Founder-Editor: Late S. M. Ali Dhaka, Monday, July 11, 1994

# **Enabling Environ for Poverty Reduction**

The Indian Finance Minister Manmohan Singh has said on arrival in Dhaka that military spendings need to be cut in the region for speedy economic growth leading to poverty alleviation. Since the galloping military expenditure results from the security environment, it is the improvement in the latter that holds the key to any radical reduction in defence spendings.

The adviser to Pakistan Prime Minister on Economic Affairs V A Zafarey had this to say on arrival: "mistrust and bilateral issues obstruct the process of cooperation" which otherwise could have ensured rapid economic growth in the region.

Between these two statements we have the crux of the poverty alleviation challenge confronting the SAARC. In fact they have gone to the heart of the matter and hit the nail right in the head when they linked mutual distrust and armsbuilding as the basic problems ruling out poverty alleviation. The entire gamut of human resource development parametres - education, adult literacy, vocational training, healthcare, food security, housing and future welfare cover - are being abysmally ignored as the arms race in the region get heftier budget allocations year after year.

It is principally India and Pakistan, the two big partners of SAARC, who owe the rest a responsibility to roll back their military expenditures which have assumed astronomical proportions in stark contrast to their respective poverty situations. Their own poverty has not only remained largely unaddressed by their high defence profiles. It has in a way also led to impoverishment in the other SAARC countries. This, in the sense that an uncertain security environment on an overall basis has induced other countries of the region to go in for high military spendings at the expense of priority development projects that could mitigate poverty. So. as an upshot of the Indo-Pak arms build-up, which is basically antipoverty, we have had to be stuck with inadequate response to poverty of one billion people in South Asia. The defence preoccupation syndrome in the whole region has been further accentuated by distrust in the bilateral relations between some countries.

We believe that India and Pakistan have a leading role to play by setting examples of drastic squeezes on their military budgets. There has already been some talk of an across-the-board reduction in defence spendings by 3 per cent in the region. With such an explosive situation in Kashmir, ticking like a time-bomb, which had already triggered two subcontinental wars in conditions of less preparedness on both sides, we are bound to be ill at ease when talking about eradicating hard-core poverty in ten years' time.

Let's separate the facts from fiction and rhetorics from realities. We have allowed ourselves to be trapped in a vicious cycle - mistrust build-up in turn spawning more distrust as the prime mover of an unending arm race. We are vociferously asking for peace dividends at the end of detente. But what about arranging some peace dividends for ourselves in the region. Let the heads be put together in a common quest for a really enabling environment for removal of poverty in the region rather than losing breath through recitals of pious intentions and platitudes.

# Indecent Fraud

One courageous national daily once made it into a campaign to denounce large newspaper advertisements offering quick and sure cure for all kinds of incurable afflictions — sometimes with guarantees. Such campaigns, however valiant, have to stop some day. But those advertising campaigns promising panacea particularly for maladies of the realm of Eros continued unafflicted. Some newspapers, very respectable ones at that, have failed in this matter to respond to the call of ethics, dictates of public health and the needs of a national mind warv of quackery. This failure is being matched by the nation's government and its watchdog body of drug control.

A regular half-page advertisement in the high est circulated daily in the land, with unusually big type used in the text, guarantees a 100 per cent cure in a few days of a worst complicated and chronic discase whose name the heavenly healers always fail to spell correctly. They call the disease diabetics. But this is nothing compared to the fare guaranteeing mostly return to virility of sagging genitalia and other erogenous areas and in very explicit language. A medicine is offered, derived from ancient casting of spells and charms, that would make a 60-year-old hag lead the life of a 25-year-old young colt. Are all the wonderful good news addressed to only sexually failing and frustrated male population? Not at all, there is hope for women too. Just use their breast up cream and your bustline would improve from 'one size to the next'.

This much is a poor sampling of the fare offered and the language couching the promises is hardly translatable - from the pages of the panjika calendar books suddenly all porno material has made a glorious landing on the broad- sheet prestigious morning papers of the nation. Very obviously the business of deceiving people by playing on the private vulnerabilities of individuals is working a gold mine. Bravo. But what is the government doing for containing and eliminating this biggest public fraud that is sure to tell upon the state of the national health of both mind and body? The government has been foolish enough to tread on a very unfirm ground of guarding the "religious feelings" of a community which is too subjective a thing for anyone to sit in judgement over! And here when not only established norms of decency but also the nation's health is being harmed with veritable fanfare, government is behaving in a manner suggesting there is no such phenomenon presiding over the destiny of this

hapless concentration of humanity.

