

## An Appeal for Restraint on Both Sides

We had hoped that fruitful dialogue would take place, and an acceptable solution to the present political crisis would be found, rendering the so-called 'Dhaka siege' unnecessary. It hardly needs saying that what we had hoped for remains in the realm of wishful thinking. Instead, we have to brace ourselves today, for whatever may happen as a result of the opposition's programme of the siege. What we can now do is to appeal for calm and restraint from both sides and hope that no human life is lost, and no property, both public and private, is damaged. Even before the 'siege' the opposition has called for a half-day hartal on Sunday. The government, on its part, has taken some tough measures by cordoning off central areas of the city. We would like to take much of the latest rhetoric as political posturing, and hope that behind the public utterings there are realistic assessments of the situation on both sides, and there is a genuine desire for the event of the day to pass peacefully.

We do not intend to write today on whether or not the demands of the opposition are valid. What, however, we would like to stress, with all the earnestness and sincerity at our command, is our deep concern that events may somehow go out of hand, and that violence may erupt.

We are heartened to note that the principal mover of today's programme, the Awami League, has declared its intention of carrying out the 'siege' programme peacefully. But we would like to caution that mere intention is far from enough. AL will have to discipline its cadres, and warn them of dire consequences if they violate the party directives. The leaders on the spot will have to ensure that peace is maintained through strict vigilance over misguided over-enthusiasts, who are more prone to breaking the party discipline than others. This is assuming that everybody is sincere about holding today's programmes peacefully. We raise this point for good reason. It is possible that some may think that if violence breaks out, and innocent lives are lost, then the government is likely to lose more in public sympathy than the opposition. This may tempt the 'over-enthusiasts' to reckless behaviours. After all, nobody can deny that 'politics of dead bodies' is an unfortunate reality in our country. Short-sightedness may prevent us from seeing the long-term dangers of such politics.

We would like to express stronger words of caution against the government and the ruling party. We sincerely feel that any attempt to forcibly stop the opposition's programme would be counter-productive — in fact foolish. There should be no attempt to use the police and other forces to clash with processionists and opposition party workers, as long as the demonstrations are peaceful. If the ruling party and the government want to counter the opposition's activities, they should do so politically, and organise their own public programmes. Under no circumstances should they go for a clash or forcible countering of the opposition's programmes. This, we feel, would help to allow the day to pass peacefully.

However, no word of caution, and no amount of preparation can take care of the unforeseen. When thousands of people are out on the streets, facing thousands of armed policemen, it is not always possible to guard against every eventuality. The political tempers are already flying high with the opposition accusing the government of deliberately causing the transport strike to jeopardise the 'siege' programme. Signs are bad, and we are deeply concerned about the possibility of outbreak of violence.

We call upon both sides to exert maximum restraint and desist from violence, regardless of provocations. This is our fervent appeal to leaders of both sides.

## A Pragmatic Way to Swallow Pride

Bangladesh, a 20th century sovereign state, has at last demarcated the limits of its power at least in one area. Authorities have officially closed the search for the lost motor launch Dinar-2 and have given up all exercises in connection with the salvaging of the vessel. With the launch the entrapped bodies of at least 250 passengers would remain outside of the power of this state and its people even to trace them, not to speak of performing the last rites for them. So far only 49 bodies have floated their way to their relations. With the vessel and the bodies will now remain hidden perhaps forever the main proofs of what indeed happened when the Dinar went down. The closure of the attempts to get at the vessel puts a seal on the chances of the probe now in process into the tragedy to arrive at conclusions more weighty than mere conjectures.

This has been a pragmatic step. We congratulate the authorities for being able to swallow their pride and come to terms with the fact that Bangladesh doesn't have the technical powers to locate as big a thing as a double-decker motor launch in an inland water body. But not many of our citizens, specially those having a patriotic streak, will be able to do that so easily. Are we indeed so poor in all respects other than the politicians' gift of the gab? What use is this independence for them, they would ask.

Sentiments apart, this can be a good occasion to wake up to similar other thousand incapacities on the part of our state. Till now we knew that of the littoral states by the Bay of Bengal, Bangladesh new the least about the Bay that has been named after this very country. We never acted upon that deplorable fact. Now time has come to accept that we know as little of the beds of our rivers as we do of the bed of the Bay. This is indeed very hard to accept.

