A look at our national budget however gives a completely different picture. This is why the proposed aid cut will be viewed as an element forced from outside on us. The irony is that success in one form and failure in another have produced the same result for us.

However, this is bound to happen, specially when economic policies are to conform to recipes put forward by international financial institutions. The conditionalities are sometimes too stringent to lose sight of the fact that at the centre of all developmental and economic policies is man. Then there are double standards aplenty. For example, the rich nations' policy to subsidise their agriculture is in sharp contrast to their advocacy for withdrawal of subsidy from more backward farming in developing countries. The farmers of Bangladesh have been experiencing the adverse effects caused in the process. A bumper crop produced by the farmers is fetching prices at times below their production costs.

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. The confidence reposed in the country's ability is a moral booster. But such a confidence will go in vain if the environment of aid is not gradually replaced by one of favourable business, internationally. US President Clinton recently made a comment in favour of turning aid into trade. The developing countries for practical reasons have been arguing for long to do this through trade liberalisation, removing protection and easing off tariff etc. It is exactly at this point, the question of letting the General Agreement on Tariff and Trade (GATT) play its due role arises. We will be happier if such a practical and beneficial system could be evolved specially when there are more claimants for international aid.

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. However, we would like to argue that unlike most of the countries of the world, women's issues in our country lie at the very centre of our development struggle. When we talk about the need for women's development, we are essentially talking about doing things which will set in motion a whole range of development activities that are likely to have a tremendous impact on our society.

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. We, more than anybody else, should be able to judge how true this is. Social research have proved over and over again that an educated rural woman has better knowledge about health care, about normal hygiene, about proper nutrition for her kids - in short she is able to raise a healthier future generation for us. A better educated rural woman has been found to be more supportive of her kids going for education. BRAC experience shows that after receiving some education women are generally more productive and innovative. Grameen Bank experience shows that given credit a woman is found to be just as entrepreneurial and as dynamic, if not more, compared to any man. And if that woman has some education to support her ideas then she is capable of tremendous innovation and risk taking.

Therefore, for us in Bangladesh, giving all out support to the cause of women's emancipation is not only a moral and political commitment, but it also makes good economic sense.

Yet we are so far behind in taking some of the most obvious steps in this direction. Laws that discriminate against women still fill up our law books. Social customs that put women down are still not fought against as openly and as vehemently as we should. Harassment of women in the streets and in the workplaces mostly go unreported.

Given the tremendous role that women can and need to play for the overall economic development of our country, a more sincere support for the women's issues and a more vocal media participation in achieving them should be our commitment in this year's international women's day.

The Muddling British Agonise yet Again

used to be a proud boast of the British that they always muddled through in the end. Their governments were hopeless. People grumbled and grumbled. They liked to see themselves as inefficient and bumbling. And they joked that in wars they always lost all the battles except the last. It was nearly true.

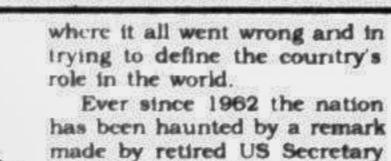
You do not hear that kind of talk these days in Britain. Such remarks were easily uttered because they were made from a position of strength. They were bred in the days of empire. Behind the jolly picture of incompetence lay the total self-confidence bequeathed by the Victorians.

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. By contrast, the featureless, concrete buildings of the Fifties and Sixties stand like grey and tatty containers waiting on the dockside to be taken away.

Since Britain won, with allies, its last great battle nearly half a century ago it has increasingly agonised about itself. These days it has begun to seem at the end of its tether. Millions of words and countless hours of television have been expended analysing

Derek Ingram writes from London In the midst of its worst recession since 1945 Britain is in the middle of another

soul-searching. Following months in which all its institutions, including he monarchy, have been questioned, the murder of a two-year-old by children has started a national debate on what sort of society is being created. Gemini News Service examines the British navel-gazing.



of State Dean Acheson that Great Britain has lost an Emptre and has not yet found a role. Today it is not only its international role that worries the British; they are much more worried about their daily existence, even their personal

No domestic event for a ery long time has shaken the country so much as the kidnap and murder in Liverpool of a two-year-old boy. Jamie Bulger, by other children, It has called into question the whole way in which society handles itself in an industrialised country on the verge of the 21st Century.

Have centuries of experience in education, welfare, child upbringing, handling a national economy, policing, penal reform, political leadership led only to this?

At times like these people

look about them and see only what has gone wrong and the reasons for what has happened seem only too apparent. Highly developed as Britain has become in many ways, many people still live in bleak, barren surroundings - in areas of Liverpool like the one where little Jamie died.

In the centres of big cities homeless youngsters sit aimlessly in street doorways, begging from their cardboard boxes. They are, most of them, from broken homes or the children of single parents. In many areas - what have come to be known as the inner cities - the streets are unkempt, the shops empty and plastered with peeling advertisements. the roads potholed.

It is a time of recession and these scenes are not confined to Britain. They are to be seen in the United States and mainland Europe, too. Nor is recession new. We have been here before. In the 1930s barefoot children were a common sight in the poorer parts of London.

