

ADP Implementation Hiccup

The implementation status of foreign-aided projects in the ADP at the end of the first quarter looks far from encouraging. An ERD review has revealed that utilisation of foreign aid has declined from Taka 1284 crore during July-October 1992 to Taka 1032 crore during the corresponding period of the current financial year. Last year's performance was bad enough so that there is no telling how disappointing it is this year.

Waking up to an emerging situation and doing something concrete to bail out of it have seemingly meant two different things for us. We had all the figures handy of the yawning gaps between allocated and realised investments and the brainstorming sessions on possible recipes were far too many with occasional doses of donor inputs as well. Yet far from bettering aid utilisation we have slid to something less than before. In other words, the information-driven stimulus or motivation has been wanting.

A serious cumulative effect can be carry-over projects with the attendant cost escalations. One other implication that we read into the situation is the aid pipeline bulge that the donor community points to whenever we request a higher pledge of assistance from them. To what extent aid disbursement snags or the funding squeezes contributed to the same is well worth taking up with the donors. For our part, the domestic counterpart funding for foreign-aided projects should be markedly improved with a much greater internal resources mobilisation now. While this should take care of a hitherto persistent donor complaint on this count, it should entail some self-analysis as to why despite this apparent advantage our ADP implementation is lagging behind.

The point at issue is we have to make up for the deficiencies in the implementation machinery — almost double-quick to meet the physical targets of development by the year-end. The real bottleneck has been the obviously lacking delegation of financial and administrative authority in the domain of implementation. In preparing projects, 32 signatures are said to be required on a file moving upwards and, obviously 31, as it travelled back. As for a decision on project implementation, the number of mandatory signatures can be higher. It is therefore inexplicable why the committee appointed by the Prime Minister a year ago to devise procedural changes for an adequate delegation of authority towards rapid project implementation has not produced any result as yet. We think there should be designated project directors fully empowered to accelerate the pace of implementation.

Our predicament has been the dual task of effecting structural changes and carrying forward the actual development process all at once. But we are in a race with time — on a yearly basis, that too. The delegation of authority can be achieved soon enough. It would be a bit intriguing though to raise the question of service reorganisation when the compelling need is here to make more than a success of the remainder of the current ADP. There can be no excuse that faster development has to wait until the services have been reorganised.

A Smooth Grand Show

Curtain came down on the Sixth SAF Games on Monday evening. It was good while it was there — a kind of induced wellbeing. Now that it is over what are we left with? A mighty heave costing so much in money and nerves is usually justified by the pay-offs it makes till long after the show is over. In fact international sportfests of this size change a nation's sporting temper and acuity into something irreversibly better. It is with that prospect we should now have sighed with satisfaction. But there is no way to be sure about that. All we can be certain of is, well, we can mount eye-filling pageants and spend an awful lot, work up a national frenzy. But about the thing all this is about — sport — possibly we shall be marking time at the same spot.

Bangladesh's football disaster and the infamous glitches involving our national flag and the national anthem — undoubtedly acts of sabotage against not so much the Games as against our sovereign nation — would qualify for a wreath of shame and penitence. The whole shaming spectacle has been lent an extra brilliance by one who has been called the queen of the meet — the gilded-three-times-over Shiny Wilson. In fact, she symbolised the best point of the Dhaka meet — no doping, no controversies and acrimonies and all friendship. Except for a few flare-ups of mean and provincial enthusiasms at certain indoor venues, everything went off with a no-hitch clockwork sureness, a thing of beauty by itself. We want to include in this compliment to the organisers, congratulations to those that visualised the whole big thing. It was so very reassuring to have such a grand thing materialise in a setting of national disarray in many aspects of life and work. The opening and closing ceremonies together easily constitute the biggest ever cultural meet of this nation. And the best produced too. One has of course to discount the matter of taste and class, quality and art in such feasts for a motley horde of uninitiated ones. This notwithstanding, the games were the single biggest cultural enterprise of this nation showing our capacity for such massive staging of songs and dance and art. While tendering the credits to where it belongs, one cannot but ask why should such a cultural happening be made only by way of decorations to a sporting event? Cannot SAARC hold seven-nation cultural festivals just on this scale — or even grander ones? This poser is a measure of the undeniable success of the meet.

