

Growth of Dairy Farms

The government have recently announced a scheme for providing financial incentive to private dairy farms. A modest one, this is nevertheless a concrete move to encourage growth of small and medium scale dairy farms in the country. It will also help open up new possibilities for self-employment, especially in the rural area.

Under the scheme, owners of dairy farms having five to ten improved varieties of cows, will be compensated in cash, equivalent to twenty-five per cent of the investment cost, after completion of one year of operation. Farms having eleven to twenty cattleheads will get a cash compensation of twenty per cent of the project cost. Each individual dairy farm will get the benefit of the cash compensation only once. The scheme will operate through the Bangladesh Krishi Bank and the Rajshahi Krishi Unnayan Bank. A sum of eight crore taka is said to have been earmarked initially for funding the scheme. Besides, commercial banks also are reported to have been advised to extend credit facilities to the participants in the venture.

Private dairy farming has a claim to priority in state support on considerations of meeting nutritional needs and employment generation. The demand for milk and milk powder is so big that even a dramatic growth in our dairy industry will not be able to meet the huge demand that now exists in the country. Roughly five years back in financial year 1987-88, we were importing thirty thousand tons of milk powder which is a huge quantity itself. This year, imports are projected at double that figure, i.e. sixty thousand tons, costing hundreds of crore of taka.

The new scheme provides an instance of bottom-up planning and will, hopefully, induce growth from the grass-root level. Grandiose plans for producing milk on a large scale in the country did not yield much of a result in the past. It is important that the new initiative succeeds. First, since eligibility for cash incentive is predicated on use of high-breed cattle, the government must take immediate and substantive measures to ensure adequate availability of these to the farmers. Access to livestock insurance facilities for farmers participating in the scheme has also to be assured. Since the farmer always takes good care of his stock, insurers' risk would be minimised and they should be able to provide insurance cover at a relatively low premium. To make insurance cover more attractive to the participating farmers, there ought to be a built-in provision for no-claim rebates in the insurance policies. Rebates due for a particular year could easily be adjusted against the premium for next year. To reassure the insurers that they are not taking undue risk and to tell the farmers that they are in safe hands, the Directorate of Livestock, who would wield direct supervision over the scheme, should institute a programme to place the cattleheads in the participating dairy farms under intensive care.

Let us hope that the concerned authorities would take appropriate steps at the right time to ensure success of the initiative.

Cutting Marriage Registration Fee

Women are unmistakably on the move in Bangladesh. Their large participation in the garments industry and road-building and construction work as well as their progress in the education sector are surely comforting indexes. The daily fare of reports of rape and kidnap and murder of women as well as the weekly unflinching diatribe against them by the local mullah give support to the hope that the most repressed section of all humanity must indeed be on the move in this backyard of modern civilisation. There is, moreover, a happy news from Chittagong where it has been claimed that in the whole of that division female school enrollment has surpassed that of male.

There must be some other less than heart-warming side to the coin. A new kind of gender exploitation is fast proliferating in the villages and their rotting extensions — the city slums. A girl must marry or become a prostitute — there are no other choice for her in almost the whole of our society. The first choice is of course on the side of life and society, hope and love, work and fulfillment which is to marry and raise a family. The second is, in fact, no choice at all — its a choiceless compulsion that comes at the end of all power to resist. Over the recent years news has been travelling from all nook and cranny of the country of how that beautiful first choice is being violated. In Bangladesh, a model of agrarian society in which families guard their integrity with fierce jealousy, marriage is being used to grab unearned cash and kind and ended as soon as the greed has been satisfied.

The latest news is from Narail where incidence of divorce is accelerating incredibly. How and why? Most of rural marriages take place without registration because the parties cannot afford the necessary fee. In the absence of a proper document, the man can break the marriage at will for he has to pay nothing for his act. He is obliged in no way to make amends for his action or compensate the woman — either religiously or legally. The religious and legal requirements for a divorce to be accepted have been designed to inhibit the incidence of such breaking of marriages and families. Where these cannot be enforced, as in the case of there being no registration, the man feels free to make divorce into a regular business. And this leads to an inevitable rotting of the social fabric.

How can this be stalled and society brought back to healthier norms? We agree fully with the suggestions that have been pouring in from the interior: the rate of marriage registration fee must be reduced making it possible for even-very poor people to go for a registered marriage. The land where statistics on birth, marriage and death is not reliable, can only be pitied. All attempts to get at the brasstack realities of such a country must prove futile and, as such, all efforts to orchestrate socio-political action and plan the future must go haywire. Ours is unfortunately just such a country.