#### Political Disaster Ahead! HE country is fast mo ving towards political

disaster - hard earned democracy is at stake! What tion and not the government. the political parties are Even with caretaker govern Election for fighting for? ment, rigging/false voting my going to or remaining in take place if the political par power? Why not leaving it to ues resort to such practices the people? They know what to do in the election. It's not and Election Authority is not honest and fair. Therefore, if far off. Street actions to adthe real issue is fair and free vance it is fraught with danger. election, then caretaker gov-This is not the end of the ernment is not the answer; world - patience might be a better alternative. The people the answer lies in an Election Authority/Election Commisof Bangladesh have gone sion which can do the job. through immense sufferings. Though political parties Let them breathe a little and strongly doubt each other's honesty and ability to hold the elections, the country, how-

see who is better. Election rigging? Unfortunate as it is - this takes place in many countries around the world: it varies only in forms and degrees. Some do it in a subtle way and others blatantly. In any case, caretaker government alone cannot ensure free and fair election. It is the Election Authority which is honest, independent and impartial - that can ensure free and fair election. This needs to be understood If rigging takes place, the Election Authority is to blame if it does not take action to stop it. If media coup takes place, again the figures are possibly cooked with the knowledge of the Election Authority. One may say it is done at the insistence of the government in power. Again, Election Authority is responsible if it happens at all. If Election Authority vows to remain impartial and uninfluenced, media coup ean not take place because, in that case. Election Authority will come out with the correct results. Therefore, practically everything depends on the Election Authority. If it is honest and impartial. what it is expected to be, then the govby Muslehuddin Ahmad

onciliation Here in Bangladesh, democracy stands established, people are sensi ble and fine - here we need only some political flexibilities. Political leaders must also un derstand that they are the leaders and can serve people whether they are in the government or in the opposition. Only through service to people can they prove their worth and achieve their political goals. Women are generally flexi-

ble and accommodative. Bangladesh is in a way lucky to have two honourable ladies at

no such fear The good thing is that the present demand of the opposition has indeed forced the Treasury Bench to introduce a bill on strengthening the Election Commission. This is the opportune moment for the opposition to return to the House and debate the issues to make the Election Commission the strongest one which can really take charge of the present and future elections of the country. They can really try to 'make' the Election Commission, so to say, a separate "Election

political parties represented in the present Parliament exactly in the same proportion of their present strength in the Parliament. Some representation of the important political parties which are at present not represented in the Parliament, may be consid-

b) Advisory Council Members will be nominated by each

political party. c) No Advisory Council

Members will participate in

d) All Advisory Council

the election.

Members will refrain from participating in the party activi-

This is the opportune moment for the opposition to return to the House and debate the issues to make the Election Commission the strongest one which can really take charge of the present and future elections of the country.

people and, therefore, it is possible to constitute an impartial, strong and non-political Election Authority/Election Commission for conducting election in a free and fair

ever, is not yet bankrupt in

terms of honest and impartial

Anyway, these ideas and views have already been reflected through newspaper columns and particularly through the very well-organised written dialogue chronicled by The Daily Star. Consequently, both the opposition and the party in power have come up with definite proposals which are, of course, poles apart. However, when two poles of this globe have met each other through the land mass, there is no reason why these two opposing forces cannot meet. After all, incredible things have happened in the politics of some other countries. Nelson Mandela and De Clerk joined hands to build South Africa - Arafat and Rabin shook hands and moved towards political rec-

the top of two major parties What we need from them is a shrugging off of the past and a "warm handshake" and then things are very much likely to fall in their right places. The whole country is eagerly await ing this. Those who say women cannot run the affairs of a country should be proved

wrong. Based on the positive elements of what the political parties have so far proposed, the following suggestions are put forward which along with others may at least from the basis for a DIALOGUE that may lead to the possible solution of the present crisis:

The main worry seems to be on who should head a government, caretaker or otherwise, during three months of election period. The fear is that the head of the government has the possibility of influencing the election. Once the Election Authority is made completely independent of administration there should be Government" to run country's elections. The opposition must not lose this opportunity as they themselves created it.

Apart from the above one, may even suggest an interim National Government for election period of three months. The following are the elements: 1. After the dissolution of the Parliament, the Prime

Minister is to continue to head the government during the three months of election period to maintain constitutional continuity of the elected government. 2. All cabinet ministers to resign three months before

the election. This provision cannot be incorporated in the constitution. An understanding has to be reached on this. Prime Minister-in-

charge will have an Advisory

Council - say 15 to 20 mem-

bers — to be appointed in the following manner : a) Advisory Council - Members to be drawn from all

ties during election period of three months.