From Xavier to Pushpamali and Bahadur Prasad to Damayanthi Darsha to little Abhijith, came regaling performances making the meet memorable. But for the extra-ordinary showing of the Bangladesh shooters, the hosts would have been left with nothing better than biting their hands. Outstripping all that was good in it, the Games couldn't be more warmly memorable to the tens of millions in the host nation than it was instantly made by a 21-year-old from Dhamrai. Bimal ran to clinch the prestigious 100 metres sprint in 10.61 seconds eclipsing by a wide 0.07 second the SAF record of Narayan.

We can handle such a task. Proven. But this is irrelevant as long as we can better neither Pakistan nor even Sri Lanka. And at the end of it all we must seriously brood over the sobering fact that all this amounts to nothing by world standards. When shall we subcontinentals earn some relevance to world sports?

THAT the foreign secretaries of India and Pakistan should meet on January 1 to discuss Kashmir is a sort of poetic justice. Forty-six years ago, on that date, the two countries stopped fighting in Kashmir at the UN behest. Since then they have fought three wars but have failed to evolve a permanent peace treaty.

The general impression is that the forthcoming meeting will be another sterile exercise. Yet the manner in which both sides have moved from their implacable positions generates some hope. Prime Minister Narasimha Rao said from the ramparts of Red Fort on Independence Day that Kashmir was an integral part of India. But a few months later he writes to Pakistan Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto that India is willing to have talks on Kashmir, conceding that the territory's future is still to be settled. No sovereign country discusses the status of its own tract of land unless there is a dispute.

Benazir too has blown hot and cold. She first resurrected the UN resolutions at different forums in Pakistan and abroad, calling for right of self-determination for Kashmiris. But when it came to issuing the joint communiqué with India, Pakistan eschewed reference to the UN resolutions. The communiqué mentions only the Shimla agreement, while announcing that the two governments have agreed to resume bilateral talks at foreign secretary level.

Not only that, Islamabad gave up the idea of moving a resolution at the UN on 'India's violation of human rights in Kashmir.' True, after 83 members said that they would abstain it was touched and go. Still Pakistan had mustered 58 votes against India's 52.

Islamabad must have made its own calculations to come to the conclusion that it was no use picking on New Delhi at a time when it had taken the initiative for the talks. Also, Pakistan, despite its rhetoric, did not want to miss the opportunity. This is the first time in 30 years that the two countries will formally take up Kashmir. It was vainly discussed at six sittings in 1963 between Swaran Singh and Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, then foreign ministers.

Nine years later at Shimla, the line of ceasefire in Kashmir was converted into the line of control, with minor adjustments. But that was a fallout of the Bangladesh war. Even then the two sides promised in the

Kashmir: Cause or Consequence?

Shimla agreement that they would meet to have a final settlement of Jammu and Kashmir for the establishment of a 'durable peace.'

Subsequently, there have been some superficial attempts to deal with the subject. The late Rajiv Gandhi met with Benazir at Islamabad and Rao with Nawaz Sharif, then the Pakistan prime minister, at some forums abroad. But the problem has remained unresolved.

Foreign secretaries are probably expected to pick up the thread where Swaran Singh and Bhutto had left it of. There is not much to pick up. But if they want to run after the shadows, they should bear in mind why Swaran Singh and Bhutto had failed. They just could not find a formula which would sell both in India and Pakistan.

Now there is a third party to reckon with. In the last four years Srinagar has also come into the picture. The government of India has assured Yasin Malik, the JKLF leader, while persuading him to break his fast unto death, that 'the people of entire Jammu and Kashmir will be consulted and involved before reaching a settlement on Kashmir.'

Touching all the three points — New Delhi, Islamabad and Srinagar — is a difficult job. But this is what is required of foreign secretaries if they want to effect durable peace. Perhaps, they can begin with finding out minimum common factor and then gradually build upon it. The decks clogged for 40 years cannot be cleared at one go.

Nawaz Sharif has said that no compromise on Kashmir would be acceptable. Benazir has also been speaking harshly, probably for domestic consumption. But there cannot be any settlement which is not a product of compromise. Why the solution has eluded India and Pakistan is the obduracy on both sides. They have taken lofty positions, without realising how far one country can go to accommodate the other.

Fortunately, there is a sea change in Indian opinion. Unlike Pakistan, there has not been a single dissenting voice in the country on the talks on Kashmir. Whether it is because of the unending militancy or the growing feeling that the force is no solution to counter the people's alienation, the climate in

India is in favour of making concessions for a settlement, provided it does not mean the secession of the valley. There is also wide realisation that the country cannot progress without peace in the sub-continent.

Islamabad may miss the opportunity if its perception is that India has offered talks to seek Pakistan's help to extricate

prove to be yet another meeting, the likes of which lie buried beneath the pile of failures.