After the Chandpur tragedy it was said that at the confluence of the Dakatia and the Meghna is a hole some 250 feet deep made by the screwing effect of the eddies there. Don't we have any way to verify this? We thought that this was rather easy with the use of conventional sounding process. What is missing is perhaps the decision that we shall know all about our land and rivers and weather and everything that sustains us physically.

Let the Dinar tragedy be an eye opener to myriads of our incapacities generated by our lack of knowledge about what to look for.

# Expatriates in Development: When a Boon and when a Bane?

by Abdul Bayes

ONE of the most important agenda for discussion in a state of 'sponsored development' is, perhaps, the role of the expatriates. Expatriates and their roles in the development process of the LDCs continue to be subjects of severe intellectual attacks and, of late, the attacks so launched tend to foam. At the extreme, the view is being widely articulated that the predominance of expatriate advisors and their ideas, in some cases, lead to 'expatriate' the indigenous developmental initiatives of the host countries. While the criticisms so far mostly originated from the recipients' soil, the same emerging from the expatriates, perhaps, could make it more credible.

Dr Emma Crew of the University of Sussex, on a visit to Bangladesh under the Jahangirnagar University and the University of Sussex linkage programme, recently held a seminar on 'Expatriates in Development'. Wearing an expatriate's cap herself, Dr Crew seemed to lead us to a grove of pertinent issues relating to the dynamics of 'imported' brains from the perspective of the 'importers' as well as the 'exporters'. It appeared to us that she presented the experiences of hers and of others while working in different countries as consultants and her point of reference was largely European expatriates. Dr Crew observes that 'independence (in the periphery) has not led to a decrease in expatriate involvement... and during 1980s donors became concerned that large scale development programmes appeared to collapse as soon as these expatriate "technical advisors withdrew." Furthermore, she also remarked, "doubt about the sustainable value of expatriate expertise became well established." Her observations, probably, can enable us to reach the conclusion that far from being edifice of a sustainable local capacity building, the outgrowth of expatriates in many cases worked just for the reverse.

### Why Expatriates?

As could be gleaned from Crew's deliberations, the reason of fielding more expatriate consultants in some countries and less in others, could possibly be the following. First, expatriates are assumed, by the Northern Agency Staff (mostly the Europeans), to be endowed with specialist skills and knowledge of rare standings. Second, expatriates are thought to be more friendly, as compared to the locals, to the interest of the poor and that of the donors themselves. And third, the expatriates are considered as more accountable and above bureaucratic high handedness. Are the assumed qualities of the expatriates tally with the real situations?

Emma seemed reluctant to live with the impression that the Southern planners are always less qualified than their counterparts, the Northerners. She thinks that "when donors or assistance agencies insist on the fashionable skills, they create both national skill shortages and job opportunities for expatriates simultaneously". This is evidenced from the fact that in monitoring foreign funded development projects, the so-called "hard" quantitative methods (mostly applied in the European context) are often valued above "soft" qualitative approaches (Southern favorites). In some cases, she pointed out, expatriates were asked to supervise and guide nationals having

higher levels of university education and IQs than the expatriates themselves. Such a situation appears counter-productive and silent resentment tends to creep in terms of aversion to work and other means. By and large then the fact that Southerners lag behind the Northerners in terms of skills and knowledge appears to be more artificial than real.

The donors send their own evaluators to assess the performance of funded projects and this is premised on the fact that donors want to see that their interest is best served by those who tend to be loyal and those who can presumably make certain that donors' money is productively spent in the recipient countries. The national experts are, on the other hand, denied of a trust as they are alleged to be (i) unable to place the grassroots participatory development concept into practice; (ii) incapable of reaching the poorest segment of the community; (iii) biased towards male hegemony or are sexist and (iv) representing mostly the urban, middle class and male dominated elites. While there might be some elements of truth in these allegations, the author argues, there is no proof that the expatriates are universally above those limitations. In fact, most often the expatriates find it more difficult, as compared to the locals, to embrace the grassroots concept. "Southerners argue that foreign agencies could practice what they preach about devolving power by giving members of recipient agencies (grassroots or otherwise) more autonomy and decision making control... Paying more attention to class and

productive as long as there is flexibility in determining the needs for expatriate assistance and the needs are assessed mostly by the nationals rather than by expatriates themselves. In fact, different doses of expatriate and national efforts should be worked out to arrive at an optimal situation.

