

Link with Mongla — Need for Action

It could be a gem of an entry in Ripley's Believe It Or Not. Still it has so far failed to surprise a nation which has been at once the most credulous and the least trusting among nations.

And Mongla is not connected with Khulna, the big city, it is a gateway to — by railway. Then what is the port there for in Mongla? What is it doing out there?

It is said that the railways had come to the subcontinent before even many European nations built them — a century and a half back during the viceregency of Lord Dalhousie, not for any love the British rulers had for the colonial natives.

Perhaps we can attribute the same designs as the British to the Pakistanis when, as published in The Daily Star of Wednesday, they, after opening up the port at Mongla, went for rail connections with Khulna and thereby to the whole of our western region.

That these things would still take long to perform cannot be used as an excuse for developmental declaration in that region. As we can at present pump enough power to the western region, if we want to, there is no strong impediment to a selective industrialisation there.

Let us lay the foundation of this absolutely necessary process by connecting Mongla and Khulna by railway and after that let us also divert more ships to Mongla from Chittagong thus relieving the latter and ridding it of the dangers of holding a monopoly.

Outrage in Nigeria

Washington is absolutely right in describing the annulment of the Nigerian presidential election as "outrageous" and in threatening to reconsider its relations with Africa's most populous country.

The annulment — officially described as suspension — of the polls came on Wednesday under the orders of the country's military ruler Gen. Ibrahim Babangida on the pretext that the judiciary of Nigeria had challenged the result of the election.

Nigeria which faces manifold problems is plunged into a crisis. It is important that international pressure is stepped up on Babangida either to withdraw his decree or to hand over power to a transitional civilian government.

THE much heralded and indeed expected industrial take-off due to liberalisation of industrial policy has never come about. Nor is there any sign that it will do so in the near future.

That industries becoming sick is mostly our own doing and should be admitted in the first place to keep the record straight. Then the sincere investigation to look for the viable and non-viable industries can reveal the true picture of the industrial sector.

For the first time, the government is seriously considering the establishment of an institution similar to the one India floated in 1985 under the name, Board of Industrial and Financial Reconstruction.

PEOPLE'S participation has become a catchword. It was shaping up, first, in obscure discussions among intellectuals to be sold as the standard baggage of development rhetorics.

However, in reality, the underdeveloped countries had to follow the orthodox idea — what has come to be termed as 'modernisation approach', stressing the injection of capital inputs from outside which would result in 'take off' and external spread of benefits throughout the system.

Following the profound disillusionment with the established development strategies, people's participation along with 'participatory evaluation, participatory action research, participatory management, participatory form of planning' has become an all pervading cliché in 'development doctrine'.

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Treatment of scabies. Sir, A letter by Drs H B Codrington and S E Coghlan of Friends of Bangladesh regarding scabies as epidemic (April 12, 1993) in The Daily Star drew my attention as well as interest as they were proposing the use of Lindane at 20:1 dilution for the treatment of children suffering from scabies.

SICK INDUSTRIES

Practical Steps Needed for Recovery

by Anu Mahmud

painful, has nevertheless to be taken to save the industries concerned. Where all measures to salvage an industry appear to be doomed in failure, the question of any concession does not simply arise.

Industrial Policy '91 ventures to find out the problems of sick industries and also the necessary steps those will be taken to solve the identified problems. With the fixing of the targets government set up a high powered 'Sick Industries Rehabilitating and Reviving Cell' in June '91.

According to statistics of Bangladesh Economic Survey Report, 22,000 small, medium and large, local and foreign industrial units have been approved. Among these, 17,000 were approved during the nine years of Ershad regime.

parts have pointed out that, due to various causes, the extent of sick industries in our country has reached to 70 per cent of those approved. According to this statistics the number of sick industries stands up to nearly 15,000. On the basis of a survey conducted by the Board of Finance and Investment, it has been noticed that 45,000 industrial units are traceless among the 70,000 approved from '85 to '90.

Reasons for Going Sick. Dhaka Chamber of Commerce and Industries has pointed out that these sick industries have created concern among the banks, financial institutions, industrial entrepreneurs, creditors and share holders.

(1) Faulty evaluation of industrial projects. (2) Financial mismanagement. (3) Lack of smooth monitoring of credit by financial institutions. (4) Lack of knowledge related to productive technology. (5) Non-utilisation of productive capacity. (6) Unfavourable atmosphere regarding industrial relation.

