

## ADP Implementation: Learning by Experience

The quantum jump in the implementation of ADP, 1993-94, by a neat 13 per cent over the previous year's figure of 81 per cent — making it 94 per cent for the year gone by — gives cheer in an otherwise mixed picture. Not merely does it break the exasperating monotony of poor project execution since 1990-1991 as a somewhat set pattern of non-development. It also comes as a piece of good news in the midst of a developing flood in the upper eastern half of the country and drought conditions in our northern districts.

Half-way through fiscal 1993-94 when a review was made on the ADP utilisation status it was revealed that we were in for a third successive tumble in project implementation, the worst perhaps since 1990-91. Nothing short of a Herculean effort was needed to turn a corner. Donor criticism filled the air — ironically at a time when our own contribution to the ADP was on a remarkable upswing. It shook the policy making apparatus and the implementation machinery, root and branch, in a manner of speaking. Project implementation turned out to be a testing ground for the government's image with the people and the donors as well.

This is exactly the point we want to make here by way of urging to learn from adversity and by experience. Unless a challenge breathes down our neck we seldom do worthwhile things. But sitting it out till we have such a pressure do the trick for us is brinkmanship of an indecisive lot that better not be repeated.

We learn that the double-quick implementation of the ADP during the closing months was made possible by delegation of administrative and financial powers to the project directors, quick release of funds for land acquisition, project-wise coordination meetings and round-the-clock work by the Planning Ministry to improve fund utilisation. Administratively, things were made easy by prioritising some ministries and reallocating funds to their projects dubbed as more important than those of other ministries. Was it the importance of projects or the failure to utilise funds by some ministries that influenced the decision against them? In fact, low-performing projects and, by implication, the ministries under which these came, were deprived of funding this year. Unless these had some importance how could they have been adopted in the first place? Fund utilisation has to bear relevance to an over-all project implementation within the purview of an integrated development programme. At any rate, we are gladdened by the completion of 136 projects — we take it to be the push-button stage — out of the 161 targeted for 1993-94. But it is incongruous why the ERD and IRD parented by the Finance and Planning Ministry, should have lagged behind with another surprise in the Ministry of Social Welfare adding to that rather bleak picture.

It is also difficult to understand why even after the delegation of administrative and financial powers to the project directors, the line agencies are not parting with their powers to complete the cycle of devolution. At the top and, down the road, the matters relating to mobilisation of funds, signing of agreements, finalisation of Project Concept Paper, land acquisition, appointment of consultants and procurement of materials have for long been handled by people lacking in motivation and training. When would that end?

## Launch Disaster: Worse Wounds

The Saturday launch disaster opened a wound in the national psyche more serious than the feared death of perhaps 200 souls in the capsized. The treatment of the news in the government controlled electronic media merits the most serious of considerations by all who have the interest of this nation uppermost in their minds. Last Saturday Chandpur riverport, on an otherwise bright and shiny day, became a picture of grief. Early afternoon that day a two-storeyed passenger launch plummeted into a Bermuda triangle-type eddy at the confluence of the Dakatia and the Meghna, taking an uncorroborated number of passengers down with it. The capsized vessel could not be traced, not to speak of being salvaged, till the morning of Monday. Although some 60 passengers were thought to have swum ashore, the first words that got around within minutes of the disaster put the loss of life at close to a thousand. Not many of the dead were Chandpurians, for the launch was bound for Mollar Bazar on a regular route. That did not prevent Chandpur people from rushing to the spot and mounting a round-the-clock vigil. Praiseworthy was also the performance of the district administration and the river police. The national print media put the death toll at between 200 and 300 in the second such river mishap near Chandpur in 30 years. The dangerous eddy has always been there. River vessels know it too well to be trapped by it. Why did Dinar-2 fail to steer clear of it when smaller vessels and even country boats do it with unfailing success?

The government-controlled electronic media has underplayed the news of the tragedy with abject shamelessness. This, as always, has created the scope for speculation beyond the bounds of reason. Government figures and lowdowns on such accidents are mostly suspect and not for no reason. Speculations add to that to create an unbridgeable chasm. Society loses its grip on reality as it also is progressively robbed of things on which to put its trust without which any society is bound to cease to be such.

The disaster, undoubtedly the national news of the day or even the week if not quite of the month will, of course, call for a probe at the appropriate level. But as workings of such probes tend not to yield anything ever, this cannot be expected to have any healing effect on the havoc played on the nation's mind unless there is a serious effort to avoid any travesty of the truth. Information is one of the first rights of the citizens and as such this should be treated as sacrosanct, specially by the government, the biggest disseminator of the most important national input for its citizens.

