

THIS institution has enhanced the image Bangladesh to a credible extent in the World of Technology. A brilliant product of this institution Dr. F.R. Khan has gone a long way to uphold the prestige of this institution. Other prospective students who have engaged their endowments for the remarkable progress in technology, both at home and abroad, have eventually fostered the traditional pride of this institution. Today, those of you who have graduated from this institution, I hope, will devote your experience and creativity with a view to glorifying yourselves and the credentials of this institution, giving your endeavours a total success.

Washing a happy start
Entering from a century into another is indeed a remarkable change.



We, the fortunate quarters created inviolable impediments for the country's common mass and your mission should be directed to combat this widening gap with firm commitment. You are the inheritors of modern technological concepts and it is needless to mention that the potential of your anticipations to take a realistic form is far greater than others.

Common People's Strength is the Main Power

Every human being is gifted with inborn qualities, regardless of his socio-economic status. The wider a society idealises and patronises the latent talents of its individuals, the greater its power and strength.

The Government policies, regulations, working procedures and national priorities of our country are not at all programmed for the flourishing of its people.

We are currently running such projects, in the name of common people that those in fact serve our self interests. We arranged such an array of vague institutional programmes, so that those remain in the grip of the fortunate few like us.

Bangladesh — not a poor country, but failing to explore human resources

We regard Bangladesh as a poor country. For this reason, we don't feel guilty and hold ourselves responsible for what is going on around us. This is nothing but a lame excuse to avoid responsibility. Our attitude seems that the country is in such a deplorable condition because our forefathers have not strived much or nature has not gifted us with valuable assets.

In the name of poverty alleviation, what we have accomplished so far is running "Destitute Mother's Projects" or "Food for Work Programmes". Now-a-days it has been heard that some people have prescribed "Food Stamp Projects". None of these are poverty alleviation projects in its true sense. To be less skeptical, these are in fact "Poverty Nurturing Projects".

Others are not sincere about poverty alleviation because our forefathers have not strived much or nature has not gifted us with valuable assets.

We should not state ourselves as a 'Poor Country', rather, to be precise, we should state 'The country is failing to explore human resources'.

Earlier, we have prepared many papers, developed elaborate plans, but effective steps have not yet been initiated to make it a success. As a result, being very rich in human resources, the people of our country have so far remained poor.

Where is the one lakh crore?

During the past 21 years, we have received 24 billion dollars from donors. This amount has been allocated for numerous projects, bringing no benefit. Although, each of the projects has predicted fantastic profiles at the preliminary stage.

We have not yet learnt what was the final outcome of these million-dollar projects, but we do know that the consultants of these projects have received a huge share as fees. They have

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offered consultancy with higher fringe benefits in Bangladesh at the expenses of Bangladesh. But the condition of common mass have been neglected from the very inception.

The consultants and the implementing bodies of these projects have tacitly convinced us that progress evolves gradually, and that we are to be patient. For progress, we need growth. To produce steam in the boiler of growth, a lot of fuel is required to heat up the furnace. The poor are still coping with their miserable situation. They are still showing signs of patience. In spite of their increasing poverty, they are 'praying' for the boiler of economic progression to produce steam. Even after burning of billion dollar fuel during the past 21 years, no steam has come from it. People are now skeptical of the very existence of the boiler at the top of the furnace. Or has the fuel fallen into furm-

To explain the complicated terms and theories of economics, the economists have compared growth to the spring tide. According to them, when it comes, everything will float on it. Both the rich and poor will rush forward. The Dingee boats of the poor will move alongside with the fast and fancy speedboats of the rich.

The things that the 'enthusiastic' economists do not try to understand is that the poverty-stricken people do not possess any sorts of economic buoyancy to keep themselves afloat.



And if this tidal flow ever comes, it will simply drown the people in greater numbers.

We Are Not Sincere About Poverty Alleviation

We cannot trace any other landscape in the globe where the density of poverty is higher than Bangladesh. Wherever or whenever we get the opportunity, we keep on surmounting the need of poverty alleviation. But contrary to our words, we

Both are very complex and contentious issues.