Second, according to Dr Crew, the habit of uncritically employing expatriates to plan, implement and manage operational programmes in the South no longer seems justifiable. Technical assistance should never displace local staff or capacity. It is clear that the representatives of the Southern organizations want Northern expatriates to be less involved in operational projects and more involved in raising awareness of the causes of poverty amongst Northern audiences. Influencing Northern public is the most strategic for development specialists in Europe. "The task of countering the exclusive portrayal of the South as miserable, dying and helpless, by creating more positive and anti-racist images is an urgent priority. Northern NGOs should consider employing nationals rather than expatriates as their representatives as government officials are more likely to heed what they say."

Third, Dr Emma Crew feels that more often than not, the Northerners' skills, knowledge and ability to represent the poor have been overrated while the Southerners' incompetence, vulnerability to corruption and lack of concern about the poor are usually exaggerated. Resources can be usefully invested in making the best use of existing national expatriates at various levels. Dependency on expatriates within operational work should be avoided because it is expensive and can undermine national expertise and capacity.

### Bangladesh Context

Many of the points raised by Dr Crew have already been, explicitly or implicitly, on the air in Bangladesh. Since independence, the country witnessed the flood of expatriate consultants under various banners. It is very difficult to compare the level of development 'with' or 'without' expatriates and thus establish rationale. But a priori reasoning would suggest that the cost of hiring expatriates largely exceeds the benefits out of that. Resources are virtually wasted in the sense that the same 'brain' can be had in Bangladesh with much little 'drain' of resources. At the moment, it is reported that technical assistance constitutes about 7 per cent of the total project aid disbursement and 70 per cent of the technical assistance is being spent on expatriates to design and implement projects — the tasks which local engineers and designers can probably perform more cheaply and effectively. In many cases, it has been argued that the locals tend to outweigh the expatriates in terms of the relevant criteria of assessment. Some of the local NGOs (eg BRAC, Proshika, ASA) seem to perform no less better than foreign NGOs. Still we tend to receive growing number of expatriate consultants each year for the various foreign funded projects. Given her level of development, in the coming years, Bangladesh might have to rely on 'imported' brains but preference should be for those having less substitutes inside. We want expatriates but as a boon and not as a bane to our development.

OPPOSITION leader Nawaz Sharif is trying to turn the tables on Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto by organising a nationwide protest movement to unseat her.

He knows the potential impact of such a campaign, because Bhutto used a similar technique in her drive to push him from power last year.

Her first "long march" fizzled out in 1992, but made the government nervous and brought barbed-wire barricades and troops to Islamabad.

Another march the following year was called off after a meeting with the Chief of Army Staff — at which an understanding was reached that fresh elections would be held. She won them.

Sharif is substituting wheels for feet: his whistle-stop "march of the caravan of democracy by train" will roll from Karachi in the south to Peshawar in the north, and will be followed by rallies and demonstrations in a national "Salvation Movement."

Says Sharif: "It would be tantamount to a criminal negligence on my part if I remain a silent spectator while the democratic system, national security, economy and judiciary are damaged beyond repair at the hands of an incompetent and anti-national regime."

But there are two differences between Bhutto's march and Sharif's attempt to railroad his way back to office.

Many people feel the campaign comes too soon after last year's election, in which Bhutto's Pakistan People's Party (PPP) won 87 out of 217 seats and Sharif's Muslim League secured 72. Another poll would be the fifth election in nine years.