# Black Sea Economic Co-operation : Windows of Opportunities

by Arshad-uz Zaman

**T**HE commitment of the leaders of the Black Sea Economic Co-operation (BSEC) is very serious. This was stated by Ambassador Evgeni Kutovoy, Director of the Permanent International Secretariat, in an exclusive interview with me. Sitting in his office which is located within the vast grounds of the lavish Dolmabahce palace, with its white facade overlooking the Bosphorus, Kutovoy pointed out that the latest Foreign Ministers' meeting in Tbilisi, the capital of Georgia, decided to establish Black Sea Trade and Development Bank which will become the principal mechanism of the BSEC in working out and financing joint regional projects. The bank will be located in Thessaloniki in Greece. After the establishment of Parliamentary Assembly of the Black Sea Economic Co-operation and Black Sea Businessmen's Organisation, setting up of the bank is an important milestone in the development of BSEC.

It was on 25 June 1992 in the glittering Ball Room of the beautiful Chiragan Palace of Istanbul that eleven Heads of State and Government assembled and signed the Joint Declaration establishing, what

has come to be known as BSEC. The signatories are Albania, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bulgaria, Georgia, Greece, Moldova, Romania, Russia, Turkey and Ukraine. It is a market of 350 million people, covering nearly one fifth of



The signing of the Summit Declaration



Permanent International Secretariat

lateral and bilateral economic cooperation.

The BSEC structure is headed by the Foreign Ministers, who meet twice annually. Current Chairman is Greece and the next Foreign Ministers' meeting is due in April next. Various working groups have been meeting quietly preparing joint plan of action. The areas covered are as diverse as communications, commercial information including statistics, energy, tourism and science and technology. The Permanent Secretariat is entrusted with the job of coordination. Director Kutovoy sees in his organisation also a clearing house, which should provide information and contacts for businessmen of member states.

BSEC is two years old but the Secretariat, barely four months, Ambassador Kutovoy, the first Head of the Secretariat, brought a wealth of experience as a career diplomat having served his country as Deputy Permanent Representative to the UN and nearly six years in the UN Secretariat between 1967-72. Recalling those years he stated that he was in the political department of the UN Secretariat and dealt with the

Bangladesh crisis in the Security Council meetings. He is optimistic about the future of his organisation although he recognises that the principal difficulty for transition to market economy lies in the adjustment of the mentality of the people. Kutovoy visualizes cooperation which lies at the crossroads of three continents and other international organisations. Underlining the difficulties of transition to market economy, Director Kutovoy mentioned the latest financial scandal in Moscow called MMM, which had shaken people's confidence in market economy.

To my question, if he visualized any political role of BSEC, Kutovoy stated that although his organisation was an economic one, it was impossible in practical life to totally separate economy from politics. Did he face any protocol problem because his title was 'director'. I asked and his answer was, 'It is the performance of the man which determines if the job he is doing is an important one'. BSEC has opened many windows of opportunities for the people of this vast region. It is for them to seize them', concluded Ambassador Kutovoy.

## Caretaker Govt Issue : There Must be a Solution Now

by Khaled Khan

**E**VER SINCE Magura by-election was held all the major opposition political parties have been echoing their dissent over the election scenario seemingly fraught with threat, violence and rigging. Consequently they have raised the issue of nominating a caretaker government for holding parliamentary elections in future. The Awami League, the Jatiya Party and the Jamaat-e-Islami have been boycotting the parliament session thereafter to protest against the 'reign of terror' let loose by the ruling party in the by-election as reported by a section of the press. They are unlikely to join the sessions till a bill on caretaker government is not mooted in the parliament by the BNP who possibly find no reasons to accede to the demand. Thus an impasse has been created. No hope for reconciliation is in sight unless one of the opposing sides budge from their present stance. Very recently, AL has given a call to pull down the government through agitation. No doubt, the situation, of late, has turned from bad to worse. Nevertheless, the call is unwarranted and to unseat a democratically elected government before its full term is over is anything but democratic.

Intellectuals and great thinkers have endeavoured to put forward their reasons both

for and against the issue in a highly entertaining debate (thanks to The Daily Star). But my conscience reacts little differently. I understand that an emphatic 'no' to the proposal by the ruling party matched by an equally stubborn attitude from the mainstream opposition will lead us to a chaos. There are people waiting to fish in the troubled water. A democratic process that was set in motion in February 91 following the exit of an autocratic regime will thus nosedive.

It is alleged by all and sundry that there has been rigging in the Magura by-election. It is also true that given the highly volatile situation that was created during the by-election no Election Commission without active co-operation from the civil administration could function smoothly. But the onus of bringing the situation to order lay with the ruling party. But they failed and thus lost the semblance of trust their detractors had on them. And hence the demand for a caretaker government for which the opposition must be given a benefit of doubt.