How would the message travel to the poor masses, specially the women and their parents that registration provides a good haven for marriage to cast anchor? After working for decades at it the family planning grassroots people are now having their way to the peoples mind. Cannot the very big network of FP workers be used to spread the other gospel of marriage registration? But this can be done only after the fee has been cut to truly humane level.

ABOUT this time of the year, 40 years ago in 1953, Mr. Ghulam Mohammed, the then Governor General of Pakistan, dismissed Khawja Nazimuddin, then Prime Minister of Pakistan and his Cabinet. Just prior to his dismissal Khawja Nazimuddin had received a vote of confidence in the Pakistan Constituent Assembly when his party, the Muslim League, which commanded an overwhelming majority in the assembly, passed the budget. Prior to the dismissal of the cabinet, troops of the Pakistan army took up positions around Karachi to intimidate any people from registering dissent at the dismissal of a sitting government with a clear majority in the legislature.

Ghulam Mohammed was a former civil servant, who became Pakistan's first Finance Minister before succeeding Khawja Nazimuddin as Governor General on the assassination of Pakistan's first Prime Minister, Liaquat Ali Khan. He carried out this act of arbitrary dismissal of the Prime Minister under the provisions of the Government of India Act of 1935 which was till then the basis of constitutional authority in Pakistan. However he could only take this autocratic step because the Commander in Chief of the Pakistan Army, Field Marshall Ayub Khan, gave him his full backing and deployed his troops to give physical support to the Governor General's decree. Ghulam Mohammed invited Mohammed Ali Bogra, who was not even a member of the legislature and was then Pakistan's ambassador in Washington, to come back as Prime Minister, on the assumption that East Bengal would be placated by replacing one powerless Bengali by an even more impotent Bengali. His judgment was vindicated when a number of Nazimuddin's colleagues obediently rejoined Mohammed Ali's cabinet. Mohammed Ali was however having a hard time controlling a restive legislature so shortly after Bogra assumed office Ghulam Mohammed dissolved the National Assembly itself. This act of Presidential discretion did not go unchallenged. A less docile group of legislators, led by Moulvi Tamizuddin Khan, the then Speaker of the dissolved National Assembly, filed a writ in the Sind High Court challenging the dissolution of the Assembly. The Sind High Court ruled that the dismissal of the cabinet was ultra vires but the government's appeal to the Supreme Court was upheld by Chief Justice Munir on grounds of national expediency.

From Ghulam to Ghulam: The Ghosts of President's Past

by Rehman Sobhan

Both Ghulam Mohammed's arbitrary act and its eventual vindication by the Pakistan Supreme Court have haunted Pakistan's politics for forty years serving as the forerunner of successive assaults on the democratic process. Ghulam Mohammed's Governor Generalship was followed by that of Iskander Mirza, another civil servant, who in turn paved the way for Field Marshall Ayub Khan's 10-year raj. From Ghulam Mohammed to Ayub Khan and then eventually under Yahya Khan and General Ziaul Haque, Pakistan has since been exposed to a succession of strong chief executives who assumed and exercised power without reference to popular consent or reference to the legislature. They played with and divided the politicians, won some of them over to sit in tame legislatures under an arbitrarily imposed constitution designed to vest all power in the chief executive.

The recent arbitrary dismissal of Nawaz Sharif and his Cabinet by President Ghulam Ishaq was thus, in its implications, the lineal dependent of the first Ghulam's dismissal of a Prime Minister. To reinforce the spirit of continuity, troops were again deployed in Pindi/Islamabad as a show of strength thereby suggesting that as Ayub Khan had connived in the dismissal of Nazimuddin, Gen Waheed, the present Chief of Staff of the Pakistan Army connived in the dismissal of Nawaz Sharif, as did General Aslam Beg connive in the dismissal of Benazir Bhutto. To show that the past continues to haunt the present the dissolution of the Parliament by Ghulam Ishaq is being challenged in the High Court by the incumbent speaker Gowher Ayub who, in a piece of delicious irony, happens to be the son of the late President Ayub Khan, one of the first assassins of democ-

racy in Pakistan.