The guiding canons of the currently ruling paradigm of market economy are privatization. The forthcoming budget will surely be formulated within that framework, and will contain proposals to carry the process further. One will have to wait until the budget is unfolded to know the proposed pace and dimensions of the process and how will the proposals impact on the national goals indicated above.

No doubt those who have faith that market forces are the best means of solving socio-economic problems will find the budget as proposed admirable. Also, party political adherents and sympathizers will no doubt support it, often as a matter of course. On the other hand, those who are concerned that market forces may further strengthen the hands of the already strong economic actors, and put the mitigation of mass poverty and unemployment in the back seat may have many questions to ask. Politicians belonging to opposition parties and sympathizers of those parties will no doubt find the budget unacceptable, again not infrequently as a matter of course.

In reality, the budget pro-

Let the People March Forward

are never sincere with our efforts in this regard. Had we been so, then we would never vacillate to give a second thought to focus on poverty alleviation as our main objective for the development.

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In the construction works, the line of action of the Civil Engineers have been highly acclaimed. If we were serious on poverty alleviation, we would have followed their procedures. We would have re-arranged our schedule on "Critical Path Method" and organised our management and plans accordingly. We would have totally engaged the talents, techniques and endowments and the organising capabilities of our entire nation.

use modern technology within their means. With the large-scale use of the Micro-Chip, computer and electronic technology have changed the previous concepts in no time.

Once, everybody pictured and visualized the computer as a threat in that it would push people out of their employments. Whereas today with the use of micro-chips, computer

For the first time I experienced that the people are talking of the basic economic issues, while doing their daily household marketing. For this grand success I give a big hand to the importers of Indian eggs. We had been slapped and pushed from our surroundings, but that could not wake us from our slumber and stagnation.

Industry has become the major sector to create employment opportunities for the backward nations having ample human resources. A large number of human resources can easily be employed to assemble computers, invent new programmes and entry datas.



I came to know that Australia has shown deep interest in importing "Neem plants" from Bangladesh worth over Taka 30 lakh. They have proposed to pay three US dollars per Neem plant. They are collecting millions of Neem plants from China at present.

The export of flowers and orchid is a flourishing trade in



some countries. Even the exotic species of plant saplings may be exported for creating a beautiful radiance. I have pondered over the question why Bangladesh fails to take this

houses at a reasonable price. I hope that you know the process of making quality burnt bricks, to make the mud-built huts more stable and to invent roofing materials through adding a layer on bamboo mats that can be compared to the CI sheets.

International Architecture Award for the Construction of Tk. 12000-houses

You may have heard GB received the Aga Khan Architecture Award for this housing programme and also for its architectural design. This award is highly acclaimed in the world of architecture. The world's most famous architects select the worthy nominees for this prize. Being an architect of Bangladesh, you are surely taking pride in this achievement.

Our thoughts have taken the format of other people's minds. The students are acquiring bookish knowledge in the universities, instead of gaining the light of education in true sense of the term.

This tendency has been intensified due to our state policy. We are so much dependent

Professor Muhammad Yunus, the founder of the Grameen Bank, needs no introduction. He has captured the world focus for his pioneering work with the credit system for the landless and poorest of the poor. Recently, as the convocation speaker, he delivered a speech at the Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology (BUET), which has been highly acclaimed by a cross-section of the public. Forthright, original in approach, the speech has sought to delve deep into the local potential instead of going by the prescribed recipes by the international financial institutions and bodies whose assessments are more often than not, either biased or simply overlook the obtaining reality. Considering the importance of the speech, we felt tempted to publish the speech in its entirety but for the space constraint.

The speech was in Bangla and its English translation was rendered by Rashed Mahmud Titumir.

We would have acquired vast global experiences and devote it to this purpose. We would have proceeded with the purpose of alleviating poverty by detecting the percentage of progress achieved each year.

The Most Advanced Technology is Within the Reach of the Poorest People

Rapid progress is going on regarding Science & Technology. Only within in 4-5 decades, the course of technology has totally changed. When technology developed to speed up production rate, its tendency was to expand the production unit and help minimize the production cost. Technology was suited to large capital intensive investments.