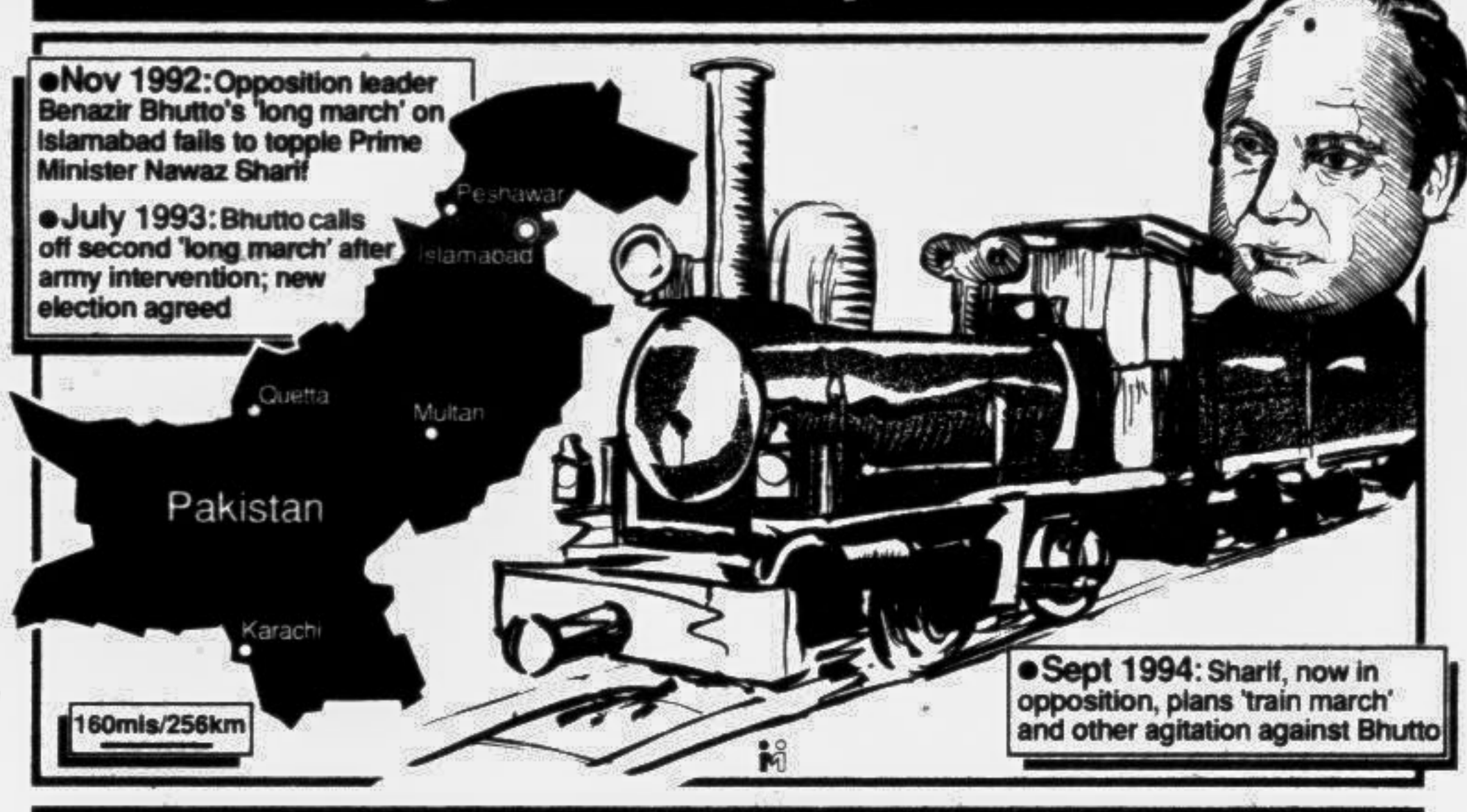
Secondly, when Bhutto called for her second march, President Ghulam Ishaq Khan and Prime Minister Sharif were at each other's throats; confusion reigned, with provincial governments refusing to obey the federal government.

## Nawaz Sharif Tries to Turn the Tables

Tariq Butt writes from Islamabad

Opposition leader Nawaz Sharif caused diplomatic problems for Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto with his reported remark that Pakistan has a nuclear bomb. Now he is planning a domestic assault on her government with a nationwide campaign to force her to step down or go to the polls.