- (7) Frequent changes of government policies. (8) Higher prices of gas and electricity. (9) Frequent import of foreign goods and pervading blackmarketing. (10) Increase cost of production due to inflationary pressure. (11) Unfavourable market condition. (12) Bureaucratic complexity. (13) Weak infrastructure. (14) High rate of bank interest. (15) Shortage of essential raw materials. (16) Imbalance between demand and supply condition.

Increasing Sick Industries

The number of sick industries are continuously increasing. The re-cycling of invested resources is virtually absent. The established industries have failed to see the face of profit. The efficiency of labour is also decreasing day by day.

The real picture of the industrial sector is that from '82 to '90 hundreds of crores of Taka has been drawn in the name of 'industrial revolution'. But this huge amount was neither invested nor any step taken in that direction.

derstanding with the authorities. To evade the burden of such huge amount of outstanding loans, those industries were mentioned as sick and remain only in the documents.

Textile Weaving: A Different Case

The small-scale textile weaving industries have become sick due to circumstances beyond control of entrepreneurs. The mills have become sick due to economic size, lack of working capital, unbalanced machinery, loss of local market to smuggled fabric, repeated natural calamities, loss of production due to chronic power trouble and anti-autocracy movement.

The textile sector as a whole and specialised textile sub-sector in particular have, however, vast potentialities. The whole sector, after meeting our total demand of all types of fabric, has the potentiality to export, through our export-oriented garment industries and also directly, fabrics worth no less than Taka 10 billion in a year.

(I) Take-over of the aided projects by the banks so that the banks make no further claims on the entrepreneurs. (II) It is not at all an easy task for any entrepreneur to

repay the principal amount of loans in seven years. So, the aided units should be allowed to pay 25 per cent of the accumulated general interest after calculating the same at 10 per cent rate of interest since establishment of the mill.

(III) The principal amount of credits or loans should be allowed to be repaid in 10 years and the overdue interest amount thus calculated should be kept in separate non-interest bearing accounts.

(IV) The rates of interest on accumulated credits should be within tolerable limits and arrangements should be made for re-payment of the principal amount and interest thereon, kept in a separate blocked or non-interest bearing accounts within a period of 15 years for the specialised textile mills and power loom industries.

Central Bank's Directives

Under the directive of the central bank to development finance institutions and commercial banks, waiver of 100 per cent general interest amount is to be allowed to "defaulter industrial loanees" in case they clear off the whole outstanding amount thus calculated, within 45 days.

For the development and smooth expansion of our industrial sector, it is necessary to take practical steps and prompt action to assist the sick industries.

It's a Paper Packed People's Participation

by Rashed Mahmud Titumir

its birth two decades ago, the country has increasingly become dependent on foreign debt and aid, in order to keep pace with the orthodox strategy.

There already exists a large number of economic literatures as how the donors, through the mechanism of foreign aid, attempt to influence the economic policies of the recipient countries.

In evaluating the role of the donors in influencing the domestic economic policies of Bangladesh, a study conducted for the Planning Commission, concluded: "In Bangladesh donors have tended to freely express their views on the suitability of various policies enacted by the government of the day, the quality of the government of the administration and their political integrity.

no accountability system for bureaucrats to the public, who remain static in every regime. People-government inter action is extremely poor.

Misuse of development resources for kickbacks and patronage, with collusion or knowing acquiescence of concerned officials and donors became quite common in recent years, allegedly. The malice was exacerbated by total lack of public accountability.

While field officers remain responsible for implementation, much of their power and autonomy has been taken away and where responsibility was given, the required authority was vested.

their contribution to Bangladesh's development efforts give them a right to dictate how it should conduct its development affairs."

A strong and competent planning apparatus and its implementation capability are the soul and guiding light of development. But in Bangladesh, plan documents are little more than a collection of oft-repeated pious goals, backed neither by a credible strategy nor adequate resources.

There is no indepth review of the government's operation and

and target group participation is relegated to relatively inconsequential and minor decision-making. Of course, even in this minor participation, the guiding hand of NGO worker is ever present.

So, it can be said that NGOs would seem to be placing their potential services in penetrating rural civil society to contain structural instability. Given the NGO rhetoric on radical transformation, this would seem counter-productive.