It appears that New Delhi's desire to solution has encouraged an over-simplified view of the Indian predicament. The country is not tottering, nor is the militancy succeeding. True, India wants a solution. But there are limits beyond which it

cannot go. Whatever the settlement, New Delhi will have to sell it to the people and Parliament. Both are willing to go far to bury the hatchet with Pakistan. But if Islamabad insists on claiming Kashmir as 'an unfinished part of partition,' India's stance can become tough.

That is the reason why many wonder whether Kashmir is a cause of souring relations between India and Pakistan or a consequence. The bitterness of the past has come to influence the affairs of the two countries so much that they cannot get out of the vicious circle in which they are in. Their hostility is now proverbial. And it is getting so sharpened that the danger of another round of hostilities looms larger than before.

This does not, however, mean that India should draw back from its obligations. For example, it should voluntarily redeploy its forces defending the Siachen glacier. Why to wait for an agreement with Islamabad? What is not strategically important is not worth fighting for, particularly when it means more estrangement with Pakistan.

Since even the process of normalisation is difficult to begin, the deployment of forces at Siachen glacier may win in Pakistan such favourable opinion as is necessary for its resilience on Kashmir. It is time that the two countries realise the futility of their hostility, which is distasteful to both.

verting the best of resources — and efforts — to destructive purposes.

One fails to understand why Islamabad is, wanting to raise the question of Wullar Lake barrage at the secretaries' meeting. The building of the barrage, although for the exclusive benefit of Kashmir, has remained suspended for the last two decades. New Delhi has no intention to pursue the works in the face of Pakistan's objections. Similarly, there is an attempt to revive the dispute on sea limits.

The Indo-Pakistan boundaries were demarcated by the Boundary Commission in 1962. However, the demarcation was done up to a point north of Sir Creek. The Creek area was left undemarcated, as at that time there existed no territorial dispute. New Delhi may be willing to make concessions here provided Islamabad allows the Wullar Lake barrage to come up. All this demands a frame of mind which is willing to accommodate. Once the two countries imbibe such an attitude, the problem of Kashmir too will not be intractable.

BETWEEN THE LINES

Kuldip Nayar writes from New Delhi

Itself from the situation it faces in the valley. Benazir has made the same point. In an interview to a monthly from Karachi, she has said that Islamabad cannot be expected to bail India out of a problem that it had got into.

If this is the brief that Pakistan foreign secretary has got from his government, the talks, scheduled for two days, may not last for two minutes. It will

known their preference for a dictator. The reason is plain and simple. The country, the respondents believe, can make progress only under a dictator — no one else.

Still more enlightening it would be if the considered views of Indian villagers could be available on the subject under scrutiny. So long as that will be eagerly awaited by all who have followed this queer development, we in the meantime can toy with the idea of deducing the possible implications of the outcome of the poll. The first question that will be asked is why the urban populace in India has made a preference we in Bangladesh look at with disgust. Can it be that the Indian city people, more informed as they are than their village counterparts, are bored with a democratic dispensation and are therefore desperate for a change — no matter if it means a rule by an autocrat?

It could be quite possible if the population covered by the opinion poll were unlettered and without experience of a considerably stable democratic tradition. Moreover, the wind of

democracy is now sweeping terrains and geographic regions so long lorded over by despots and military strongmen. The Indian urban people's choice of a dictator just at this time runs counter to the trend. Then this cannot be a caprice, at any rate. The poll itself gives some clues to the bizarre preference when it does not forget to take into account the reaction of the respondents to the country's corruption. No less than 55 per cent of the respondents have blamed the politicians for corruption, only 10 per cent the businessmen and 27 per cent find both at fault.

Indeed, the low esteem for the Indian politicians explains why the people opt for a dictator. What the pollsters have failed to mention is whether the one of their choice would be benevolent or oppressive. The resentment shown by the city residents is understandable and one may even sympathise with the disgruntled people who have a bitter experience of bureaucratic red-tapism and corruption. But question remains if the choice will be a better one. Our long stint with this mon-

strosity however makes us 'once bitten twice shy'. The Indians with no such experience would not do particularly bad if they had a feel for it — albeit for a short while.

