

People are not Pawns

With the doctors' strike dragging into its 10th day, the country's medicare system is on the brink of total collapse.

In the unending episode there are two parties — the government and the medical practitioners.

Many a tragic death could be avoided had the government moved fast and tried to solve the problem across the table.

The striking doctors have ignored one fundamental principle which is that theirs is a profession unlike any other.

On the other hand, this government now has to prove it is in control. There is no point conceding to unrealistic demands of any interested quarters.

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Message from Los Angeles

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Political and Economic Factors behind the Flow of Aid

by Judith Randel and Tony German

For many countries, aid and development cooperation is determined more by historical, political and economic considerations than by the needs of poor people and issues of global sustainability and interdependence.

THE pattern of bilateral assistance from Development Assistance Committee (DAC) donors shows great variation and no clear focus on poverty.

The 'long tail' of the British aid programme and the distribution of French and Belgian aid clearly have as much to do with the colonial past as with present day development priorities.

One indication of the weak focus of DAC donors on poverty and vulnerability is the fact that only the Nordic countries and Portugal devote more than one third of their aid to the LDCs.

The failure of donors to allocate funds to countries where the need is greatest is even better illustrated by the figures on ODA received per poor person.

El Salvador, Honduras, Botswana, and Tunisia all received 100 times as much aid per poor person as India, which with more than 400 million poor people, has slipped from first to sixth among recipients of DAC aid during the last 20 years.

The major shift in aid to states affected by the Gulf War, from countries as diverse as Japan and Ireland, and the continuing prominence of Israel in

the US aid programme are illustrations of aid being used for foreign policy rather than developmental purposes.

The use of aid as a political reward and of aid conditionality to achieve foreign policy or development objectives are two sides of the same coin.

The observation of human rights and adherence to the principles of 'good governance' have now been added by donors to the economic conditionalities of the 1980s.

The case of Indonesia shows the urgent need for more effective donor coordination. The donor community looks incoherent when DAC members such as Canada and the Netherlands cut aid to Indonesia because of human rights abuses.

Women, Environment, Poverty and the Role of NGOs

In recent years, as NGOs have expanded and governments have attempted to implement sustainable development programmes, the relationship between the official and non-government sectors has become closer.

part of donors to take on participatory, long-term development and because it may give opportunities to scale up the impact of the people-centred community development that characterises NGO work.

NGO experience is being sought on the issues of environmental sustainability, women's participation and poverty reduction and the links between them, to inform donors' policies and practices.

It is a truism that women are half of the world's population, do two-thirds of the world's work, earn one tenth of the world's pay and own one hundredth of the world's property.

Significant progress has been made by several donors towards integrating gender considerations into the mainstream of programme design and implementation.

As a result of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) process, many DAC donors have also incorporated environmental sustainability criteria into the planning, implementation and appraisal of projects.

environmental issues and the operation of environmental checks.

The progress made by donors towards integrating gender issues and environmental considerations into aid programmes and administration is encouraging.

In 1990, DAC members agreed that development cooperation must become a more central policy concern. NGOs argue that a sustainable development perspective must be brought to bear on areas of government policy which affect the relationship between North and South.

Making Development Cooperation a Central Policy Concern

In most DAC countries, aid departments do not have Ministers of Cabinet rank. Consequently, the extent to which sustainable development considerations make a strategic contribution to government policy at the highest level depends on the inclination and influence of the senior Minister in the charge of foreign affairs.

There is no clear pattern among DAC donors as to whether development policy should be detailed in legislation, as in Switzerland and Italy, laid down in a major policy document, as in Canada and Japan, or based on a collection of speeches, reports and statements, as in Britain.

The lack of clarity and political weight means that aid administrations often find their work being undermined by the activities of another government department. The public ac-

countability of governments for aid spending would also be improved if donors were to adopt clear aid and development policies and clear lines of political responsibility for their implementation.

German NGOs argue that the principles governing aid programmes should be extended to the policies of all Ministries so that, for instance, German support for the military and police in recipient countries, or export guarantees, do not undermine the objectives being pursued under the aid programme.

Some countries, however, have explicitly recognised and then prioritised between development and other policy considerations. In Denmark, the interests of Danish business can only be considered after poverty alleviation criteria have been met.

The Swiss Government's decision to address domestic consumption and production processes as part of its overall approach to environment and development predates UNCED — and is an unusual and welcome example of a donor government making the link between the effectiveness of aid and lifestyles in the North.

Many NGOs see public education in the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) countries on issues such as the links between environment, consumption and population as being vital for two reasons. First, to maintain and increase support for aid. Second, to create conditions under which governments will have public support for the policy changes needed to respond to global challenges in

areas such as trade, AIDS, resource use, migration, and employment.

Creating the Conditions for Aid Reform

Most donors give a low priority to public education on development issues, spending very little and often devolving the responsibility for public education to NGOs.

The widespread public support for aid and compassion for people struggling to overcome poverty needs to be matched by knowledge and understanding of the causes of poverty and what can be done to reduce it.

A Broader Concept of Security

In this report, the evidence from NGOs shows clearly that most aid is not being used to reduce poverty.

If the twin aims of UNCED — the eradication of poverty and progress towards protecting the global environment — are to be realised, sustainable development will have to become a key political priority for governments, not simply a subsidiary matter dealt with away from the Cabinet table.