Target group members are not involved in financial decisions regarding expenditure of NGO funds.

The general picture that emerges from fieldwork of the study is a situation in which a small executive group of the NGO makes all major decisions

as every one rushes to perform (compete) in market, class solidarity is buried deep under the rhetoric of 'people power'. Instead new factions (via NGOs), new line of dependence are created.

If a political party is perceived as a development agent, the philosophy of the party itself will decide the development concept of that given party.

However, the programme and political position of the major parties exhibit a common limitation. Solemn declarations of lofty objective have been made, but a concrete analysis of the specific strategies, steps to be taken to realise the objectives, problems and prospect are absent in all cases and there is hardly any democratic practise inside these parties.

With these brief but substantive views, one gains the ground to ask where the people are! It would not be too harsh to comment that the promoters of 'people's participation' are perhaps following the Goebble theory that if you repeat a lie for hundred times, people will start believing it.

grievance, complaint, to disseminate information and to exchange ideas and views on different subjects.

The ministers and the public leaders make public speeches and issue press releases, the bureaucrats address seminars and conferences and the affluent hold press conferences but the members of the public can only afford to write letters to the editors of newspapers.

We would request our public leaders and bureaucrats to kindly make time to take necessary action on the letters written in the newspapers by the members of the public instead of wasting time, energy and public money on ostentatious and gaudy display of activities and performances that ensure and guarantee peace, progress and prosperity for the 120 million people of Bangladesh.

O H Kabir Dhaka-1203

To the Editor...

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Treatment of scabies

Sir, A letter by Drs H B Codrington and S E Coghlan of Friends of Bangladesh regarding scabies as epidemic (April 12, 1993) in The Daily Star drew my attention as well as interest as they were proposing the use of Lindane at 20:1 dilution for the treatment of children suffering from scabies.

Secondary lesions like papules and pruritus are however caused by cell-mediated hypersensitivity reaction to the mite or its products. Pruritus or itching develops typically two to three weeks after initial infestation, tends to be most pronounced at night and may persist for two weeks after successful treatment, until the mite antigens have been removed.

private antibacterial therapy. Now, according to the British National Formulary, Lindane and Malathion are the treatments of choice for scabies but Lindane should be avoided in children, during pregnancy or breast feeding, and in patients with low body weight or history of epilepsy.

Benzyl benzoate should be avoided in children. According to Martindale's the Extra Pharmacopoeia, monosulfiram is considered to be suitable for children. After observing its role against mite in as early as 1936, ICI undertook research to develop the pharmaceutical forms as a remedy for scabies.

Clinical studies using monosulfiram (such as Tetmosol of ICI) and benzyl benzoate were carried out in Brazil, where monosulfiram was found to be superior to benzyl benzoate and with apparently no side effect except some isolated instances of acetaldehyde syndrome in patients who have consumed alcohol during monosulfiram therapy.

firm preparation is about Tk 25 which (as marketed) should be diluted to 2 to 3 parts of water before use. The cost of 120 ml (as marketed) benzyl benzoate is about Tk 19.00 which doesn't need any dilution. Considering cure rate the total cost of therapy of monosulfiram is comparable with that of benzyl benzoate.

Accordingly to some Brazilian authors, low costs, absence of severe side-effects, proven parasiticidal, antipruritic properties and the speed of action elect monosulfiram as the treatment of choice. Moreover, this preparation is also effective in clearing pediculosis, which can complicate a scabies infestation.

In conclusion, Lindane, although safe if used as advised, is one of the most intrinsically toxic compounds of the commonly used scabicides which precludes its use in neonates, infants, nursing mothers, etc. Benzyl benzoate should be avoided in children. Commercially monosulfiram is the least toxic and can be used by all the latter classes. This feature is particularly important for a highly contagious disease such

as scabies where all close contacts of all the infected patients should also be treated.

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Anonymous letters

Sir, I fully endorse the views of the learned writer Ms Nahusha Kamal when she says "Anonymous letters or telephone have saved the lives of thousands of people all over the world. They have also saved millions of state and public properties from ruination."

In my humble opinion each and every letter whether anonymous or with name and address of the writer needs to be duly attended, considered and necessary action taken by the authorities concerned in the interest of the public service.