Considering their inexperience in this matter, can we make a great proposal for our mutual benefits? Their political system and tradition have so far failed to produce a single dictator. Only once did the late lamented Indira Gandhi try to be a bit despotic and with what a rebuff she was readily bundled out of powers by the electorate! Perhaps the Indians were not ready then for a dictator. This time they seem to have made up their minds. But there is none around who can help them now. So as a neighbouring friendly country, we are willing to help them out of this mess. We have a home-grown one for export, now languishing in jail, who can be a trouble-shooter. We offer to lend his service — also because the elaborate arrangements for taking care of him costs a big sum on our exchequer for nothing. The Indians should not mind to spend on him for the service he will render.

Indians Opt for a Dictator!

by Nilratan Halder

OPINION polls, nowadays carried on weird subjects, bring out weirder results. Sponsors who have money to spare and interests in peculiar traits of the human kind often hire the services of pollster agencies with proven credentials. Gallup Polls, Harris and Mori — to name a few — have earned for them an unrivalled credibility in projecting the trends of voting in yet-to-be-held national elections or of other denominators of life and living. Of course a few of the predictions miss the target by miles.

Until recently, opinion polls were a western phenomenon, but no longer. The craze has just caught up with the East as well. A less known marketing and research group in India conducted a poll on a subject that distinguishes itself for the novelty of the idea behind it. Eyewitness, a video news-magazine, sponsored the poll on the choice of a system of government among residents of India's five largest cities. Bombay, Calcutta, Delhi, Bangalore and Madras. It has come up with the most outlandish of results in that the majority of the city population have made

known their preference for a dictator. The reason is plain and simple. The country, the respondents believe, can make progress only under a dictator — no one else.

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Catholic church sainted John of Capistrano.

It will take a similar miracle, inspired by Allah, to protect the latter-day Ottomans of Sarajevo against their besiegers, who already occupy the hills surrounding the city.

The only difference between the offensive of five centuries ago and the present war is to be found in the imbalance between the forces involved.

The sultan of Vlad's time had at his disposition the most powerful army of the world — the same that had captured Constantinople. The Christian kings, despite the backing of Western Europe, were a negligible force.

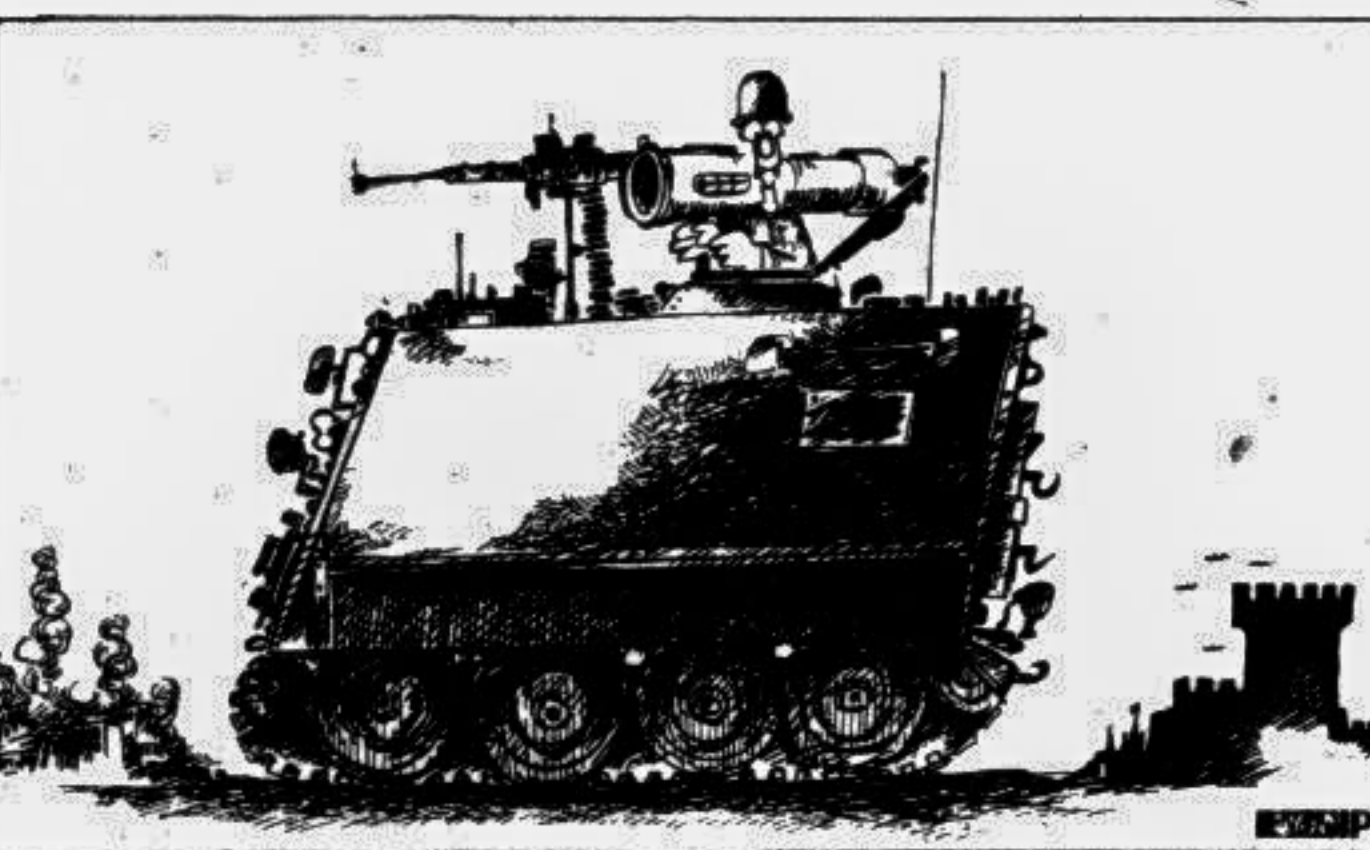
Today, the roles are reversed. The weakness of the Muslims has been exacerbated by the embargo decreed by the United Nations, and they are no match for the huge arsenal which fell into the hands of the Serbs and Croats with the disintegration of Yugoslavia.