Science & technology has now reached such a stage that proves favourable for the countries that are lagging behind in exploiting its human resources. Physical technology has totally diversified into a new track of development after the concoction of the Micro-Chip. Every new innovation has opened up the opportunity for common people to

There is another promising scope for backward countries in employing their large manpower effectively in another arena of technological development.



ment. This new innovation is called bio-technology or bio-engineering. Though it is also the latest and top ranked technology of the world, it can be introduced into the poorest countries of the Third World. In this field the investment cost is much lower. In the method of bio-technology, by the assistance of numerous technicians, we not only can get a bumper harvest of parasite-free crops, but also ensure the yields of finest quality crops.

What is the Role of Our Technologists?
Through a series of events,

We are so much dependent on donors that we no longer rely on our own ideas. It seems that we cannot even sneeze without the permission of our foreign donors. We are learning their attitude, thinking in their way and writing according to their wish. What ever the donors say, it is final and fully legal.

The world's technology is advancing towards making the human resources more effective. Latest technology has become easier to implement, less expensive to invest and more suited to the infrastructure. Against this auspicious background, the work of our technologists is apt to become much more easier.

We suppose that as engineers of Bangladesh you have studied various techniques to build a durable house for the poor people at low cost, and have thought to supply the materials to build the type of

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Let me cite an example. We have so far spent Tk 350 crore on consultants to plan flood control measures. Who will not be tempted to be a party to this costly paperwork?

Who are the Clients of the Technocrats?

Who are the clients? The technocrats will study in order to serve whom? To sell their talents to the World Bank and other donors? To advise the central govt? To direct the village administration? To support the fortunate quarters? Or to serve the poor?

Before being employed, one must need know one's duties to his employer. One has to set his principles according to the employers' expectations. In the obtaining circumstances, it

is not absurd to mention that the World Bank and other donor agencies are directly and indirectly the clients of our technocrats. So, the technologists are preparing themselves accordingly and there is nothing to be amazed at this outcome.

What Should You and Your Friends can do Together

Now you all are busy with the planning for the future. Maybe, some of you will initiate an action research programme to devise a technology for the community so that none remains in starvation during the period of *Kartik Chaitra*. I guess you will dedicate your own income and free hours for the purpose.

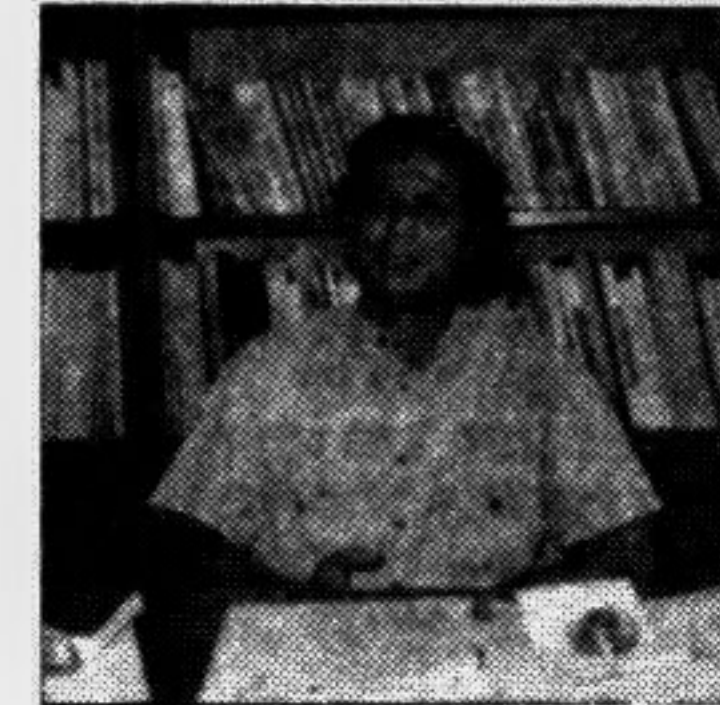
Some of you might have thought to run "Mechanical Camps" in the Boro season like your doctor friends who run "Eye clinics". You will do them so that the engines do not stop in the season due to mechanical

Creating obstacle for people seems to be the sacred duty of the "government." If a citizen has the idea that the function of a government is to punish the good and look after the wrong-doers, it would not be surprising. To break the law seems to be the habitual right of the government. Those who function near the government seem to have taken it for granted similar is their right also. The government seems to be a huge oppressive machine to inflict more sufferings to people.