In case there is no agreement on an Interim National Government, Prime Ministerin-charge may form the Advisory Council by appointing non-political, neutral persons on a consensus basis in consultation with the Leader of the Opposition/opposition parties.

4. Prime Minister-in-charge will run the day-to-day administration on the advice of the Advisory Council on consensus basis.

5. No major political or economic decisions will be taken by the Prime Ministerin-charge and her Advisory Council during three months of election period.

6. Prime Minister and Advisory Council will pass no order to the Election Commission on any election issue.

7. Chief Election Commisstoner will be a totally neutral, non-political person and be appointed on unanimous decision of the Prime Minister-in-

in-charge to save time, similar facilities will have to be extended to the Leader of the

Opposition or may even be extended to the leaders of other political parties. 11. Media time for election campaign must be allocated equitably to all political parties - the basis may be their strength in the Parliament. Special allocation to be made for parties not represented

charge and Leader of the

Opposition party in the

8 Chief Election Commiss

ioner will appoint other

members of the Election

Commission in consultation

with the Prime Minister-in-

charge and the Leader of

Opposition party in the

Commission is formed it takes

full charge of the elections of

the country. The Election

Commission will run the elec-

tions on the basis of the

Election Rules and the deci-

sions and guidelines given by

the Parliament. Election

Commission will not take

orders from the government

in-charge or any political party.

and facilities will not be used

by anyone for election cam-

paign. If government transport

is used by the Prime Minister-

10. Government machinery

9 Once the Election

Parliament.

Parliament.

now in the Parliament. Other appropriate conditions suggested so far by many through media for holding fair and free election.

Considerable patience, accommodation and flexibilities are necessary to get over the present political crisis. The nation expects the political leaders to sit across the table and openly and frankly discuss ISSUES.

We urge our politicians, especially the two leaders, to hold a Dialogue immediately to solve the current political

(The author is President of the North South University)

## 'Commander Pilate' Swims in an Unfriendly Sea Crespo Sebunya writes from Kampala generally about its policies, a

Outnumbered and outgunned, Rwandan rebels have put government forces on the defensive.

Their success puts a spotlight on their commander, an austere, non-drinking, non-smoking

disciplinarian with a burning zeal to bring justice to to the country from which he was forced

WANDAN rebel leader Major-General Paul Kagame had just been told by a visiting Uganda reporter about reports of his death. It was an opportunity to crack the kind of joke that people love to hear. Instead he simply said, "I'm still alive," and strode back to his Landrover.

ernment or political parties

can hardly do any mischief.

Indeed, the Election Authority

is in-charge of country's elec-

Kagame does not joke According to one Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF) soldier.

he can go months without

Nor does Rwanda's possible future president drink or smoke. His discipline and incorruptibility are legendary. As director of military intelligence in the National Resistance Army - the Uganda, rebel movement which Yoweri Museveni led to power in Kampala - subordinates knew him as unforgiving: "No amount of money could save you," recalls an officer. For this he was nicknamed Pirato, or Pilate. after Pontius Pilate who sen-

tenced Jesus Christ to death. His period as intelligence director saw a record number of treason cases. Robbers caught red-handed were given even shorter shrift. It was common for a polythene bag to be placed over their head.

causing death from suffocation. Now, back in Rwanda, he has made strenuous efforts to maintain discipline in the paste and regards it as a luxury," says a fellow officer, who points out that many RPF soldiers "fight tooth and nail to reach the trenches occupied by Rwandan government troops so they can enjoy bottles of beer and French corned

as a baby. Gemini News Service looks at the man who could be president.

The roots of his unrelenting zeal go back to his evacuation from Rwanda to Uganda in 1959, when he was two years old, to escape a previous round of communal violence.

As a young man, outraged by the injustice of the Milton Obote government, he left Makerere University to join Museveni's rebels.

In 1983 Obote expelled 40,000 Rwandan refugees because of their support for the rebels. Some estimates put the number of Rwandans killed in the fighting at 10,000.

Having helped restore peace and order in Uganda, the diminutive, bespectacled Kagame drew up plans for the current invasion of Rwanda with former Major-General Fred Rwigyema, Major Dr Peter Baingana and Major

Chris Bunyenyezi. When the invasion started, he was taking further military training in the United States. His three fellow officers died in the first week, and he took

"His task was massive because he found the whole army in in disarray." recalls a colleague.

over the RPF reigns.