We can only hope that the murderers of women and children in Bosnia-Herzegovina will face their own Nuremberg and be judged and punished for human rights violations.

ALFONSO LOPEZ MICHELESEN is now the leader of the Liberal Party in Colombia.

Balkan Dracula is Loose Again

The horror in the Balkans is yet another chapter in the region's blood-stained history that stretches back to the legendary Dracula, writes ex-Colombian president Alfonso Lopez Michelsen in this exclusive Inter Press Service column.



At times, they allied themselves with the Turks, recognising that the Ottoman Empire was more powerful than any European nation. But when the Moldavians or Hungarians had a military success they broke their alliance and sided with the Christians.

It was an interminable war, as difficult to understand today as it was then, despite all the technological communications advances.

Both sides killed each other with the same cruelty we see today. They raped enemies wives to carry on their race, destroyed their homes and set fire to everything they came across. Torture was their daily bread.

It is said Vlad impaled as many as 25,000 Turks on wooden stakes to frighten off the enemy. He roasted gypsies like lambs and let the survivors choose between eating others of their own religion or being eaten

themselves. Vlad Dracula was so blood-thirsty that when he was a prisoner of the King of Hungary, Matthias Corvino, he entertained himself by impaling rats and little birds he caught or bought in prison in Budapest.

The various ethnic groups killing each other in ex-Yugoslavia in 1993 are no more compassionate. Instinctively, perhaps because of their ancestry, they dream of nothing but exterminating the enemy and of frightening opponents to their proposals with the myth of their perversity.

Just as the world was forgetting the Nazi concentration camps and the outlawing of Jews, on the eve of the 21 century, we find in Eastern Europe a disregard for human rights as in the epoch of Dracula.

Is there some form of international law or protocol of the Geneva Convention that could stop this massacre?

The very names of today's battles echo those of the time of

Vlad the Impaler. It was in the camps of Kosovo and in Czebernica, which today has fallen to the Croats, that he learned the arts of war.

The siege of Sarajevo resembles in many ways that of Belgrade by the Ottoman sultan in the 16th century.

It is related that an army of 100,000 Muslims closed in on Belgrade, which had but 7,000 soldiers to defend itself and was the last bastion of Christianity before the march on Budapest.

Thus, it seemed on the verge of giving in when Juan de Capistrano, the most famous preacher of the Middle Ages, exhorted the peasants of the region to take arms to force the Turks to raise the siege.

With greater success than the troops of the United Nations, the improvised forces of Capistrano, about 25,000 in number, attacked the besieging forces from the rear, forcing them to withdraw. It was such an astounding feat that the

To the Editor...

Letters for publication in these columns should be addressed to the Editor and legibly written or typed with double space. For reasons of space, short letters are preferred, and all are subject to editing and cuts. Pseudonyms are accepted. However, all communications must bear the writer's real name, signature and address.