Others will direct "Electrical Camps" for the irrigation pumps and industries so that they remain active without any electrical malfunctioning.

Like the "free clinics" of your doctor friends, you are also planning on designing houses, selecting building materials and advising the poor on the building techniques free of cost. In the slums and villages, hope you will plan a combined housing facilities with sanitation, electricity, drinking water, school and health centre.

Some of you might have been thinking that you will open "Technical Advisory Squad" in serious places and make the technological developments accessible for all. Without neglecting canal excavation, you are rather thinking to prescribe methods so that the programme brings prosperity to all. Furthermore, you desire to draw a conclusion on the conflict between canal excavation and road carpeting and sketch an elaborate plan so that these two projects complement each other. Some may be thinking that during the natural calamities, they will send "Technical Squads" to the affected areas so that the rehabilitation programme gears up through building



houses, providing electricity and power supply, constructing the roads and establishing communication facilities. Moreover, you may be thinking of alternative plans so that these facilities cannot be damaged so easily in future.

Indian Eggs

While talking about technological innovation cannot resist myself from, raising the issue of Indian eggs. This issue has angered all of us. For the first time I experienced that the people are talking of the basic

economic issues, while doing their daily household marketing. For this grand success I give a big hand to the importers of Indian eggs. We had been slapped and pushed from our surroundings, but that could not wake us from our slumber and stagnation. With the import of Indian eggs, we for the first time discovered wrinkles on our foreheads.

There should be an Alliance among the Govt, Universities & the Business Community:

We are to create unity among ourselves. We should make an alliance among the govt, business community and the universities. We should change the customs and relations. The govt should not sit rigidly with an emperor like gesture, the university teachers should not remain as the hypothetical thinkers, the businessmen should not search for quick fringe benefits and



profits with glittering eyes. Each one of them should regard each other as friends and devote their intellect and industry together to combat other's impediments. We should enact new laws to avoid delaying and harassing people.

Please assist in removing all bottleneck

Creating obstacle for people seems to be the sacred duty of the "government." If a citizen has the idea that the function of a government is to punish the good and look after the wrong-doers, it would not be surprising. To break the law seems to be the habitual right of the government. Those who function near the government seem to have taken it for granted similar is their right also. The government seems to be a huge oppressive machine to inflict more sufferings to people.

We are caught in our own trap

The government should implement, save spread and preserve this system. Those who break the rule should not be let off the hook. The government should be a source of inspiration. The government should be of a positive nature not of a negative one.

Whereas, wherever you go, you will find patriotic people, among the politicians, government employees, university teachers, businessmen.

We dare put our own thoughts and perspectives. Thus, the knowledge that is supposed to open our eyes and broaden our minds, has in the long run, crippled our minds and made us blind. Instead of our own eyes, we are with the programmed eyes, being fully aware of the consequences. Our thoughts have taken the format of other people's minds. The students are acquiring bookish knowledge in the universities, instead of gaining the light of education in true sense of the term.

It is only the youth community who can lift the living standard of the have not to a reasonable level. The lower class have been stuck in the mud and that mud can be eliminated successfully through establishing their rights in nation building policies and by providing them with sufficient tools of modern technology.

A budget is not simply a number-game concerning collection and allocation of funds. Such numbers can be purposeful only when they reflect certain purposes in terms of promoting certain kinds of economic and social activities and restraining others. The purposes should, in turn, be derived from national goals, ideally set through a process anchored on the prevailing socio-economic realities and shaped by people's needs and aspirations. Although a budget (revenue budget and annual development programme - ADP) is for one year, it must be so prepared as to be a building block for a process towards realizing those national goals. In Bangladesh, two overriding goals are sustainable economic growth and poverty alleviation. Indeed, it is now well known that while growth is important for poverty alleviation it is not a sufficient condition. Two basic concerns underpinning the sustainability question are protection of the natural base of the economy (environment) with a view to ensuring the economy's sound growth at present and in future and an equitable distribution of growth taking place for an orderly progress of society.