Several senior officers were allegedly executed and RPF losses were high, apparently because of the activities of Rwanda government infiltra-

"Troops were demoralised. first by the death of their senior commanders and then by the chaos that followed. Many simply deserted to head back to Uganda," according to the

jor reorganisation, and also created a semblance of balance within the RPF by including as many Hutus - who form 85 per cent of the population — as

possible. His 14,000 force has got the better of the 35,000 gov-

ernment troops who once surrounded them, partly as a result of Kagame's ingenuity. "I'm sure victory is at hand,"

says a confident Kagame. But there is a long way to go before his aim of "social justice for all based on the rule of law" is achieved. "We have suffered for several decades and there has been immense dictatorship here.

For a start, the population is still hostile, unlike the Uganda experience, where people welcome and supported the

"It makes the Ugandan war look like a Charlie Chaplin comedy." comments an RPF commander. "Here, once members of the population sight you they just make the alarm and welcome you with a machete in their hands." Even Kagame embarked on a ma- the church, the RPF suspects. is set against Tutsis: "They teach that killing is bad, but to kill a Tutsi is good. In other worlds, they teach that a good Tutsi is a dead one."

> The RPF is now giving pri ority to educating its own followers and the community

factor they previously neglected. It needs to counter the enormous propaganda from the government side, which represents the RPF as an invasion force from Uganda. At a press conference organised jointly by the RPF and Rwandan military officers, the latter constantly referred to Kagame as "Museveni's son."

Kagame has indicated that the main problem in Rwanda is bad leadership: "Why should Hutus and Tutsis, who share the same language and culture, fail to live together?" He sees reconciliation as the main task.

Whether Kagame will get a chance to do the job is not yet clear. Some people despise his relative lack of academic achievement, which they contrast with the record of a number of highly-qualified RPF executive members. Some have expressed doubts about his policy of pursuing outright victory. Even Yoweri Museveni commented recently: "They don't have the capacity to win

this war." Kagame has not outlined an economic programme. "I think first we have to achieve national unity and democracy." he says, "then the rest can fol-

CRESPO SEBUNYA is news editor of "Business World" in

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.

## **Employment of deaf** youths

Sir, I am a deaf young man. Having passed Class-V from Govt Deaf & Dumb School. Dhaka and also Class-VIII from a private education institution. I was subsequently trained as a skilled machine man in ERPH at Tongi. I had to receive my education through hardship but I am unemployed in spite of being extremely industrious.

Previously I worked as an Asstt Mechanic in Kohinoor Chemical Co (BD) Ltd for about six years. I worked honestly. sincerely and diligently, but due to some reasons the project in which I was serving closed down and I was retrenched from service. I am trying to get a job elsewhere but, as ill luck would have it, l am a deaf and, being neglected everywhere.

There is none to look after me, I have no land and have no means of living. My father died in March 1987. I am getting frustrated as my only younger brother is also mentally retarded and my mother is sick and dependent on me. I am married and have a child, too.

I am in great financial crisis and need a job very badly, but, it is a matter of regret that the deaf in our country are very much neglected and there is no arrangement or opportunity to provide the deaf with suit-

All hearing impaired persons like me should get oppor-

tunity of employment in gov. ernment or private enterprises according to their qualifications and fitness in the society. I eagerly request that any one would help me in any way so that I can stand along with others, as a capable earning member of the society.

rebel army, despite the in-

tense desire for retaliation for

the massacres organised by the

that could try to derail our

programme," he once admit-

strongly against revenge, driv-

ing the message home by

ordering the execution of RPF

own sense of austerity into his

finds you with a tube of tooth-

soldiers who kill civilians.

"This is one of the issues

But he has come out

He also tries to instill his

He is the type of guy who

government.

fighters.

A S M Rahmatullah House No-70, Sukrabad, Dhaka-1207

### Market segmentation for newspapers

Sir. Your recently published editorial comments on press freedom in Bangladesh drew my attention and I would like to add my opinion. You are absolutely right on the point that recent attack on the press is a heinous work and direct threat to freedom of speech. Arrest of a national daily editor was an example of government's disrespect to the press.

However, I feel, the press freedom existing these days is being misused by the fourth estate community. If you go through a national daily within

a shortwhile you will be able to realise its political stand. Either it's a pro-Awami League or pro-BNP or pro-Jamaat or pro-India or anti-India and what not. As a subscriber of a daily what I feel is that people don't want to see editor's view at least in the news treatment. This problem is so acute these days that one needs to

go through at least 23 different

'pro' newspapers to get a feel

of what actually happened.

otherwise you have to be happy with any of the 'pro' versions. Problem with the poor subscribers and 'the middle of the path' people like me is very serious, neither I can be happy with this 'pro' news treatment nor can effort to subscribe more than one newspaper.