Yet now the mood scems much more despairing. In better days expectations were raised too high. People were led to the idea that the good growth was bringing an ever better life. As so often, the politicians have much to answer for.

There is little sign of real leadership in Britain today John Major is not a bad prime minister but he is not a very good one either. He is often given to silly remarks, such as his reaction to the Jamie affair: "Society needs to condemn a little more and understand a little less.

But then Britain has had many poor leaders in the past and survived, even prospered, under them. A significant aspect of today's situation is that, although press, television and radio are carrying out a great exercise in national selfexamination the people seem strangely mute.

Three million are out of work. In other days people took to the streets. In the Thirties thousands marched

on Westminster from the north of England and politicians of stature stood at the base of Trafalgar Square and blasted into megaphones.

Today only hundreds gather round a low-grade speaker with a microphone. Instead, as at election time, the arguments are carried on by television. The audience may be much bigger, but the debate is contained in the way it never used to be

While communication has become easier the people's voice is less clearly heard. The TV producers and interviewers decide what questions shall be discussed, which politicians and community leaders shall be invited to answer them. The politicians do not confront the people in the way they did 50

The British always like to think they are unique. That was always nonsense and what is happening here is beginning to apply to other industrialised countries. All the signs are that much the same symptoms are beginning to appear in France, Germany and other countries of mainland Europe. Britain just happens to have got there

If this is so, people everywhere, not just in Britain, also have a lot to worry about.

DEREK INGRAM is Editor of Gemini News Service.

NORTH SOUTH UNIVERSITY

A Private Institution that Belongs to the Nation

by Muslehuddin Ahmad and Junaid Kamal Ahmad

HE first Divine revelation to the Holy Prophet (SM) "Igra bismi rabbika-lladhi Khalaq"- "Read in the name of Thy Lord, The Cherisher, Who creates" — was a proclamation emphasizing on seeking knowledge through reading and writing which every human being must strive for. It is this very ideal that motivated the members of the Foundation for Promotion of Education and Research to establish this seat of higher Learning - North South University.

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.

STUCK!

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. Such inequity in government spending, which is a historical legacy, is the worst in Asia and also amongst SAARC countries. In Sri Lanka, for example, to take a contrasting case, only 22 per cent of the government's expenditure goes to finance the ten per cent of the best educated in that country.

To reverse this inequity one may suggest a strong partnership between the public and the private sector. But this partnership nation, is the fact that NSU is committed to bringing back to Bangladesh some of the best and brightest scholars who have opted until now to stay abroad. NSU is a strong challenge to the brain drain phenomenon. There is no doubt that this young group of Bangladeshis who have come from the best educational institutions abroad are brimming with ideas and energy that can be tapped by the government and the national at large. This is another reason why we believe NSU is a "public" good.

Thirdly, NSU is confident that its educational quality will entice many of the students to stay back in Bangladesh. It is

hoped that schools in India, Thailand and even in the US will lose their magical appeal allowing NSU to help this nation save scarce foreign exchange. In that sense also, NSU is a "public" good.

Finally, at a time when this nation needs dynamic managers both in the public and private sectors, NSU is committed to reducing the shortage of skilled manpower.

NSU is not focussed on Bangladesh alone. In its philosophy it is international not only because it draws on the model of higher education in the US and borrows the philosophy that private individuals can contribute to public ideals, but also because its name evokes a powerful concept.

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: how the interdependence of the rich and poor would unfold in the future. It is hoped that the young leaders that will emerge from NSU will not only have a vision for Bangladesh, but will contribute to Willy Brandt's hopes for cooperation between North and South.

NSU has already started receiving some fruits of North South Cooperation in the form of help and assistance from Ford Foundation, DSAID, Asia

Foundation etc. NSU has also received positive responses from some US Universities for joint collaboration. With a view to maintaining high academic standard, NSU has already set up an International Advisory Board with a professor of Harvard University as its chairman. The other members are from the US University. namely, University of Illinois, (Urbana-Champaign) Brown University, George Washington University, Harvard University, Vanderbilt University etc.

Tagore once in his speech to students in China said: "When I was very young I gave up learning and ran away from my lessons. That saved me and I owe all that I possess today to that courageous step. I fled the classes which instructed, but which did not inspire".

Village Women Turn Garments to Export Gold come growth centres and rural

ILLBOARDS 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-billionrupee (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 work-

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

in the central hills where she lived, jobs were scarce. But today, life is a little easier with her working in a garments fac-

In fact, Nimala could only think about contributing to her family's finances. But her mother, a food vendor, looks further ahead, encouraging her daughter to save money and buy some jewellery in preparation for her wedding day.

Now the government wants to spread the benefits further. It wants to move the garments industry away from the capital city of Colombo and the Free Trade Zones (FTZs) and to the rural areas. Already, some 200 garment factories are being opened and are already operational in rural areas.

Times are good for garment exports. Outlets for Sri Lankan garments include boutiques of Christian Dior, Pierre Cardin and Jordache and department stores such as Sears and Roebuck and Marks and Spencer. Sri Lanka has been making garments with brand names like Levis, Arrow, Manhattan, Van Heusen, etc.