### Railroading democracy



The President still has power to dissolve the National Assembly, but today's holder of the post, Farooq Leghari, is close to Bhutto.

One of the opposition's four main demands is for the resignations of Leghari and Bhutto followed by elections under a neutral caretaker administration.

Other demands are:

An apology by Bhutto for helping Indian Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi suppress Sikh separatists in India during her first stint as Prime Minister from 1988 to 1990;

Removal of recently appointed Lahore High Court judges, who the opposition alleges are PPP "loyalists";

Restoration of the opposition's government in the North-West Frontier Province, which was removed three months ago and replaced by a PPP nominee.

Tactic No. 1 has been to attempt to discredit the President, with an allegation that he illegally obtained Rs15 million from a banker currently facing fraud charges. The allegation has not been tested in court, but has damaged Leghari politically.

Tactic No. 2 is to seek the support of Altaf Hussain, self-exiled leader of the Mohajir Qaumi Movement, a regional party in Sindh. Hussain, who lives in London, is opposed to Bhutto because of their rivalry in Sindh, Bhutto's stronghold.

The third tactic is the mass protest. If the protest takes off, the opposition may reinforce it by resigning from the National Assembly or, if it feels the campaign has caused so much disarray that PPP members may switch sides, it may move a vote of no-confidence in the Prime Minister.

So far, Bhutto seems unruffled by the prospect of widespread agitation. "We will not be blackmailed," she says.

She dismisses the need for protest after a free and fair election and charges: "They want to bring back their reign of loot and plunder, and the

whole drama is an effort to save the Ittefaq Empire (Sharif's big business house)."

But she is not passive. She has ordered banks not to give credit to companies owned by opposition politicians. Criminal cases have been registered against many opposition leaders, including Sharif, and some have been arrested — harassment was also faced by Bhutto and her colleagues when they were in opposition. The government has virtually frozen funds for development schemes in opposition constituencies.

Interior Minister Naseerullah Babar is scornful of the opposition's ability to stage a mass protest: "Agitational politics and launching a movement requires dedication and mobilisation. The opposition is not attuned to this and most of its leaders have not yet seen the jail as detainees."

In addition, the opposition does not enjoy the blessing of most religious parties, which support Bhutto or are neutral. "No agitation in Pakistan can succeed unless it is supported by religious parties," says Maulana Fazalur Rehman, Secretary-General of the Jamiat-e-Ulema-e-Islam and a Bhutto supporter.

The most serious development would be if the Army saw a threat to law and order. The Army will not take over, but even intervention to bring about a truce would be bad news for Pakistan's nascent democracy.

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

## 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.

### 'Black-gold' of Cox's Bazar?

Sir, For the last two decades millions of tons of valuable minerals — zircon, eilmenite, rutile, garnet, magnetite, and monazite etc popularly known as 'black-gold' found in some coastal areas of Bangladesh continue to be washed away by tidal bore and sea water. It appears that it is nobody's headache to look into the matter.

Despite crores of Taka spent on research and survey works of the beach sand and the purchase of machinery and equipment for the Atomic Energy Commission's Beach Sand Plant at Cox's Bazar set up in 1975, the concerned authorities — the Ministry of Energy and Mineral Resources, the Ministry of Science and Technology and Bangladesh Atomic Energy Commission could not achieve any tangible result as yet.

I read in some local dailies that some foreign firms are now negotiating with our government for obtaining a mining licence for the extraction of the valuable minerals on payment of paltry amount of royalty. Bangladesh Atomic Energy Commission has also floated international tender

inviting the services of foreign consultants experts for their Cox's Bazar Beach Sand Plant.

Why don't we extract ourselves the valuable minerals through our own indigenous method and technology?

Why don't our government let us know the modalities, terms and conditions for extraction and export of the valuable minerals?

Why do the Ministry of Energy and Mineral Resources and the Ministry of Science and Technology always keep silent?

Let it be known to all that 'black-gold' mine project is one hundred times more economically useful than Barapukuria Coal Mine Project and Madhyapara Hard Rock Project.