Ghulam Ishaq had already given a demonstration of his political ancestry when, 29 months ago, he dismissed the government of Benazir Bhutto without giving her the chance to prove her strength in Parliament. This act was fully endorsed by Mr. Nawaz Sharif whose political colleagues joined the interim government under yet another Ghulam, Mostafa Jatoi, who to complete the circle of irony, had until recently been one of the principal lieutenants of Benazir's father, the late Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, in the People's Party. To show that those who sow bad seed must eat its bitter harvest the new interim government contains members of Nawaz Sharif's cabinet and party who had been won over by Ghulam Ishaq and/or the all powerful Inter Services Intelligence (ISI) who have for many years kept a stable of Pakistani politicians in their pocket. Benazir has thus returned Sharif's compliment to her with a bonus, by underwriting Ghulam Ishaq's constitutional coup. In return her party will sit in the interim government which will hold elections within 90 days. She has designated Farooq Leghari, a former CSP officer from a prominent landed family in the Punjab, now the second-in-command in the PPP, to join the interim government of Balakh Sher Mazari another prominent landowner from Dera Ghazi Khan who has been in and out of the Muslim League.

Nawaz Sharif should again be reminded of the day when President Ziaul Haq dismissed his own hand picked Prime Minister, Mohammed Khan Junejo with the full support of Nawaz Sharif who divided the Muslim League against his own parliamentary leader in support of Ziaul Haq's arbitrary act of dismissal of Junejo, so he continues to reap what he has sown.

Under the circumstances, Pakistanis who do not suffer from an extreme case of amnesia will shed few tears for Nawaz Sharif who has twice before connived in similar acts

of Presidential autocracy. It was his act of *lese majeste* in seeking to amend the constitution which vests these arbitrary powers in the President to dismiss a government, which earned him the wrath of the aging President and led to his eventual dismissal. Ziaul Haque had put this provision of arbitrary power in the constitution to make sure that all members of parliament would remember that their stay in parliament depended on the will of the President rather than the support of their constituents. Threats to tamper with the powers of the President were at the source of the dismissal of Junejo, Benazir and now Nawaz Sharif.

In years to come, if in fact Benazir is re-elected to power, she too may come to regret her support and possible connivance in Ghulam Ishaq's assault on the democratic process. Her sense of vindication at a similar connivance by Nawaz Sharif will not win her any support as a principled upholder of the democratic tradition so that she too may reap her own bitter harvest when she challenges the arbitrary powers of the President and the sources of his power, the armed forces of Pakistan.

It is not certain where this process will end. Pakistan's court's have demonstrated a tradition of expediency, upholding the exercise of arbitrary power. If they do not do so this time then it will have to be seen whether the law is stronger than the army which continues to be the ultimate source of constitutional power. The source of arbitrary executive power in Pakistan has thus always been the army who have always had to underwrite the assaults on democracy by power hungry bureaucrat Presidents.

This time round however the exercise of arbitrary power may not pass unchallenged. Nawaz Sharif has the supreme asset that he is a Panjabi. From the days of Nazimuddin, through to Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, Mohammed Khan Junejo and Benazir Bhutto the victims of Presidential autocracy have originated from the

powerless areas of Pakistan. Nawaz Sharif on the other hand comes from the heartland of power since two thirds of the army is Panjabi. He commands considerable popular support in the Panjab where he was deemed by many as a competent, if not financially scrupulous, Chief Minister and was indeed well regarded there as Prime Minister. I was recently at a seminar with Nawaz Sharif's Finance Minister, Mr. Sartaj Aziz, a Pathan, who was full of praise for the qualities of head and heart of Nawaz Sharif. Sartaj Aziz is now no longer Finance Minister and has come out in support of Sharif stating that the economy is in good shape. We read that the business community in Pakistan is threatening a strike in support of Nawaz Sharif who was the first businessman to become Prime Minister of Pakistan. Western aid donors and foreign investors are also impressed by Nawaz Sharif's ambitious programme of market reforms. Sharif can thus command a diverse measure of support from traditional areas of influence in Pakistan. So the game in Pakistan is far from over.

Now that everyone from the army, the President, the Courts, the Muslim League and even the People's Party have all compromised themselves who is left to uphold democratic values in Pakistan? It is not surprising that Pakistanis have become cynical and now see that democracy is likely to function only through the courtesy of the armed forces and their geriatric proxies in the Civil Service, who will always remain *ghulam's* of the military establishment. How far this process will continue in a world where democratic values are supposedly becoming dominant in the political culture is to be seen. My suspicion is that Pakistan is likely to go through a protracted process of instability until such time as its armed forces can be persuaded to stay out of politics and let the people and their elected representatives have the final say in determining the process of political succession.