PROKRICHI's demands

Sir, I commend you for your editorial 'Parliament should debate PROKRICHI's demands' published on 12.12.93. Your rational suggestion to let this PROKRICHI-BCS affair be handled in a manner acceptable to both sides — a debate in the Parliament should be given a serious thought by the Government if it wants to extricate itself from the present dilemma. Demands, as put by the PROKRICHI have been made more or less understandable in the serial instalments published prior to the editorial, seem to be nothing unrealistic or unacceptable. And the Government must not show cold shoulder to the matter as the demands of the PROKRICHI count a reasonable ground, to some extent if not wholly.

As claimed by the PROKRICHI that the Prime Minister had initially committed to have accepted the four of the 17 demands, the question remains

what could be the reason that is holding the Government back from accepting as such. In a democratic country we cannot adhere to the vintage systems that had been introduced by the colonial British, which is by no means compatible with our present democratic system. Every one agrees that present crisis in our public administration demands a total reform for the sake of smooth functioning of our democratic Government. Like it or not, we have to accept what Parliament decides on this matter and the nation should be enlightened with the merits and demerits of the PROKRICHI demands.

Therefore, while the Government should show some respect to the claims made by the PROKRICHI, it should also not succumb to any ill advice of any petty groups or individuals, since any faux pas in this context may create a very unwarranted situation when whole nation might suffer due to deterioration of public service arising out of this.

Here, I must also refer to the opinion expressed by Azad Rahman on 21.12.93 in your daily. Though very much critical of PROKRICHI's demands, his apprehension regarding creation of Neo-bureaucracy must also not be taken lightly.

I appreciate once more that there could be no better way than letting the democratic system — the Parliament — to resolve the issue as soon as possible. The right time to act is now; any sort of procrastination in this respect would only make the matter more unpleasant.

Md Jalaluddin Iqbal
Mohammadpur, Dhaka

Electric bills

Sir, We would like to draw the attention of the PDB authority to accept the payment of electric bills either in cash or cheque from the industrial sector. At present cheques are not acceptable.

Tea industries are one of the major electricity consumers in the country. It causes much inconvenience to collect cash from one bank and deposit to another bank to pay the electric bills. In tea industries, bills are mostly above a lac Taka and it is not always safe to move with so much cash from one place to another.

We hope that the concerned

authority will pay due importance to this matter considering the inconvenience being caused to their valued consumers.

Mottus Samad Chowdhury
Phultola Tea Estate, Sylhet

National football team

Sir, Thousands of football fans really thought that their long held dream would surely be materialised this time. After failing to win the gold medal in football in the previous SAF Games, people thought, this time the National Team would not let them down. But what has happened? Bangladesh has lost against Nepal and the hopes of thousands were shattered.

Now, first of all, let's look at the standard of football in South Asia. A few years ago India was the strongest team in this region but gradually Bangladesh became stronger and in all the previous SAF Games our team was the favourite. Nepal and Sri Lanka were, let's say, far weaker than Bangladesh. Over the years, their football has improved while our standard has gone down rapidly.

We had to loose against Nepal which is most humiliating. Now, I would like to draw the attention of both the fans

and the concerned authority. Are you people really determined to improve the standard of our football or are you just too much concerned about your own interests? Why do we have to lose against Nepal? Anyone who has seen the match between Bangladesh and Nepal will certainly agree that the Nepalese displayed a better brand of football than the Bangladeshis.

My question is that how is it possible for the Nepalese to play better in our country where the crowd is on the native side? It is because their determination to win is not affected at any rate by a supportive or, for that matter, an unsupportive crowd. The day has arrived to realize the bitter truth. Our football team is no longer capable of producing any good results. In the World Cup qualifying round the team's horrid result was humiliating enough. Now losing against Nepal should be the limit of it.

Much has been written through these columns to draw the attention of the people concerned. But it seems that it has yielded nothing. I am sure that there is no use telling them as they are rather willfully blind. So what is that should be done? Money spent to modernize the team is misused and we can certainly say that the responsible people for this are not pun-

ished. Bangladesh, in the arena of sports, is little known and in the present state of affairs, I personally think there is little possibility. Meanwhile, our neighbouring countries are well-known for their sporting feats in cricket and hockey. These countries are also known to have excellence in tennis, billiard squash and a lot of other games.

While we are known to be not too honest a people, corruption and mismanagement are common here. So doubt remains as to how is the money assigned to for the development of our football is spent? Why can't we have an excellent coach from Germany or Italy? Why does our footballers play so good for their clubs and when it comes to the National Team they turn out to be failures? Why don't we have any good international result? Why aren't the players given proper training before any tournament? These and many other questions will probably remain unanswered. As long as there are apparently fewer numbers of sensible people in the authority, there is little hope.

Towheed Feroze
New DOHS, Dhaka