Mallika Wanigasundara writes from Colombo

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 FIZs 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-

fully 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

infrastructure - roads

bridges, water supply, power

generation and telecommuni

cations systems - will hope-

(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

OPINION

For a Greater Unity

checked.

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 rela-

tions 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 subcontinent has worsened in international politics. If this reli gious fundamentalism of medieval age is not checked not only that these three countries will be balkanised but also the not be able to avoid becoming slaves of the western civilisa tion 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 fundamental years only because enslaved three parts since Indepen- tinent. dence and the fundamentalists of these three countries are entrenching themselves by spreading hatred and distrust.

people of these three countries can come closer and give the politics of division a new direction, based on higher values and faith, then this dangerous game of the fundamentalists can be

You may recall that the partition of India had made Dr Lohia very sad. He used to say that if this artificial division was not controlled by fresh efforts and values then the people of these two countries (then India and Pakistan) would have to bear a lot of hardship. So Dr Lohia had visualised a concept of unity of these two countries to protect the sovereignty and prosperity of these nations. Now the name of Bangladesh has been added to it.

It need not be explained in detail that if such a unity is given shape or sort of a confederation is formed, arms race, terrorism, fundamentalism, violence and poverty can come to an end.

We have invited eminent personalities of India, Pakistan and Bangladesh to this conference. It is a matter of great pleasure that we have already got consent of former president of India Giani Zail Singh, well-known journalist Kuldip Nayar, Socialist MP George people of these countries will Fernandes and former Lok Sabha Speaker Rabi Ray

> We have sent invitation to great son of Frontier Gandhi Khan Abdul Wali Khan, Pakistan cricketer Imran Khan, actor Sunil Dutt, Indian cricketer Sunil Gavaskar, Hassanul Haq (Inu) of Bangladesh and many other eminent personalities.

It is hoped that realising ism. This dangerous game is the importance and necessity continuing for the past forty of this conference, you will join us in overcoming the pre-India has been divided into sent crisis facing the sub-con-

Raghu Thakur Convener, Samajwadi Manch New Delhi-110002

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. This will surely deter any further foreign investment here.

Maybe a sinsterous game is going on behind the curtain to accelerate this sudden sell-outof MNCs. The local Chief Executive Officers (CEOs) of these MNCs might be playing a role no way congenial to our present day economy and prompting, on the other hand, the MNC principals to take such decision. Seemingly the bureaucrats those matter perhaps are making a situation to make this exodus inevitable and, on the other hand, the buy-outs by the local CEOs painless and smooth. How this people's government has been restrained from taking any effective counter-measures to stop these MNCs from departure? Some say that verbal request to the concerned governments of these MNCs by the top executive of our government even would have enough to stop these disastrous exodus. But surprisingly

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

enough our government is

silently watching this ignoble

time the government should boldly come out breaking bureaucratic clout and immediately send SOS to the concerned foreign governments not to off-load the equities of these MNCs at this juncture when we need huge foreign investment to augment the dilapidated economy.

Istiaque Ahmed Chowdhury Dhanmondi R/A, Dhaka

Hajj policy

Sir. When the government notified, in the second week of January, its Hajj 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

i am one of this year's applicants, and I opted for making my own arrangement, but a press release of the government, published in certain newspapers in the last week of February has thrown me in to a quandary. The latest press release re-

lates to non-ballottee pilgrims who, if they make their own arrangement for residential accommodation, would have to provide to the Saudi Embassy at Dhaka copies of deeds of lease in order to obtain visas.

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. An intending pilgrim

> 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 Airica, I would like to congratulate them through your esteemed daily.

Windies have proved that they are still the kings of cricket. Watched the finals made me feel that Pakistan are still babies when compared with the Windies. The much credited Pak bowling failed to penetrate through the Windies batting line-up in all the four matches. Rather it was the Windies bowling that proved that the Pak batting is not at all impregnable to their pace quadret (not duo) that bowled them out for only 43 runs on one occasion, the lowest in the game's history. In all their four matches, Pak batsmen were

ducked 14 times, six in the 43

showed dominance which expresses the fact that the Windies bowling line-up has become balanced. Brian Lara has once again expressed his versatility with the willow, amassing 341 runs from seven matches at an average of 68.2, with two consecutive 100s, one being undefeated. Dancer Lara has rightfully received the Man of the Series award. Desmond Haynes has crossed 8,000 runs in the final with a beautiful half century. Finally, it would do injustice if Richie's captaincy is not credited. In just above one year, he, think, has become the best captain in the world.

On February 11, The Daily just too good to be true"!

Asrarul Islam Chowdhury Department of Economics Jahangirnagar University

runs innings! No single Windies bowler

Star printed a feature on the Windies under the caption, "Windies' period of rebuilding is over". Rightfully so. They have proved that they have once again become impregnable. The matches against Pakistan speak so at least. Otherwise, the World Champs would not have lost eight of their nine Matches against them. After the recent Triangular Tournament, I have no more doubt in me to say that, "they (the Windies) are