### Non-committal on EC

Now the opposition have outlined the procedures on the formation of a caretaker government but remained non-committal on the issue how to

render the Election Commission most effective in dispensing its assigned duties. If violence occurs and anarchy prevails in the event a general election is held under a caretaker government, the concept will be meaningless and the government will lose its credibility. An all powerful EC deriving its strength from a non-partisan government can function without fear or favour to plug the holes that breed violence, corruption and malpractice and, therefore, is an indispensable issue. But the opposition parties, except the LDF, have not come forward with their considered views how to stem those ills which have eaten deep into our social structure and come into play from the day one of an election campaign, no matter whether it is a general election, a local body election or a by-election. Threat, intimidation and show of muscle power persist denying the genuine voters their right to franchise. Quite often than not the partisan attitude of the government machineries and local body chieftains influences the results. These are some of the impediments that stand in the way of a free and fair poll, and therefore must be resisted through enactment and rigorous implementation of laws.

Opposition's demand for a

caretaker government is perceptible. But the strategy they are pursuing to make it a success leaves much to be desired. That BNP shall table an amendment bill in the parliament against which all their members are supposed to vote, is a ridiculous idea conceived by the opposition. BNP will moot the bill only when they are convinced that such an amendment in the constitution to incorporate a caretaker government to conduct general election will not substantially alter the status of the constitution and they are giving nothing away to cause any heartburning in their camp. So, the most ideal option left for the opposition to achieve their goal is to join the parliament session but keep their fights on in the form of debate, dialogue and agitation both inside and outside the parliament instead of trying to coerce BNP to come to their terms. So the ball is moving in the centre field. If it is a drawn game, nothing to lose heart.

### Intriguing Alliance

It is highly intriguing that Awami League have taken the Jatiya Party and the Jamaat as their allies to launch a movement against BNP. Once the bitterest foes have become their trusted partners, Gullible

past inhibitions and found the present crisis as springboard for embarking upon a bigger mission. Has the Awami League ever taken note of it? None of the two parties will spare a moment's opportunity to crush Awami League which is advised to come out of the trap forthwith. At least the martyrs of the liberation war and the movement for democracy will not feel betrayed.

Despite the earlier dialogues having failed to reach a consensus both the treasury bench and the opposition should mend their fences and invite each other for further dialogue with the lone object of doing good to the country. The leaders, in particular, should keep their egotism and are recruiting armed cadres who have demonstrated their muscle power on more than one occasions. On the other hand, the Jatiya Party represented a government whose supremo usurped power from an elected government, acquired fabulous wealth from unknown sources, allowed corruption to pervade the society and acquired all the vices conceivable of any head of the state. They had perpetrated an autocratic rule in the country for long nine years and quit the power after a mass upsurge. They are also back in the stage to play their dubious role. Both Jamaat and Jatiya Party have shaken off their

past inhibitions and found the present crisis as springboard for embarking upon a bigger mission. Has the Awami League ever taken note of it? None of the two parties will spare a moment's opportunity to crush Awami League which is advised to come out of the trap forthwith. At least the martyrs of the liberation war and the movement for democracy will not feel betrayed.

At this critical juncture the ruling party has a greater role to play. They will have to initiate the dialogue with opposition once again with a view to resolving the crisis, if necessary, through amendment of constitution. Both the parties should work relentlessly, no matter how painful the efforts are. People will not accept 'no' for an answer.

## Nobody Wants the Warriors without a War

Tariq Butt writes from Islamabad

Once they were welcomed as heroes in the struggle against godless communism; now the war is over and they are feared. Gemini News Service reports on the fate of the Arab fighters who helped the Afghan mujahideen and are now being forced out of Pakistan.

particular sectarian views. At least a dozen people were killed in the clash.

For years Pakistan opened its doors to adventurers from all over the world who wanted to join the Afghan jihad (holy war). But it has paid a high price.

Pakistanis had access to drugs and arms even before the outbreak of the war, but the fighting has severely exacerbated the problem. The country now has more than 2.5 million heroin addicts, and millions of Soviet-made Kalashnikov rifles are in the hands of a wide range of people, including politicians and religious zealots.

A group of Arab militants recently fought a pitched battle with Afghani tribesmen in the Tirah Valley of the Khyber Agency, a tribal area near Afghan border, in just the sort of incident the government fears. The former fighters, well-equipped with sophisticated weapons, had reportedly been trying to preach their

fused to go home for fear that they will face accusations of terrorist activity.

The government of Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto is determined to show these former fighters to the door, a policy also followed by the previous government. The administration has given several warnings to those concerned to leave the country and has also quietly conducted roundups. As a result, nearly 2,000 Arabs have left.