O H Kabir Dhaka-1203

### Cairo Conference

Sir, Why this sound and fury over the UN-sponsored International Conference on Population and Development which is being held in Cairo under a pall of debatable and raging controversy and against the backdrop of disputable rows on the irritating and touchy subjects of "abortion", "promiscuity", "homosexuality",

freer sex", and "AIDS" as apprehended by Christians and Muslim fundamentalists and clerics. The term "abortion" needs to be defined. If an adolescent male and female, indulge in immoral sex, resulting in the pregnancy of the girl, the question of whether or not, the process of abortion should be applied comes. The draft declaration on the Conference does not encourage such free sex and promiscuity. Of course, free sex is rampant in some western countries where abortion in such cases has been legalised, but fortunately, in Asia and African continents particularly in the Muslim countries free sex is strictly prohibited by law.

The draft report does not encourage extra-marital sex, although there are instances in some western countries to have pre-marital sex where marriages take place after the birth of a child. Such a marriage is not a taboo in those countries and it varies from one society to the other, but hardly this can be permissible in a Muslim country. Another is the instance of an abortion or unwanted pregnancy of a married woman. The parents can take recourse to abortion for the sake of keeping the family size within limits, according to the need. In such cases, according to draft declaration, government should take appropriate steps to help women avoid abortion, which in no cases should be promoted as a method of family planning and whenever possible, provide for the humane treatment and counselling of

women who have had recourse of abortion.

For women, the existing inequities and barriers to them in the workforce should be totally eliminated. Governments should promote, monitor and evaluate the education and skill development of women and girls and legal economic rights of women and in all aspects of reproductive and sexual health, including family planning. Regarding the girl children, the definition that they are potential child bearers and caretakers, must be expanded to include health care, nutrition, inheritance rights, education, social, economic and political activities. For men, special efforts should be made to emphasise their shared responsibility and promote their active involvement in a responsible parenthood.

The reproductive rights and health implies that people have a satisfying and safe sex life and that they have the capability to reproduce and to freedom to decide if, when and how often to do so. The cornerstone of sexual and reproductive health rests on the recognition of basic rights of all couples and individuals to decide freely and responsibly. Reproductive health care should, inter alia, include family planning, counselling, information, education, communication, education, services of pre-natal care, safe delivery, pregnancy termination by means of contraceptives etc. post natal care and planned parenthood. Naturally, by the use of contraceptives, vasectomy etc. the question of pregnancy and the resultant abortion does not arise at all. Responsible sexual behaviours, including voluntary sexual abstinence for the prevention of HIV infection should be promoted.

This Conference is to adopt a 20-year plan and the bottom line and crucial factor is that nothing will be done without consulting the member countries, which includes Muslim countries as well. Every step of the preparation for a World Conference and every word of the controversial draft document goes through an elaborate debate and dialogue process through several preparatory conferences. The propaganda to boycott the Cairo Conference arises from the biased and prejudiced interpretation of the draft declaration. We are delighted to note that our PM, although pre-occupied by the local propaganda against the Conference — has allowed the Minister of Health to attend the Conference.

N H Sufi Mohammadpur, Dhaka

### 'Something more is wrong'

Sir, My attention has been drawn to a letter published in The Daily Star on August 30, 1994, captioned "Something more is wrong". In connection with the remarks in the said letter on my article published in The Daily Star of 19th August, 1994, I have to say that the Financial Express dated July 20, 1994 reported that "of the \$4.7 billion that poured into India in 1993-94 only \$600 million was in direct investment. The rest went into the stock market."

Nitai C Nag Department of Economics University of Chittagong

Proposals for export promotion

Sir, Further to the discussions at the 26th meeting of the Export Promotion Council held on September 1, 1994 and the working paper thereof, we like to put forward a few suggestions as under:

The facilities and incentives now available to the 100% export oriented industries should also be made available to those industries which export finished products in spite of their not being 100% export oriented.

We understand, that given similar incentives to all engaged in export would not only encourage those who are not 100% export oriented industries, but also boost overall exports of the country.

The trade wings of the Bangladesh diplomatic missions abroad should be manned by people recruited from the private sector on contract basis or, alternatively, by government officials who are commercially oriented.

We hope the above suggestions will receive due consideration of the appropriate quarters.

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