Both are very complex and contentious issues. The guiding canons of the currently ruling paradigm of market economy are privatization. The forthcoming budget will surely be formulated within that framework, and will contain proposals to carry the process further. One will have to wait until the budget is unfolded to know the proposed pace and dimensions of the process and how will the proposals impact on the national goals indicated above. No doubt those who have faith that market forces are the best means of solving socio-economic problems will find the budget as proposed admirable. Also, party political adherents and sympathizers will no doubt support it, often as a matter of course. On the other hand, those who are concerned that market forces may further strengthen the hands of the already strong economic actors, and put the mitigation of mass poverty and unemployment in the back seat may have many questions to ask. Politicians belonging to opposition parties and sympathizers of those parties will no doubt find the budget unacceptable, again not infrequently as a matter of course. In reality, the budget pro-

Budget 1993 Let There be an Open Debate

by Qazi Kholiqzaman Ahmad

posals offered will neither be unmixted good nor all bad when judged objectively with reference to prevailing socio-economic conditions and the urgency that is attached to promotion of economic growth, poverty alleviation and large-scale employment creation. The tone and tenor of the these are the direct outcome of the policy of establishing free market economy and the structural adjustment and other programmes being implemented to that end. It may be expected that the budget will spell a more vigorous pursuit of the market economy-focused goals and adjustments. It is certainly better to have such a large foreign exchange reserve than the vulnerability that a precarious reserve position spells. At the same time it must be understood that for a heavily aid dependent country like Bangladesh, there is no real benefit to be derived from idle reserves. What is important is to manage the reserves in a manner that international confidence in the country's external economic relations is not eroded and, at the same time, surplus resources are put to uses beneficial to the country. Here of course the question is whether or not there is genuine demand for foreign exchange. Although I do not know the facts of the matter, but demand should be a constraint in a country where acceleration of economic growth requires increasing imports. The commitment of the rather large foreign aid this year is surely a big morale booster for the government in as much as it amounts to a donor certificate in support of the economic policy directions that the government is pursuing. In fact, the aid pipeline is of the order of a huge 5.5 billion US dollars and the annual aid utilization is of the order of 1.5-1.8 billion US dollars. The projected growth rate of some 5 per cent is certainly welcome. One hopes that it materializes and is not revised downward later on. In any case, a weather favoured agricultural bumper crop is a major reason for this relatively high economic growth rate. And one cannot expect that weather will be similarly bountiful every time. Moreover, the collapse of food grain prices in the wake of bumper crop raises yet another contentious issue that needs to be addressed to stem a backlash and support further agricultural growth. Moving on, naturally the budget proposals, relating to both revenue collection and expenditure (both on revenue and development heads) allocation, will imply burdens and benefits and discrimination. The question to ask here is: how will those burdens and benefits be shared and discrimination endured? In a society where the majority is absolutely poor and income distribution is highly skewed, it must be ensured that the distribution of the burdens and benefits and discriminatory consequences alleviate rather than accentuate poverty and deprivation. At the same time, growth must accelerate to enlarge the total cake. The challenge is very intriguing for a precariously resource poor country like Bangladesh. The country is entrapped in low saving, low foreign aid disbursement and low investment syndrome. Add two other major crises, viz large and rapidly growing population and environmental degradation, that this country faces, the challenge compounds and becomes absolutely mind boggling. In this piece it is my intention to remind all concerned that society faces a very difficult situation. This demands objectivity and sincerity from those who have been entrusted by the people and/or are being paid by the people to manage their affairs. The observed competition in the political firmament of the country for scoring political points over opponents through demagoguery and rhetoric are in fact a cruel joke to the poor mass of the population. Issues must be addressed by the political parties with carefully thought out policies and programmes. Others (various professional groups, industrialists, business community) who wish to participate in the debate must also come with concrete policy suggestions and practical proposals with open mind and without being prejudiced by their professional or group interests and keeping the realities facing the country firmly in perspective. Let a debate be conducted around forthcoming budget and annual development programme by people of different persuasions with objectivity and constructively as a consensus building process on fundamental issues facing the nation, shunning trivialities and frivolity.