Lessons for Bangladesh

We in Bangladesh may take appropriate lessons from the melancholy course of events in Pakistan. We have a shared political ancestry and have already been infected by the germ of arbitrary exercise of power which carried over into independent Bangladesh. Our renewed democratic tradition has been manifest in the freely given vote of the people in February 1991 and the return of power from the all powerful Presidential executive to the legislature, following the repeal of the Fourth Amendment. It is however a fragile tradition where indeed state power was transferred through the democratic process for the first time since 1954 when the *Jukto Front* took office for its very brief tenure before it was arbitrarily dismissed by the same Ghulam Mohammed who dismissed Nazimuddin.

It will thus take a great deal of political maturity and faith in the democratic process from the electorate to see that our democratic traditions are sustained. This will demand a commitment by our political leaders to a culture of democracy within their own administration and party and a genuine attempt to establish democracy at the grass roots. Unless the common people of Bangladesh or indeed Pakistan are given a stake in the viability of the democratic order where they see that democracy can materially improve their lives, reduce their insecurity both from market forces and the arbitrary behaviour of the administration, political touts and armed brigades, they will remain unmoved by threats to their democratic institutions. Unless the people are consulted through revitalised institutions of local government, in the work place and in other areas of civil society, they will remain uninvolved in the defense of the democratic process. It is only when our common people feel that democracy has meaning for them that they will come out to defend the process against arbitrary usurpation. It is only when the enemies of democracy know that in every corner of Bangladesh or Pakistan lakhs of people will take to the streets in defence of their democratic rights that we can be sure that democracy has come to stay and that we will have finally exercised the ghost of Ghulam Mohammed.

With High Hopes Eritrea Goes to the People

David Orr writes from Asmara, Eritrea

Slowly but surely, Eritrea is emerging from years of chronic famine and the longest civil war in African history. From 1961 until 1991, Eritrea fought a bitter struggle for independence from Ethiopia. The government estimates it will cost \$2 billion just to repair the damage... As Eritreans prepare for a referendum, April 23-25, Gemini News Service reports on the optimism of a country trying to stand on its own feet after three decades of war.



Abeba Tuucu (left) and Selamawit Teslahunegn, EPLF fighters at the Ministry of Information, Asmara, where they both now work. Abeba is a librarian, Selamawit a journalist.

says: "This referendum is a very significant milestone in the history of our country. Our fight has been a long one and we are the last nation in Africa to gain freedom. This vote will secure recognition of our independence by the international community." The vote will also mark an historic confirmation of the long-disputed colonial boundaries laid down by Italy, which ruled Eritrea from 1890 until its defeat by Britain during World War Two. From 1941 until its UN-sanctioned federation with Ethiopia in 1952 Eritrea was a British protec-

torate. Afwerki is keen to dismiss any notion of Eritrean secession as a blueprint for the Balkanisation of the continent. He says: "It is difficult to say our example should be copied elsewhere in Africa. We have reached this stage after a century of struggle." "Whether we like it or not, the colonial boundaries are the basis of African nationhood. I do not believe our independence will have a domino effect. The fragmentation of Africa along ethnic lines would be disastrous and endless." A commitment to multi-

party democracy has been a cornerstone of EPLF policy since 1987 and the PGE insists that after the establishment of constitutional government, the Liberation Front will dissolve itself. If so, it will become the first insurgent movement in modern history to do so.

For the time being, Eritrea is enjoying a honeymoon period. The mood of its capital, Asmara, is buoyant and celebratory. Everywhere, fine colonial and Art Deco buildings are being decorated in time for the referendum. The stalls of the Muslim quarter's bustling marketplace are piled with fresh produce. Along palm-lined Liberation Avenue and in the streets behind the Roman Catholic cathedral, cafe society takes its ease with cappuccino and pastries.

However, Eritrea's spirited emergence into nationhood is tempered by the sobering realities of decay and destruction suffered over the past decades. Nearly every family lost a member in the war. Some 80,000 martyrs, including 60,000 EPLF fighters, died in the liberation struggle. Tens of thousands of children were orphaned and countless thousands of people were disabled. In every village and town they are to be seen on crutches and in wheelchairs.

None of the 100,000 fighters — one third of them

women — has been demobilised. Worse still, nearly 500,000 Eritreans still languish in Sudanese refugee camps. The PGE wants their return, but there are no jobs and in many cases no homes for them to come back to.

The main problem is the economy, which lies in ruins after decades of fighting, neglect and economic mismanagement. The PGE estimates it will cost \$2 billion just to repair the damage and return Eritrea to its pre-war status as one of Africa's most industrialised nations. The 40 public sector factories standing idle in May, 1991 — textiles, footwear, beverages and other such light industry — are running at only one-third capacity.