Further, this too much political inclination is destructing their business interest what perhaps they are not realizing. They are serving a part of the total market, the rest segments of the market are not touching their publication. They can get substantial share of these segments by positioning their newspapers in all the segments in any of these two

M F Zaman Jaldhup, Sylhet

#### Malibagh Bazar Road Sir, After long waiting, the

dug portion of Malibagh Bazar Road has been repaired a few weeks back. This road is in front of Mouchak Market, running from north of Maruf Market and connecting another road on the eastern side. Perhaps inferior quality materials have been used at some portions of the repaired road because such portions have already been damaged. This is one of the most busy roads in the city and suffering of the people would know no bounds if these portions are not repaired again immediately.

Therefore, it is our honest request to the authority to investigate the matter and take necessary steps to repair this road in public interest. Further, we also urge the authority to find way to stop wastage of government money in this way.

Golam Kibria Malibagh, Dhaka

# Maga cities

Sir. For 6000 years or so the city has been the marketplace of ideas and art, the hub' of commerce, the heart of civilization. Now a USA survey of world's 100 large urban areas (including Dhaka) warns that runaway growth may lead to unliveable cities in days to come.

The picture of devastating strangulation is already there in parts of the city of Dhaka. In its rating of livability the city scores 32 points only, one of the lowest living standard with Melbourne, Atlanta etc scoring the highest (86). The 10 factors that went into the ratings - public safety, health, education, housing, cost of food, tel service, traffic noise and finally, cultural amenities - are rather unmanageable or turning so day by day.

Unless we turn the 65,000 villages into places worth living, the metropolis will never be able to get ahead and will remain simply beyond management.

Dhaka

Col Mirza Shafi

#### Ibrahim Danishmand

Sir. A religious scholar by the name of Hazrat Ibrahim Danishmand came to India from Damascus, where he had been a pupil under the great Sufi philosopher, Shaikh Shahabuddin Suhrawardy, in the early part of the 13th century AD. After spending a short time in Multan with his Suli friend Shaikh Bahauddin Zakaria, he went to live among the Pathans in south Waziristan. Family legend has it that, sometime later he moved to Bengal where he died, probably in 1270 AD, and was buried at Sonargaon, Mogra para. A dear friend from Bangladesh has very kindly confirmed the existence of a 'mazar' in Sonargaon that bears the inscription "Syed Hazrat Ibrahim Danishmand (RA)" Unfortunately, no further details are available about his life in Bengal.

Ibrahim Danishmand had four sons. One of them, Shaikh Lal, is lost to history. The descendants of the other three sons, Shaikh Yusuf, Shaikh Mahmood and Shaikh Sirajuddin, live in a valley named Kaniguram in the hills of south Waziristan, and now, also in Lahore, where they moved after being uprooted from Jullunder in east Punjab in 1947. Shaikh Bazid Ansari, better known as Pir-e-Roshaan, who campaigned against emperor Akbar in the North-West Frontier, was a descendant of Shaikh Siraj-uddin, the eldest son of Ibrahim Danishmand. The mother of Nizam-ul-Mulk, the founder of the Nizams of Hyderabad. Deccan, was a descendant of Pir-e-Roshaan. Even Pakistan's cricketer, Imran Khan, is linked to Ibrahim Danishmand through his mother.

I have been trying to carry out some research concerning Ibrahim Danishmand and his descendants, and have met with some success. However, there is very little material available that could shed light on their lives in Bengal.

Through the columns of your esteemed paper, I would like to approach and request any individual or institution in Bangladesh, that may have any information concerning Syed Hazrat Irbahim Danishmand who lies buried in Sonargaon, for help. Any information concerning his beliefs, teachingu,

disciples, family members, dates, places, inscriptions, etc. would be much appreciated. I would be more than happy to re-imburse any costs involved in procuring and providing such information.

K H Zia 7905 Saguenay, Brossard, PQ J4X 1K6 Canada

## Children's hospitals

Sir, In our country there are only a few children's hospitals. Even these few hospitals have many limitations to providing better treatment to the huge number of ailing children. Hence, it is greatly felt that the government provide the children's hospitals with necessary fund to raise the number of their medical staff as well as other facilities.

At the same time, initiatives

should be taken to set-up more

hospitals for children both in the public and private sectors.

M Zahidul Haque Asstt Prof. BAI. Dhaka

#### Our national news Sir, When I go through page

9 of your esteemed newspaper, which you have allotted for our national news I feel very sad and disheartened. Most of the news items are depressing. Murders, dacoities, hijackings, suicides, accidents, diseases and natural calamities seem to have formed a retinue.

I wonder if ever this trend will change, and our national news will make us happy and hopeful.

East Nasirahad, Chittagong

Nur Jahan