Draconian expulsion measures have been avoided, however. The policy has been gradually to push them out of Pakistan but to let them go to any country they like rather than sending them home.

One reason for avoiding a direct confrontation and for not delivering them into the hands of their home governments is that such moves might have provoked a severe

backlash in the shape of attacks on Pakistani installations and diplomatic missions abroad.

Most of the expelled fighters have taken refuge in Afghanistan. But, because of the appalling conditions in the war-shattered country, where the civil war continues to rage in the form of a straightforward factional struggle for power, they rarely stay long and sneak back into Pakistan through the porous border.

However, although most major political parties — including the ruling Pakistan People's Party (PPP) and the opposition Pakistan Muslim League (PML) headed by former Premier Nawaz Sharif — favour expulsion, hardline religious parties including the militant Jamaat-e-Islam (JI) and Jamiat-e-Ulema-e-Islam (JUI) are against it.

"Both the PPP and PML are united in opposing move-

ments of Islamic resurgence in the world," says JI Chief Qazi Hussain Ahmad. "The Arab war veterans who have rendered valuable services to overthrow the communists and in the rehabilitation of Afghanistan are being harassed by the government and their houses are being raided just to please its American masters."

His counterpart in the JUI, Maulana Samiul Haq, echoes his sentiments and praises the fighters: "The Arab mujahideen have left behind a life of utmost luxury to come here and fight a holy war."

He is highly critical of Egypt for its "shameful role in becoming a policeman on the American payroll."

In support of his policy, during a debate in the Senate (upper house of Parliament) Law Minister Iqbal Haider produced photographs of Arabs that he said had been seized by

law enforcement agencies during a search of their abandoned camps in the Tirah Valley.

"These half-nude photographs reflect the immoral lifestyle of these illegal Arab aliens," he charged. "The government will not tolerate illegal immigrants who are involved in criminal activities."

In early August, the government stepped up its campaign with dawn raids in Peshawar, near the Afghan border; 19 Arabs were arrested.

The clamp-down coincided with the arrival in Pakistan of an Egyptian delegation headed by Defence Minister Hussain Tantawi.

"The arrested Egyptians will be gifted to the visiting Defence Minister," claimed Qazi Hussain Ahmad.

Cairo is among the capitals which have been putting pressure on Islamabad to hand over its nationals. Lack of an extradition treaty between Egypt and Pakistan meant Islamabad could not meet the request but a treaty has been signed and is due to be ratified by the two countries soon.

TARIQ BUTT is chief reporter on "The News," Islamabad.

## To the Editor...

### Children's speech problem

Sir, Our experience with young ones who join the pre-school classes, is that parents normally do not realise their speech problems till it is too late. Many just keep their fingers crossed and hope their children will grow out of it somehow. And the difficulties are simply mistaken for bad behaviour of stubbornness and ignored — many even declare accordingly while reporting for admission formalities.

Speech therapists worry that children with speaking difficulties normally become target for bullies when they reach primary school. They blame hi-tech walky-talky dolls and the likes, which according to their claim, fail to encourage youngsters to play and speak with them.

We feel that children must experiment with sounds, words and language, so they can learn to communicate and

sophisticated toys reduce the opportunity for these kind of experiments. The best toys to help a child speak are the cars, trains, farm animals, tea-set, doll furnitures and teddies. The youngsters must be given these old-favourites and encourage them to experiment by giving them helping hands during school games and at home.

Col Mirza Shafi (Rtd)  
Banani, Dhaka.

cause hardly any traffic jams." Anyone travelling in the area around 8:00 am or 1:00 pm knows the chaos that occurs.

Having lived abroad I can state for a fact that in residential areas there is the occasional 'corner shop' or a couple of stores conveniently located near the homes. They have been specifically designed for selling goods and have large walk-ways so they do not affect the peace and quiet of the area. They are in no way like the shops that a minority of owners place on their boundary wall.

All Mr Hussain's talk of the Ministry wasting its time, causing financial problems, unemployment and other social problems is misleading. Dhanmondi was planned as a residential area and it is the Ministry's duty that it does its best to serve the majority of home owners.

If Mr. Hussain thinks that the Ministry of Works

"Utopian concept" of keeping Dhanmondi for its residents is unrealistic, he may be prepared to try and live in a road with 3 clinics, 2 community centres, 2 go-downs and an open air restaurant. Because that is what the roads in Dhanmondi R/A will eventually turn into once the proliferation of commercial enterprises are allowed wholesale.

S Ghani  
Dhanmondi R/A, Dhaka.

### Use Jute bags

Sir, The Bangladesh Society for Conservation of Environment (BSCE) requests every member of the society to stop the use of polythene bags. The polythene bags are contributing significantly to environmental pollution in different ways.

As the used polythene bags are thrown hither and thither,