JUDITH RANDEL and TONY GERMAN are with Development Initiatives, an independent consultancy specialising in aid and development policy and NGO/government relations.

For an Accountable Civil Service

by Syed Naquib Muslim

THE credibility of the civil service in Bangladesh seems to be in question. The socio-economic conditions of the people do not show any significant improvement.

The common people have had more than their share of maltreatment at the hands of different organised and interested lobbies.

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resources prudently to achieve developmental goals. The main challenge of civil service today is to prove its accountability and capability to run in a parliamentary democracy.

In Bangladesh, diverse mechanisms are in practice to hold civil servants accountable. Financial mechanisms like budgetary process, audit procedures, legislative mechanisms like parliamentary committees, question-answer sessions in the parliament; judicial mechanisms represented by lower or higher courts, tribunals; administrative mechanisms in the form of conduct rules, discipline rules, financial rules, anti-corruption laws and acts, have been operating to check administrative malpractices and frivolities.

BTv drama

Sir, I would like to suggest the Bangladesh Television to critically examine the drama stories from the standpoint of our social sentiments and socio-psychological values of our common people before passing for screening.

In my opinion, a TV drama should focus on the real social problems, directing possible solutions to such problems on the basis of existing social values and stratifications.

M Zahidul Haque Assistant Professor Bangladesh Agricultural Institute, Dhaka

Government servants

Sir, Due to tug of war between BCS administrative cadre and BCS non-administrative cadre (doctors, engineers and agronomists) the loss of the public exchequer on the one hand and the sufferings of the people on the other knows no bounds.

We strongly feel that whether BCS (Admn) or the BCS (Professionals), all are government servants. They equally draw their pay and allowances. Government service rules and regulations and discipline and

and the rule of law need to be established. A truly independent judiciary as provided in Article 22 of the Constitution can help establishment of these core democratic values.

It is believed that to enforce and promote accountability in the civil service, it is necessary, in the first place, to demystify the meanings and ramifications of this notion to the civil servants.

Members of the Jatiya Sangsad to expatiate, recast and modify the government servants' service rules and regulations, discipline and conduct rules keeping in view the requirements of a free and democratic country, welfare of the teeming millions and smooth and efficient administration of the country.

We would also like to emphasise here that our government servants of any cadre, association or union are not supposed to make service rules and regulations of their own.

It is not true that government service rules and regulations are British made and outdated? And it is also true that during British colonial rule in our country no government servant could dare to stage any demonstration, strike or hartal or remain absent from duty unauthorisedly.

O H Kabir Dhaka-1203

Dhaka graveyards

Sir, Dhaka was grown into a big city of nearly seven million people. Size of the population will grow further. But there are only a few graveyards for this vast multitude of people.

Factors impeding practice of administrative accountability are both intrinsic and extrinsic. Intrinsic factors relate to the inadequacy, inconsistency and obsolescence of the existing laws, rules, and procedures.

Laws and rules framed by the colonial rulers are still in vogue and these need to be revised or replaced to suit democratic needs.

Installation of the office of the Ombudsman as provided in the Article 77 of the Constitution is the demand of the day.

acute scarcity of land in the metropolis, it may become difficult to find suitable sites for the purpose.

It may not be impertinent to mention here that reservation system and making the graves pucca is not prevalent even in Saudi Arabia, the birth place of Islam, where land is abundant and population is low even in urban areas.

May I, therefore, request the Dhaka Municipal Corporation to ponder over it and set up a few public graveyards in different areas of the city considering for the convenience of the general public.

Salah Ahmed Choudhury Dhaka Cantonment

OPINION

Primary Education

I would like to commend The Daily Star for its excellent coverage of the round table discussion on education — "Primary Education for all by the year 2,000: Problems and Prospects".

While it is generally easy and tempting to point the finger of blame or offer simplistic advice and opinions when examining different problems, the round table group has provided something of much greater value: a deeper recognition of the basis and fundamental causes of the current situation.

As an educator myself and one who has spent several years engaged in the practice of experiential learning, I strongly concur with the conclusions of several of the participants that good ideas and suggestions are inadequate without, as Dr Yunus suggests, a heightened sense of personal responsibility and motivation on the part of the students and their families in the learning process itself.

The question does, as several of the speakers suggest, have to do with a national will or commitment to quality education, a perspective that recognizes the personal and social costs of illiteracy and under-education.

Salah Ahmed Choudhury Dhaka Cantonment

duct and activities of the politicians.

A responsive and an accountable civil service is an asset; its role in and contribution to the development of the nation is vital.

Education which comes from the Latin 'edu care' which means to draw forth from within, literally refers to the process of engaging students as active participants in the learning process in a way that generates and strengthens within them a developing sense of trust and integrity in the sufficiency of their being.

When children and adults are inspired and empowered by a learning process that relates to them as partners rather than subordinates, they will begin to experience learning as compelling, personally enriching, and relevant to their lives.

The real challenge of education, as we move into the next millennium, is not one that is unique to Bangladesh or third world nations. It faces all societies, including those of the western world.

As Mr Carriere has suggested in his reference to Dr Walsh's statement, "We are in a race between education and catastrophe." Can we afford the alternative?

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