The agricultural sector, which sustains 90 per cent of the population — most people being farmers at subsistence or below-subsistence level — has also been devastated. Eighty per cent of the country still relies on food aid and the estimated annual per capita income of \$115 is among the world's lowest.

Musie Tesfason, headman of Addi Konesti, a highland farming community of 1,800, northeast of Asmara, says: "Last year's rains were the best in 30 years. But we only have 100 oxen, so we couldn't plough most of the land. We eat everything we grow and still people go hungry."

Nearby, an Eritrean Referendum Commission, official explains voting procedure to a gathering of villagers: tick the blue paper for Yes, the red for No to independence.

This is a harsh, barren land. Yet signs of regeneration and self-help are everywhere. Just outside the neighbouring community of Addi Yacob, a 500-strong voluntary labour force is building a reservoir to collect rainwater for horticulture as well as for human and animal consumption.

Much of the country's infrastructure was shattered. The once-fine railway linking the capital to the Red Sea port of Massawa is no more. The historic Turko-Egyptian city was all but completely destroyed by Ethiopian bombing and shelling after its liberation by the EPLF in early 1990.

Yet, Massawa is slowly dusting itself off to assume an important role in the business of economic recovery. The city is strategically located for exploitation of the country's greatest natural asset: fish. Such is the capacity of the marine industry for revitalisation that the United Nations Development Programme is backing a \$5 million fisheries scheme, which starts in April.

It is on such positive notes that the people and the international agencies are concentrating. Despite having nine languages and two major religions, Christianity and Islam, Eritrea suffers no real ethnic or religious tensions. Above all, the Eritreans are committed to regenerating their country. They will accept outside help, but ultimately they want to stand on their own feet.

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To the Editor...

Female doctors

Sir, Now-a-days in almost all good residential areas of Khulna city and, presumably, other cities in the country, many attractive signboards of female medical practitioners, in bright colours, instantly catch sights of the passerby. Interestingly enough, one is amazed to find most of these lady physicians posing themselves as female disease specialists or child disease specialists or both. They are generally spouses of male doctors. Certainly none of the patients bothers to verify their qualifications. But there are reasons to make one believe that these lady doctors claim themselves as 'female disease specialists' only by virtue of their sex.

After all, MBBS courses for male and female doctors are necessarily the same.

To earn one's own bread is a good idea indeed; but the tactics as have been adopted by some so called 'female and child disease specialists' are not only against the code of ethics, but sheer violation of rule of law, if they are not as much qualified doctors but have gained some basic knowledge from their physician husbands or so.

Time has come that some sort of investigation should be conducted by the Medical Associations, if not by the Government. It would be wise for such general female doctors, and advantageous for the general public, if they start general practice and allow

male patients to call on them. There is no reason why they should not treat male patients. Are they still afraid of any harassment when women are working in mills, factories and offices side by side with their male colleagues?

There is acute shortage of qualified doctors in the country. If female physicians step in the field of general practice like their male counterparts, it will certainly help to a great extent in attaining the goal: Health for All by 2000, and will also reduce the burden of over engaged male medical practitioners and at the same time the scope of quacks. The MBBS female doctors should better do general practice instead of confining them to attend female patients only by

posing as female disease or child disease specialists. Without real specialisation, such practice may, at times, play havoc to the women and child patients.

K R Zakhrni
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Pay scales at BAI

Sir, Anomalies in the pay-scales of Professor and Associate Professor of Bangladesh Agricultural Institute (BAI), Dhaka have been prevailing for the last several years. Many approaches have so far been made to the competent authorities for removing the anomalies but no fruitful result

has yet been achieved. The incumbents are suffering from frustration.

The Bangladesh Agricultural Institute (College) is a technical education institution offering four years B Sc Ag (Hons) Degree course under the academic control of Bangladesh Agricultural University, Mymensingh. The government has yet to decide who will control the administration of BAI. Till now the BAI is functioning under the administrative control of Bangladesh Agricultural Research Institute (BARI), Gazipur although, a few months back, the Ministry of Agriculture (MOA), vide a circular, made it public that the MOA will take over the charge of administration of BAI as per a cabinet decision following

rejection of the BAI's demand and expert committee's recommendation for sanctioning academic and administrative autonomy in the pattern of Bangladesh Institute of Technology. God knows what would be the fate of BAI, one of the oldest educational institutions of this subcontinent, established by Sher-e-Bangla A K Fazlul Haq during the tough British period.

Whatever the consequence may be, we earnestly call upon the higher authorities to solve the long standing pay-scale problem of BAI's Professors and Associate Professors.

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